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## **Choosing future, good candidates go hand in hand**

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Just as we are settling down from a tempestuous October election, it is already time to gear up for municipal elections that will be held in March. Candidates for mayor of Fresno and for Fresno City Council Districts 2, 4, and 6 may begin filing papers to run for office on Nov 10. The filing period closes Dec. 5.

A public that voted in record numbers in October now needs to give some much-needed attention to our forthcoming municipal elections. Encouraging good candidates to run, and choosing well from those who run, is far preferable to bearing the consequences of electing people who:

- focus on short-term patches instead of long-term solutions;
- concentrate on personal political ambition rather than community interests;
- show more loyalty to ideology and party than to community;
- refuse to collaborate in the search for a better future;
- and act on behalf of narrow interests rather than overall government effectiveness and fiscal responsibility.

Currently, Fresno suffers from the highest unemployment rate of any metropolitan area of our size in the country, a correspondingly high crime rate, the second worst air quality in the country, a huge backlog of deferred maintenance for our road system, fire stations badly in need of repair and amenities that do not compare favorably with other metro areas of our size.

### **The right questions**

How do we organize ourselves to choose well? Fresno Citizens for Good Government believes that the way to begin is to ask the right questions. We are not looking for any specific right answers. Rather, we are looking for thoughtful, informed responses.

It is our hope that others will join us in making sure that thoughtful questions and thoughtful responses become the basis for the coming municipal election campaigns. We also hope that the prospect of a campaign characterized by civility and substance might attract the caliber of candidates who too often decline to share their talents with a public that needs them.

Here is the product of our collective best thinking on questions that should be asked of candidates:

1. Fresno residents have suffered from double-digit unemployment for two and a half decades. What is your plan for tackling this problem?
2. If current trends continue, in a few years the entire budget for Fresno will be required to pay for police and fire services, leaving nothing for economic development, parks or other services. What would you do to assure that city funds can be balanced among a wide variety of services?
3. What would improve the livability of Fresno? What steps would you take to improve livability? The quality of our air? The quality of our roads? Our transportation system?
4. How do you define fiscal responsibility? What is the appropriate level of municipal taxation and debt for our citizens? What should our fiscal reserves be?
5. Will you put the attainment of government efficiencies for the benefit of the total community ahead of the interests of special constituencies?

### **Working together**

6. City issues, such as unemployment, crime, health and education are interwoven with one another and are governed by multiple governmental jurisdictions. What would you do to address issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries?
7. What would you do to engage citizens of Fresno and others with common interests to be part of positive problem-solving efforts? Can you embolden other elected officials to work with you to tackle complex, difficult issues? How?
8. What are the values you will use as you make decisions about our future?
9. What is your history of thoughtful problem solving?
10. What attributes and experience qualify you to analyze and help devise solutions for the complex problems we face as a community?

We must ask the right questions. Learn about the candidates. Vote for the right candidate for the job. Choose to elect candidates that will always put Fresno first. If we don't choose our future, we will get one by default.

Peter E. Weber is chairman and Nancy Richardson is vice chairwoman of Fresno Citizens for Good Government. The organization's Web site is [www.fcgg.org](http://www.fcgg.org).

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