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[Home](#) > Mt. Diablo is at the heart of a mini controversy

Mt. Diablo is at the heart of a mini controversy

Most Contra Costa residents aren't bothered by the name Devil Mountain, but some Christians say the name is profane.

By

Staff Reporter
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Gail Uilkema, Martinez' representative to the County Board of Supervisors, said yesterday her office was inundated over the past two weeks with opposition missives to a recent bid to change the name of Mt. Diablo.

Renewing his failed 2005 bid to change the mountain's name because Mt. Diablo is "profane and derogatory," Oakley resident Arthur Mijares petitioned the Board of Supervisors and the U.S. Board on Geographic Names this month to consider renaming the mountain, and among his suggestions for a new name is Mt. Reagan, after the late U.S. president.

"Any Bible-believing, biblical-based, principled person would want to take the profane name off our mountain," Mijares told the Gazette on Thursday, explaining that his renaming effort began in earnest after he moved to Oakley and had a 'nice, clear view' of Mt. Diablo from his backyard. "Webster's Dictionary, which the federal government goes by, says the most supreme evil person is the devil, why would we want to call our mountain after an evil person? I don't particularly care what the new name is, let the community vote, let's just take the profane name off, there are spiritual issues that go deeper than what people think."

Mijares believes many of the County's social ills stem from the name of the mountain.

"All you got to do is see what's going on in Pittsburg, Richmond, and all the [purported recent] kidnapped children, it requires a spiritual answer, and breaking through the demonic curse," Mijares said.

The Board of Supervisors' Legislative Subcommittee, comprised of Uilkema and Sup. Bonilla, did not agree during its monthly meeting yesterday, and voted in opposition to the proposal. The matter will go in front of the entire Board in the coming weeks, but Uilkema expects with 99.9 percent certainty that the Board will vote in agreement with the Subcommittee.

"There was enormous public outcry against this suggestion, and not one person contacted my office saying it's a good idea," said Uilkema. "I personally do not believe the historical importance of our great landmark needs to be de-emphasized or changed. It is part of our history, people consider Mt. Diablo part of our identity."

Uilkema described her experiences over the weekend interacting with the public, and said numerous constituents approached her, imploring her to vote against the proposal.

"At church, at the dry cleaners, at the supermarket, again and again I heard, I don't want that, don't vote for it, Gail," said Uilkema.

A new twist to the name changing drama came when the agenda for today's Board of Supervisor meeting became public, and under the Appointments & Resignation portion, Art Mijares is slated to be appointed as the representative for District V-C to the County's Alcohol and Other Drug Advisory Board. As the seat falls under his purview, Supervisor Glover made the recommendation.

"While I am not in agreement with [Mijares' name-changing bid], the name change has nothing to do with [Mijares' appointment]," Glover told the Gazette yesterday. "When I interviewed him, I choose him because he has the ability to perform on that committee given his background. Nothing came up in the interview regarding names or his political or religious [ideas]."

On his application, Mijares claimed 35 years experience "working in the field of rehabilitation for the State of California, Dept. of Rehab in West County," and that he himself was a 32-year "recovered drug and alcohol abuser."

Under educational background, Mijares stated he had a B.A. in Sociology and Ethnic Studies from San Francisco State College and attended "numerous educational and training [sessions] from the Dept. of Rehab," and that he is active in East County churches and 12-step recovery programs.

When told of Mijares' expected appointment to the County advisory board, Uilkema said she supported Glover's choice and would respect his recommendation.

"I'm focused on District 2 [including Martinez], but as I've always done, I will support any supervisor's recommendation, [Glover's] the one doing the interviewing," said Uilkema.

Among the many local associations opposing the name change proposal, the group Save Mount Diablo this week sent out letters to the U.S. Board on Geographical Names and the County supervisors registering their criticism of such a suggestion.

"[Mijares] is clearly a crackpot," said Seth Adams, Director of Land Program of Save Mount Diablo, explaining that the justifications Mijares uses in his arguments are 'amusing, but inaccurate.' When asked about Mijares' appointment to the Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board, Adams said, "I have no idea what his qualifications are for that, but his qualifications for suggesting a name change of Mt. Diablo are non-existent."

News

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