



Thomas Lando, Area 4



Matt Tennis, Area 4

of conservatives taking a greater interest in school boards. A California Republican Party effort, Parent Revolt, is (per its website—cagop.org/s/parentrevolt) “focused on recruiting and supporting strong Republican candidates to run for local education offices” because “[p]arents matter, and providing a quality education that’s supportive of children is more important than supporting left-wing groups, special interests and teachers unions.”

Konkin, Tennis and Wilson are also endorsed by the Chico Police Officers’ Association, Sheriff Kory Honea and the Butte County Republican Party. Robinson, incumbent Thomas Lando in Area 4 and Scott Thompson in Area 1 have joint backing, as well, notably from the Chico Unified Teachers Association and the Butte County Democratic Party.

“The politics of this election are so weird,” Lando said. “Like City Council, this is supposed to be nonpartisan, and it’s so frustrating that it isn’t.”

“I just want the board to have the skills to talk to the administration and the district office, communicate what we’re doing to the

public and make the best-informed decisions we can,” he added. “The fact that it’s gotten political, that’s reflective of something that’s going on nationwide.”

Chico Parents’ endorsees put themselves forward as parents and champions for parents. Robinson noted a video of Wilson’s in which he said, while putting up signs, that he was running because he wanted to get parent representation on the board.

“I texted him and I said, ‘Logan, as far as I know in the history of Chico Unified, there’s never been a board member who wasn’t also a parent,’” Robinson continued. “It’s a buzzword. Yes, you’re on the board, and you may have kids, but you’re on the board because of everybody else’s kids, not yours.”

“That’s not what being a board member is about; being a board member is about being a parent to 12,000 kids.”

Issues

Tennis, for one, described himself to the CN&R as “an outsider.” He was the dissenting voice and vote on the board during the pandemic; also—as a farmer, business owner and former Sacramento lobbyist—he’s the lone trustee without a background in education. (Lando is a charter school educator; Caitlin Dalby taught middle school science; Kathy Kaiser, not seeking reelection, is a retired Chico State professor.)

“My lead line is always talking about what has happened over the last two years,” Tennis said, “the disastrous COVID shutdown that has materially harmed the children of this community.”

Learning loss weighs heavily on all the candidates’ minds and priorities. Each spoke to how students have fallen behind academically during the pandemic, along with social and emotional impacts. They shared other points of commonality: increasing mental health services, boosting special education and career education programs, continuing with the facilities master plan, supporting charter schools.

But the factions have fundamental differences in other areas.

“I think school needs to become a less politically charged environment,” Tennis said. “It should be a place where children go for the mashed potatoes and gravy, if you will, learning the fundamental communication and problem-solving skills that they’re going to need to compete in an increasingly complex and potentially difficult world.”

“There’s a lot of troubled waters out there. People are talking about nuclear war. We’re coming off the Trump era, which was a turbulent, in my opinion, time—not necessarily in

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