

Vote in business-friendly candidates this election

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



This Tuesday, Nov. 4, is a tremendously important day for our county, state and nation as we

choose our leadership and representation in government. It is the day when we go beyond all the campaigning and get down to the brass tacks of voting our conscience for those we believe will best represent us, help to improve all our lives, and move us forward. It is an opportunity to work together to better our economy, support businesses, and help protect jobs by voting for business-friendly candidates. The latter should be willing to hear the people, consider all sides of issues, bring fresh and solid solutions to the table, challenge systems and processes that are

not working, and take action.

When it comes to our government, we may have strong opinions, but the truth is, as a society, we have been complacent. Election after election we talk about the low voter turnout in the Hawaii and how apathetic the voters have become. Yet, many still do not come out and vote. We discuss the importance of engagement, but we put up with elected officials who will not meet with certain groups that have differing views. We even have permitted elected officials to behave badly and rudely to testifiers at council, county and state hearings, a situation that discourages people from participating in government processes.

Further, we have allowed elected officials to stall issues; to vote solely based on party line; to vote for bills based on labor's funding of their campaign (even when the bills hurt businesses and increase their costs); and to vote for other

special interests based purely on campaign funding. Some of our elected officials are becoming increasingly bold in their "self-interested" behavior as if it is perfectly suitable and they are above reproach. This is not what the public wants, so how have we allowed it? By not calling them to task, we have implied consent.

So, when will self-interested behavior stop? It will stop when we make it clear that such actions are intolerable. Erasing these actions begins with voting for those with great ideas and solid plans and not re-electing those who have exhibited such behavior in the past. It is time that we remind elected officials who may have forgotten that they are "public servants," and get back to a government that is of the people, by the people and for the people.

We must stop accepting the old rhetoric of "that's just the way it is" and "that's how the system works." Instead, we

must stand up and say, "If that's how it is and the system works, then we need and will make changes." People are crying out for change. It is what much of this election has been about.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce is a nonpartisan advocate and champion for Maui businesses and recognizes that it is important to hold our elected officials accountable. That is why we endorse candidates. Through our endorsement process, we evaluate candidates' past performance and accomplishments; vet them on important business and community issues; determine the rationale behind their votes on particular issues; and give them an opportunity to respond and share their views.

We do not simply endorse just to have an endorsement for each elective office. To receive our endorsement, candidates have to participate fully in our process, meet the minimum score (60 percent of the total

possible points), and be deemed "business friendly." If more than one candidate in each race meets the required score, then the candidate with the highest score is the candidate we endorse. And, if the grade wasn't met, no endorsement is made. Through this process, we get a clear understanding of who the candidates are, what they are about, and what we can expect them to accomplish. It is an eye-opening experience.

While we always need strong critical thinking, new solutions and public participation, they are imperative this election. We no longer can sit idly by and hope for change; we must create it. It is time to heed the cries for transformation, walk the talk, and vote in those who will get things done for the people of Maui.

Therefore, we support and encourage your vote Tuesday for:

State House and Senate:

• Jan Shields — Senate District 5.

• Joe Souki — House District 8.

• Angus McKelvey — House District 10.

• George Fontaine — House District 11.

• Mickey Vierra — House District 12.

County Council:

• Gladys Coelho Baisa — Upcountry.

• Don Couch — South Maui.

• Bill Medeiros — East Maui.

• Mike Molina — Makawao, Paia, Haiku.

• John Ornellas — Lanai.

• Michael Victorino — Wailuku, Waihee, Waikapu.

Together, we can make a difference. Join us in electing these business-friendly candidates with the leadership and gumption to produce positive results.

■ *Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*