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Contra Costa Supervisor Federal Glover speaks with new voice

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen
Contra Costa Times
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Few describe the soft-spoken Contra Costa Supervisor Federal Glover as a standout orator.

But the veteran elected official from Pittsburg took the helm this month as the board of supervisor's 2013 chairman with a straight-from-the-heart speech that caught even his loyal fans by surprise.

"I've watched Federal grow into this job and become really comfortable in his own skin," said his longtime campaign manager Mary Jo Rossi. "Like many of us in our 50s, I think Federal realizes his time to make a difference is now."

Setting aside his written notes and looking directly at the several hundred people gathered for the board's annual reorganization lunch, the 56-year-old Glover delivered a perfect mix of his personal and policy priorities for the next year.

He paid a tearful tribute to his late mother, a woman who knew how to listen and always had "praise for her son."

He lauded his wife of 35 years. He choked up when he spoke of his daughter and son, saying that "when you have children to be proud of, it means a lot." And his eyes watered when he talked of having his five grandchildren together.

On the policy front, Glover highlighted his focus on bringing improvements to his district's 58 miles of shoreline -- Antioch to Pinole -- and continued transportation investment countywide.

While Glover's description of the county's persistent post-recession financial woes as "opportunities" was a tad idealistic, the

term fit him as crisply as the natty dark pinstriped suit he wore.

Glover has often called himself a survivor and he's right. Politically, he went from barely surviving re-election four years ago to running unopposed in 2012.

The supervisor also undergoes dialysis treatment three times a week some five years after a kidney disorder nearly killed him. He will need a new kidney soon.

So, if Glover sheds more tears at the podium and behaves as though he is grateful to be alive, indulge him. He's earned it.

watch glover's speech: The board of supervisor's annual reorganization lunch held Jan. 9 will air on CCTV on Jan. 21, 8 p.m.; Jan. 22, 4 p.m.; and Jan. 25 at noon. CCTV is Comcast channel 27, Astound channel 32 and AT&T Universe channel 99.

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AND FINALLY: The incoming Contra Costa Board of Supervisor's chair traditionally presents symbolic gifts to his elected colleagues during the annual kick-off-the-year lunch.

Sometimes serious, sometimes funny, the gifting supervisor's choices often offer a glimpse into how elected officials view each other.

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This year, Supervisor Glover burned a music CD for his counterparts and dedicated a song to each.

Known for his dogged pursuit of issues, Supervisor John Gioia of Richmond burst out laughing when Frank Sinatra's "My Way" filled the room.

Bold and outspoken, Supervisor Karen Mitchoff of Pleasant Hill fist-pumped to Helen Reddy's "I Am Woman."

Outgoing board chairwoman and Supervisor Mary Nejedly Piepho of Discovery Bay danced up the aisle to "Proud Mary."

The unfailingly upbeat Supervisor Candace Andersen of Danville slightly furrowed her brow at hearing Bobby McFerrin sing "Don't Worry, Be Happy."

"Do I look worried all the time?" she asked.

Given the tenacity and diversity on the board, Glover wisely closed out the luncheon with a classic rendition of Sister Sledge's "We Are Family."

But with very difficult budget and labor talks on the county's agenda, Glover may need a few alternative theme songs if he wants to honestly describe their relationships.

May I suggest Gotye's "Somebody That I Used to Know" or Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction?" Just a thought.

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Posted:* ContraCostaTimes.com

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