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News

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Mar. 23, 2009
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NORTH LAS VEGAS ELECTIONS: Higher, but not high, turnout seen

Twelve chase council seats, judicial post

By LYNNETTE CURTIS
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

MORE INFO

- Elections - Municipal

NOT PICTURED

North Las Vegas City Council Ward 3
Kimberly McKinney
Age: 40
Occupation: Hospital financial eligibility counselor



North Las Vegas City Council Ward 1
Rolando Cruz
Age: 36
Occupation: Sales representative



North Las Vegas City Council Ward 1
Robert Eliason (incumbent)
Age: 46
Occupation: North Las Vegas city councilman; manager at Juliet Companies



North Las Vegas City Council Ward 1
Jeffrey A. Eggeman
Age: 40
Occupation: Unemployed bartender

About \$34.

That's what North Las Vegas spent per voter to conduct its last municipal elections, a high figure resulting from the low turnout.

A mere 2,415 residents in Nevada's fourth-largest city voted in the 2007 primary, followed by a measly 1,402 in the general. Total cost: \$130,000.

This year, higher turnout is likely because of a citywide mayoral race, with two City Council contests and a judgeship.

Higher, but not high.

"Most voters don't know there's an election on," said Gary Gray, a campaign consultant to council candidate Anita Woods.

Municipal elections are traditionally sleepy affairs. But this year's are almost comatose.

"I don't see any real vigor in any of these races," Gray said.

That might be because the "big" race for term-limited Mayor Michael Montandon's seat drew five candidates -- three City Council members, a former planning commissioner and a colorful activist for the homeless -- who already are "known quantities" and haven't stirred up much excitement, Gray said.

Twelve others are quietly, cheaply campaigning in the city. Incumbent City Councilman Robert Eliason is running for a third term against two challengers. Municipal Court Judge Sean Hoeffgen is hoping for a second term; he too drew a pair of challengers. And a half-dozen people are vying for the City Council seat to be vacated by Stephanie Smith, who's running for mayor.

Voter apathy hits low-profile candidates, who have little cash and less name recognition, particularly hard. First-time candidates short on political savvy especially struggle to distinguish themselves from the pack and, sometimes, to clearly express their own views on issues.

Such candidates typically must work harder for a shot, said College of Southern Nevada history professor Michael Green.

"The most important attribute for campaigning is a comfortable pair of shoes," he said.

Early voting in the city began Wednesday. By 5 p.m. Thursday, 129 people had voted. The city government is closed on Fridays. Early voting will end April 3.

For hours and locations, visit www.cityofnorthlasvegas.com and click "elections." The primary is April 7.

Following are snapshots of the three non-mayoral races. (The Review-Journal profiled mayoral candidates March 16.)

CITY COUNCIL WARD 1

Two first-time candidates hope to spoil City Councilman Robert

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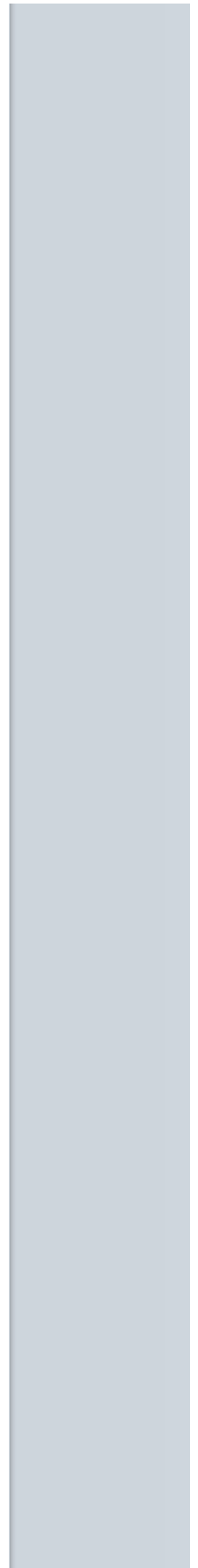


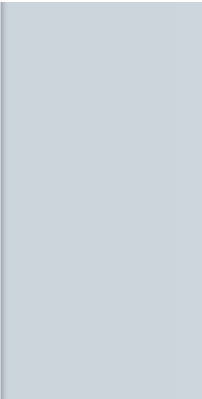
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