

**MAN IN THE MIDDLE**

**Many in East Contra Costa support Federal Glover, but tough re-election bid waits**

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Contra Costa County Supervisor Federal Glover answers a phone call before the start of session...



Contra Costa Supervisor Federal D. Glover prefers to work behind the scenes than use his bully pulpit. He's no policy wonk or prolific orator, but he's respectful to a fault -- sometimes just taking the heat rather than jumping on a critic.

Politics is often a contact sport, and this former high school football player has never smashed anyone's facemask.

"That's Fed," said Orin Allen, a longtime mentor. "He puts others before himself. Whenever there is a middle road for negotiation between two groups, he's always been there. He hasn't changed since high school."

In 1974, Glover was Pittsburg High School's student body president at a time when white and black students claimed their own hallways and lunch tables.

Few crossed racial lines, but Glover chatted up the white students and quickly gained their respect. When there were fights between the races, Glover had street credibility to serve as a mediator.

That ability to navigate the muddy waters of politics has carried him to the Pittsburg City Council and his position as a two-term county supervisor representing Antioch, Bay Point, Bethel Island, Oakley and Pittsburg.

He's running for a third term in June, in what's expected to be the most competitive race in his 13-year political career. Glover has never lost an election, but many dissatisfied voters in Antioch hope to end that streak.

Glover's soft-spoken leadership style has proved to be an Achilles' heel. His critics say he's slow to take

strong positions and, even when he does, Glover can be a flip-flopper.

Two weeks ago, he voted to have county staff explore five locations for a 500-bed state prison, including a site in Antioch a mile from Deer Valley High School. After public outcry the next day, he was in full damage-control mode and vigorously opposed the idea.

Glover is undeterred by the complaints. He's a survivor, after all -- he proved that last year when he narrowly escaped death after a major kidney disorder sent him to the hospital for a month.

"I don't think you can ever get 100 percent of the support," said Glover, who serves as chairman of the Board of Supervisors this year. "If people look at the facts, they'll see I support the best interests of the community at large."

During his last election, he ran against a political novice and gained 55 percent of the vote -- hardly a commanding victory for an incumbent. County employees -- facing potential layoffs amid a financial crisis -- are still upset about a unanimous board vote to increase supervisors' wages last year by 62 percent. That provided board members with an annual base salary of \$97,500, bringing them up to the pay levels of their Bay Area peers.

Glover's largest constituency, the city of Antioch, is fuming about the prison proposal, increased crime and flaws in the county's subsidized housing program.

"Whoever his political opponents are going to be, he's given them more than enough ammunition," said Gary Gilbert, an Antioch community activist. "Federal's going to have a very tough time getting re-elected."

### **Politics 'in my blood'**

Federal David Glover was born May 9, 1956, at what was then known as Pittsburg Community Hospital. His first name didn't last long, though, thanks to kindergarten teacher Betty Burns. On the boy's first day of class, Burns thought that she had found a mistake on the class roster.

"They just imagined that there was no way anyone would name their child Federal," Glover said. "They just changed that T to an F, and I've worn Federal ever since."

Glover grew up with three older brothers and two younger sisters in Columbia Park, a predominantly black neighborhood. Their parents had blue-collar jobs in East County -- Morris was a steelworker at U.S. Steel; Lucille was a sorter at the Tillie Lewis cannery. (They separated when Glover was 10.)

"There was always food on the table, but by no means were we wealthy," Glover said.

He grew up on burritos at New Mecca Cafe and picked apricots and cherries in Oakley and Brentwood. During the summers, he strung up worms on his fishing pole and reeled in striped bass and catfish from the Delta behind the old PG&E plant.

Throughout his childhood, Glover was a gofer for Pittsburg political campaigns, often asked to slide candidate brochures under doormats.

"I grew up watching the political process," Glover said. "I think it got in my blood."

Even as his peers turned to gangs and violence, he stayed busy with sports and politics. That's not to say he always stayed on the right path.

Glover saw his friends use cocaine and other drugs, but during a recent interview he would not directly answer whether he used them.

"I grew up in the '70s," he said. "I have never been a user of anything on a constant basis. But as a kid growing up, I was exposed to some things."

### **Finding an escape**

Glover found refuge in the Boys & Girls Club, a place where kids gathered to make crafts, play basketball and watch movies. Club leaders watched how he could seemingly get along with everyone. They tapped him for leadership roles, such as working the front counter and coaching teams.

"He'd look around at other young, black men and they were involved in drugs and violence. Federal felt he couldn't mess up because so many other people were," said his wife, Janis, who has known him since they were teenagers.

"The club means a lot to Federal. He feels it saved his life," she said.

Other young men got caught up in mischief -- including Glover's brothers Leon and Lincoln.

After a dispute with another man about a girl, Leon was shot and killed in front of the Glover home on Black Diamond Street. Leon's twin, Lincoln, died in a car accident months later on School Street while joy riding with friends.

Glover -- who was 18 at the time -- hasn't forgotten the pain those deaths caused his family, and he remains a strong advocate for after-school programs and violence prevention, his wife said.

"That's a reality for Federal," she said. "He had a pretty tragic childhood. It surprises me he isn't a hard, tough man."

### **Avenue into politics**

When the former Janis Miller was 15 years old, she saved up her baby-sitting money to take a flight from San Diego to the Bay Area. It would change her life. She came to Pittsburg to visit her cousins, who were friends of Glover's.

"They didn't want anyone else to meet her until she met me," Glover said with a chuckle. "I guess we hit it off."

He impressed her with his wit and an immaculately clean, navy blue Ford Galaxie 500 that had "butter-soft seats," she recalled.

They were just pen pals during high school, but Glover made his intentions known with an engagement ring at her 19th birthday party. In May, they will celebrate 30 years as husband and wife.

The couple grew up fast, having their first of two children a few months after their wedding. Glover was in the midst of earning a business degree at San Francisco State, but he abandoned those plans in favor of a steady paycheck.

"I'm thinking, 'I'm married and I have a child on the way. I've got responsibilities coming fast,'" he recalled.

He had deep contacts in Pittsburg's industrial circles, having worked during his college years at the U.S. Steel plant as a management trainee supervising the finishing of galvanized pipe. So when a tip came about a job to manage a termite pesticide plant at Dow Chemical Co., he jumped at the chance to make some money and support his young family.

Glover spent 23 years at Dow, working shifts all hours of the day. As he worked at Dow and raised his children, he remained primarily behind the scenes in the Pittsburg political world. Glover was the president of the Boys & Girls Club, served on city advisory boards and helped others on their election campaigns, but he never felt a calling to run for office.

He looked up to his godfather, the late Taylor Davis, Pittsburg's first black police officer and a leader of the Boys & Girls Club when Glover was growing up. In 1995, Davis -- the only African-American on the City Council -- decided not to seek a fourth term, but he wanted to ensure continuous black representation.

In his mind, Glover was the one.

"Taylor approached me and said, 'You've been back-seat driving for too long,'" Glover recalled. "A lot of people made up their mind before I did."

And like that, Glover was handing out Pittsburg High School football schedules with his campaign logo on them that summer. With the support of developer Albert Seeno Jr., Glover received the most votes out of six people running for Pittsburg City Council.

"His lifelong dream when he was young was to be an actor or an attorney," Janis Glover said. "He got to do both in politics."

### **Blazing a trail**

Glover didn't stay long on the City Council. Five years later, he made the same move his friend Joe Canciamilla made before him. Glover ran for county supervisor in a district that then represented the entire East County.

"I was putting my political career at risk," he said, "especially because I had a chance to become the first African-American supervisor when no minority had ever been elected before."

Glover initially campaigned against a county growth boundary known as the urban limit line, which threatened to cut off the development of 120 homes in southern Pittsburg. But during a runoff election against then-Antioch Mayor Mary Rocha, he changed his position to support the line that divides urban housing from open space.

His critics call it another example of Glover taking stances when it's politically convenient. Glover said he had to think more regionally as he made the transition from councilman to supervisor.

"We become very territorial on the city councils," he said. "When you are on the Board of Supervisors, you have to think outside the borders and what the impacts will be."

Glover won the race against Rocha, beating her by 5 percentage points to become the county's first black supervisor. His record in the past eight years has been a mixed bag -- picking up support in some circles while alienating other groups.

"His political strength is his ability to relate to people and come off as a really nice guy," said Canciamilla, a close friend of Glover's since high school. "He's just not a details person."

Asked what his greatest accomplishments have been as supervisor, Glover paused for 13 seconds and said, "It's hard to say, the county's so huge and you're doing something all the time. To pinpoint one thing, it's very difficult."

Glover later talked about the strides he has made as a member of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which decides how to spend state and federal transit dollars in the Bay Area. He has worked to widen Highway 4 and bring BART service to Antioch and beyond.

When others before him had failed, Glover steered a group of East County leaders to agree on the most viable plan for the BART service, known as eBART, said Oakley Councilman Brad Nix.

"Federal has always been a pusher for consensus," said Nix, who serves on transportation boards with Glover. "He's very good at moving things along. And when I shake his hand and he says he's going to do something, he does it."

Others point out that Glover is good at identifying what the problems are, but he comes up short in finding solutions. At an East County town hall meeting Glover convened last month, he spoke of quality-of-life problems such as crime and blight.

In the back of the room, the Bethel Island Municipal Advisory Council chairman wanted less talk and more action.

"I think we've come here and seen an empty bus," Joe Stokley told the group. "We need a driver for the bus."

### **Troubles in Antioch**

Glover's greatest adversaries live in Antioch. City leaders say he rarely shows up to their council meetings, was too slow to acknowledge problems with the county's Section 8 subsidized housing program and isn't responsive to Antioch's needs.

"On a scale of one to 10, I give him a zero," said Councilman Arne Simonsen.

For years, city leaders complained about the Section 8 program and its rowdy tenants, disheveled yards and other quality-of-life problems.

Glover got serious about the problem after a 2006 federal audit slammed the county for sloppy recordkeeping and other mismanagement of the federally mandated program, Simonsen said.

Glover said he took appropriate action, hiring new leaders at the county Housing Authority, opening up an Antioch Section 8 office and convening town hall meetings to understand what quality-of-life issues were affecting residents.

Glover knows firsthand about bad tenants. He's a Section 8 landlord and in the past decade has had to evict tenants from an Oakland house for selling drugs and failing to pay rent.

"When residents of Antioch have a bad experience, I know it can be a person's worst nightmare," Glover said. "I hear what they are saying."

Glover's actions in Antioch were too little, too late, said the city's mayor, Don Freitas.

"Federal Glover has failed us tremendously," he said.

Glover's colleagues, however, think he has done a fine job of giving a fair hearing to his constituents.

"He gets labeled as being pro-labor, but he's tried to maintain a good balance with business and labor," said West County Supervisor John Gioia, who has served with Glover for eight years. "He's not in anyone's pocket. He's very down-to-earth and doesn't ever lose his temper."

As Glover prepares his re-election campaign, he certainly isn't lacking support on paper. He has already raised more than \$100,000 -- a fundraising total nearly six times greater than that of opponent Erik Nunn, an Oakley planning commissioner.

On a rainy January night, nearly 500 supporters dined on crab and pasta for a Glover campaign fundraiser at the Boys & Girls Club.

"We will not be satisfied with anything less than Federal Glover to lead East County," Glover told the crowd that evening. "We're ready to fight and we're ready to fight in a big way."

### **A brush with death**

Glover's courage has perhaps never been better tested than in the fall when he walked out of UC San Francisco Medical Center after 27 days in a hospital bed.

In September, Glover fell weak with a 104-degree temperature. Glover's illness mystified doctors for weeks. They ran dozens of tests before discovering he was suffering ailments from viral meningitis, pneumonia and an advanced stage of a kidney disorder.

Death is rare from these diseases, but Glover teetered dangerously close to it.

Janis Glover recalled one day when she helped her husband out of bed, only to have him fall back on the mattress.

Glover's heart beat rapidly, sending readings on the heart monitor out of control. Doctors rushed in with a defibrillator to bring his heartbeat back into rhythm. The prognosis wasn't good.

"I had pretty much said goodbye to Federal," Janis said. "They gave me his ring. And they told me, 'Go home and rest. You'll need your energy to make (funeral) arrangements next week.'"

For the next five days, Glover had a feeding tube and was under sedation in the intensive care unit. Glover and his friends and family prayed for his recovery. A few weeks later, those prayers were answered. He left the hospital and worked up to his usual 12-hour workdays.

Glover never lost sight of hanging on, nor did he ever contemplate slowing down and putting the fast-paced life of politics behind him.

"Sometimes, I wondered if I would ever get better. But I never lost faith that I'd be OK," he said.

As Glover slowly regained his strength, he became philosophic to those surrounding his hospital bed.

"Federal came out of that near-death experience with an appreciation for what it means to be a servant of the public," said his campaign manager, Mary Jo Rossi. "He

said, 'I survived this with a renewed sense of what I am doing here. I am here to make people's lives better.'"

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### **Federal D. Glover**

- BORN: May 9, 1956
- FAMILY: Wife, Janis; son, Federal; daughter, Carissa; grandchildren Tiana (6), Talayah (3), George (2), Cierra (8 months)
- HOMETOWN: Pittsburg
- EDUCATION: 1975 Pittsburg High School graduate; three years at San Francisco State
- FAVORITE FOOD: Ribs, tri-tip -- anything he can grill
- FAVORITE MOVIE: "A Few Good Men"
- FAVORITE PASTIMES: Barbecuing, attending San Francisco 49ers games, taking Caribbean cruises
- FIRST CAR: A navy blue 1967 Ford Galaxie 500
- BEST DECISION: Marrying his wife
- BIGGEST REGRET: Not finishing his business degree at San Francisco State
- POLITICAL PARTY: Democrat
- POLITICAL OFFICES: Pittsburg city councilman 1995-2000; Contra Costa supervisor 2001-present