

## Shenkman Inadvertently Exposes Religiously Polarized Voting In Loma Linda

In five of the six San Bernardino County governmental constitutional positions up for election in the June 2 Primary, the incumbents prevailed.

Looked at in another way, in another way, in all six of those contests, the candidate favored by the county's social and political establishment won.

Up for reelection

this year were Sheriff/Coroner-Public Administrator Shannon Dicus, District Attorney Jason Anderson, Treasurer-Tax Collector/Auditor Controller Ensen Mason, Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk Josie Gonzales, Second District County Supervisor Jesse Armendarez and Fourth District Supervisor Curt Hagman.

On Tuesday night, af-

ter the ballots contained in the ballot boxes from all 2,065 of the county's precincts had been counted, which consisted of the votes cast by 224,573 or approximately 18.19 percent of the county's 1,234,386 registered voters, Dicus, Armendarez and Hagman had come out on top, having captured more than 50 percent of the votes cast in their

elections. Dicus, Anderson and Gonzales were reelected to upcoming four-year terms, essentially by proclamation, insofar as they faced no opposition.

Mason was the lone incumbent who failed to hold onto his position.

Of the 192,318 votes cast in the sheriff's race, Dicus claimed 126,186

or 65.61 percent, outdistancing Joe Silva, a former deputy, who registered 65,921 votes or 34.28 percent in his favor. In the district attorney's race, 164,066 or 99.76 percent of the 164,462 voters who participated in that vote marked their ballots in favor of Anderson, while 396 wrote in someone else. Mason logged 81,462 or 42.95 percent. **See P 3**

## Tuesday's San Bernardino Municipal Vote Closes Out Resistance To Mayor Tran

"The close of an era" is how the outcome of Tuesday's voting in San Bernardino's municipal elections was described, with two of the members of the city council who have more or less been central players in the council's ruling coalition for the last six years having been shut out of office and the longest-serving member of the council who has been a mainstay on that ruling coalition being forced into a run-off in November where his chances of reelection appear to be at best fifty-fifty.

In the same contest, incumbent Mayor Helen Tran, whose first term has been marred by administrative faux pas beyond her control and the political resistance of the aforementioned ruling coalition, was reelected and by the outcome in the accompanying council contests strengthened considerably, having been given a council line-up for the next two years, at least, which will give her a shot at accomplishments in guiding and shaping city policy that has eluded her the last four years.

At stake in this year's election was whether Tran, who was formerly the city's human resources director and since 2022 mayor, was to remain in office in the face of challenges mounted by former Mayor John Valdivia, perennial mayoral candidate Rick Avila or relative political newcomers Amy Malone, Ivan Garcia and Ronnika Ngalande. In addition, there were contests in three of the city's seven **See P 2**

## Prequel: The City Of Fontana And Its Half Of A Century Of Enduring Corruption

*How Fontana and San Bernardino County built a machine that stole from taxpayers for five decades, and why no one was ever held accountable. It began with a casino credit line. It ends, if it ever ends, with an assistant city manager involved in the processing his brother's real estate applications and a planning commissioner whose brother is a member of the county board of supervisors and the owner of the city's preeminent real estate company oversees holds tremendous sway over the municipality's official land use decisions.*

*In between, the residents of Fontana San Bernardino County have paid hundreds of millions of dollars to fund a corruption machine so durable and so patient that it simply waited out every reform, replaced every actor who left or got caught, and kept running.*

*This is the story of that machine, how it was built, who built it, what laws were broken, and why, across five decades, four mayors, three county supervisors, and a bribery prosecution, no one, at least from Fontana, has been prosecuted.*

By Carlos Avalos

Era One: The Ratelle Years (1973-1987)

The Man Who Built the Template

Jack Ratelle was Fontana's city manager for fourteen years, and during that time, he turned

a struggling Inland Empire city into his personal enrichment machine. The mechanism was not subtle. Developers who wanted entitlements, approvals, or public infrastructure money paid Ratelle through a credit

line at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas. Ratelle made weekly or bimonthly trips to collect, then returned to City Hall with stories about winning or losing at the dice tables. It was both his cover story and

his collection mechanism.

For council members, the bribes were tailored to circumstance: a city contract steered to one councilman's welding business; a no-show job created for another's un-

employed son-in-law; direct cash distributions to Mayor Nat Simon and others. The arrangement was institutional, not incidental. Everyone who mattered knew or chose not to know.

Law Broken: **See P 4**

## Three Companies Settle Suit Over Smoke Bomb Sparking El Dorado Fire With \$4M Payout

An Ohio-based smoke bomb designer/importer and two other companies have agreed to pay more than \$4 million to the United States for costs and damages from the El Dorado Fire of 2020, which was ignited when one of the Ohio company's smoke bombs created flames when it

was used as the culmination of a gender reveal party. The flames spread into what was a nearly 23,000-acre conflagration, which resulted in the death of a firefighter.

Wholesale Fireworks Corporation, which is located in Hubbard, Ohio, and its subsidiary,

American Fireworks Wholesale LLC, agreed to pay \$4 million to settle claims brought on behalf of the United States Forest Service.

A third defendant, Pink or Blue Gender Team Incorporated, a Florida-based company, has agreed to pay **See P 5**

## Improper Disposal of Waste & Patient Info Nets LLU Health \$7.5 Million Fine

Loma Linda University Medical Center and Loma Linda University Health Care along with their affiliated organizations have agreed to pay \$7.5 million in civil penalties, reimbursements and fees in addition to implementing extensive compliance measures to resolve allegations that

their employees unlawfully disposed of hazardous waste, medical waste, and confidential patient information at facilities throughout Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

The \$7.5 million settlement was worked out between the San Bernardino **See P 3**

## State Solons Mulling Reintroducing Grizzly Bears Into Golden State's Wildlands

The last known sighting of a grizzly bear in San Bernardino County was in 1922 in Horse Canyon in the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains. It was promptly shot and killed.

Six years earlier, in October 1916, the last known grizzly bear in Los Angeles County had been similarly dispatched.

In 1924, two years

after the grizzly end of grizzlies in Southern California in Horse Canyon, what was believed to be the last sighting of the species in California occurred in Sequoia National Park.

Now, more than a century later, California officials are considering re-introducing into the state's wildlands and protecting them within circumscribed areas to

be designated as their habitats.

A bill by California State Senator Laura Richardson, Democrat of San Pedro, would call upon state wildlife officials to determine whether it is possible to relocate some to grizzlies to California in an effort to re-establish the populations of the massive ursines to those areas of what was their

natural habitat which are at what is considered a safe distance from areas occupied by humans. If such an undertaking is determined to be "feasible and advisable," the bill outlines another set of steps by which the California Department of Fish and Wildlife would develop a plan or proposal to import bears from those areas of the country where they are,

if not thriving, still surviving in a modern world that is growing increasingly hostile to them.

Well within its history as a political entity, which initiated in 1853, San Bernardino County was host to grizzly bears. The large and fierce creatures are no longer a local phenomenon, with the last in this neck of the woods having been killed in the late **See P 3**