

*Written by*

The Desert Sun Editorial Board

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## **Our endorsements: Even this quiet valley election can make a difference**



*Palm Springs voters will decide on Measure B, which would impose a tax of up to 15 percent on medical marijuana collectives. / Crystal Chatham, The Desert Sun*

Tuesday's election will likely be a quiet one. For most Coachella Valley residents, there will be no ballots. But every election is important. Voters' decisions subtly shape the future of the valley — hopefully in a good way.

Two city council races, a mayoral race, two water district board contests and a rarely competitive position on a recreation district will be decided.

Palm Springs voters will consider Measure B, a proposal to impose a tax of up to 15 percent on medical marijuana collectives. The Desert Sun applauds the intentions of the measure to create a revenue stream to help pay for administration the city's three collectives and to control illegal dispensaries. The plan to fund quality controls of medical marijuana also has merit.

However, the way the measure is being presented is too vague. Voters deserve a plan that spells out how the revenue would be spent and a specific rate to meet that goal. The city didn't do this because if specifics are spelled out the measure would require two-thirds approval instead of a simple majority.

In other cities, voters have approved medical marijuana taxes by healthy margins. Palm Springs is the only city in Riverside County that supports the Compassionate Care Act by allowing the collectives to operate. We believe that in a city with a high percentage of AIDS patients and elderly residents who need the relief medical marijuana provides, two-thirds of voters might approve a more specific proposal.

Meanwhile, we urge a no vote on Measure B.

In the race for Palm Springs council, longtime incumbents Chris Mills and Ginny Foat are being challenged by Judy Deertrack and Jeffrey Nichols.

We're impressed with Deertrack. Her experience working with a tribal government in New Mexico, a deputy city attorney and with the Riverside County Planning Office would be an asset. She is articulate and would be a fresh voice on a council that hasn't changed much in a decade.

However, she can't match the institutional knowledge of Mills and Foat, who have served the city for 22 years between them. Many things are going right for Palm Springs. Tourism, hotel rates and revenue, and flights at Palm Springs International Airport have all increased. The sales tax increase approved by voters two years ago is giving the city revenue required to make long-needed civic improvements. And the revitalization of downtown is well under way.

Re-elect Mills and Foat.

We can't say the same for Desert Hot Springs. It still faces budgetary challenges, a weak retail base and high unemployment, albeit some improvements over the last year.

In the race for mayor — which comes around every two years in this city — incumbent Yvonne Parks is being challenged by Councilman Adam Sanchez and economist John-Paul Valdez.

Parks has been the city's No. 1 cheerleader and is extremely active in regional organizations, although we were bothered on the occasions when she lost her patience with Sanchez and Councilman Russell Betts. In one meeting, she told Sanchez to shut up — twice. We expect

better from our elected leaders. She should not contribute to the animosity that has haunted this council for years.

Vote for Parks.

The three Desert Hot Springs council candidates who met with the editorial board were all impressive. (Robert Bentley declined our invitation.)

Joe McKee, an engineer who serves on four city committees, is putting up a solid challenge to incumbents Scott Matas and Jan Pye. He raises legitimate concerns about the city budget.

However, Matas and Pye demonstrated their extensive knowledge of the issues and pointed out that the city has made progress with the opening of the Health and Wellness Center and the Borrego Springs Community Health Foundation clinic. Bringing in more doctors is one of the city's most critical issues.

We're also excited about the opening of a 2.6-million-square-foot warehouse that is expected to generate 1,000 jobs. The city could become a leader in logistics, one of the four pillars of the Coachella Valley Economic Blueprint. A potential Walmart also is on the horizon. No matter how you feel about Walmart, the retail giant brings in a lot of revenue, which is exactly what Desert Hot Springs needs.

Re-elect Matas and Pye.

With all the attention that water issues have drawn this year, we're surprised that the races for Desert Water Agency and the Mission Springs Water District didn't attract stronger challengers. Serving as a water district director takes a healthy dose of expertise. Incumbents Pat Oygur, James Cioffi and Joseph K. Stuart on the Desert Water Agency and Nancy Wright and Jeff Bowman of Mission Springs all showed they know the issues thoroughly.

We support the incumbents.

Finally, we were disappointed that Charlie Smith, vice president of the Desert Recreation District board, couldn't find the time to visit the editorial board or even send us a biography and a candidate statement. We were impressed with Siliva Paz, the first challenger for a seat on the district board in nine years.

Paz's life story as the daughter of a migrant worker who went on to become valedictorian of her high school class and earn a master's at Harvard is inspirational. Her work as an aide to Assemblyman V. Manuel Pérez for three years and now as manager of Building Healthy Community of Eastern Coachella Valley gives her the background to become an excellent recreation district director.

Elect Paz.

