



April 11, 2018

Editorial: Oxnard recall outcome hinges on this

In less than three weeks, Oxnard voters will decide whether to fire their mayor and three of their four City Council members. But this potentially major shakeup of local government won't be decided on issues or personalities alone.

No, these kinds of special elections largely hinge on one simple factor: voter turnout.

So if you live in Oxnard and are one of those folks who think your vote doesn't matter much, then the May 1 recall election is the perfect time to set aside your apathy. With so many voters likely to stay home, the ballots that are cast will carry much more weight.

We believe this recall is a waste of time, energy and taxpayers' money (the estimated cost is nearly \$500,000). The council made an unpopular decision to raise sewage rates to keep the city's wastewater plant afloat — a necessary action that certainly doesn't rise to the level of malfeasance or recall.

Regardless of your position on the recall, however, we urge you to participate in this important decision. Monday is the deadline to register to vote, and April 24 is the last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot.

As of Jan. 2, Oxnard had 78,354 registered voters, according to the county Elections Division. On that same date, about 75 percent of eligible voters in California had actually registered. Extrapolating that rate to Oxnard, the city has about 26,000 eligible-but-unregistered voters.

In Ventura County's last local recall election, less than 14 percent of registered voters in the Rio School District cast ballots. Three school board members were successfully recalled in 2006, contributing to years of political infighting, government dysfunction and even another recall attempt.

"When you hold these special elections, turnout drives the outcome," Stanford University political science professor Bruce E. Cain told the ThinkProgress news website for a 2013 story titled "Time to Re-Think Recall Elections." In the story, Joshua Spivak, author of the Recall Elections Blog, noted the people most motivated to vote in a recall election are recall supporters. "Because of this systematic bias, recalls are more-often-than-not successful — while in general elections, incumbents win the vast majority of the time," the story says.

Oxnard voters must decide whether to recall Tim Flynn, Carmen Ramirez, Bert Perello and Oscar Madrigal, and choose among 14 challengers seeking to replace them. We encourage residents to learn more at vcstar.com/news/elections and oxnard.org, register online at registertovote.ca.gov, and then vote by mail or at the polls May 1.