

## Contra Costa Times editorial: Re-elect John Gioia for Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

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WITH CONTRA COSTA facing a precarious financial future, it's essential that voters elect leaders who understand the intricacies of county government and the need for changes to head off fiscal collapse.

It's for that reason that we urge West Contra Costa residents to re-elect John Gioia to a fourth four-year term on the Board of Supervisors representing District 1, which includes Kensington, El Cerrito, Richmond, El Sobrante and San Pablo.

We don't always agree with Gioia. But we respect his hard work, keen understanding of the issues and willingness to raise and confront some of the troubling problems the county faces. For example, he was a leader during the past few years as the county made significant strides to reduce — but, unfortunately, not eliminate — the unfunded liability for retired workers' health care costs.

Nevertheless, without significant savings in salaries and benefits over the next few years, the county will have to continue reducing the number of employees and services to the public. In the next year, the county must address its escalating pension costs as well as the huge price of providing health care for the needy.

For that, we want a supervisor such as Gioia who is fully engaged, understands the issues and recognizes the seriousness of the decisions ahead.

His opponent, Mister Phillips of San Pablo, is a West County native who would like to see improvements for a district that is plagued by large pockets of poverty. We encourage him to continue his political advocacy. But he is not ready to be a county supervisor. He has unrealistically lofty goals for these troubled times in local government and doesn't seem to realize how hard Gioia is working on residents' behalf to protect county services.

Gioia also serves as a county representative to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, Association of Bay Area Government, Doctors Medical Center Management Authority and Contra Costa County Employees' Retirement Association. In that last role, Gioia has helped steer the pension board back from a point a decade ago where it was making unrealistic decisions that favored employee unions without regard to the effect on taxpayers.

We were pleased to see Gioia recently support pension board moves to end employee use of accumulated vacation time to spike their pensions. But we were disappointed that Gioia and the board only applied the changes to future workers, not to the current employees. For his part, Gioia says there were legal constraints toward how far the board could go. We disagree.

To his credit, Gioia has always been willing to discuss his decision-making process. He sincerely tries to balance competing interests. It's clear that he's deeply concerned about the county's financial future, especially its ability to provide health care, social services and sheriff's protection to the residents of his district and Contra Costa as a whole.