

Letter to the Editor

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 06 May 2016 03:44

Dear Editor,

I feel it necessary to clarify for the voters some misinformation being presented during this election campaign. Based on a recent Gallup Independent candidate profile and other public events and published postings, it would seem that my Democratic opponent is confused as to what the duties of the Treasurer actually include and what the office controls as far as finances go. First let it be known that while any resident of Cibola County can make suggestions as to where money should be spent, the Treasurer has NO official capacity to authorize infrastructure spending on its own. My opponent has allegedly been telling some constituents that he would fix roads if elected and this is simply not within his power to promise.

In a nutshell, each department of the County, including the Treasurer's office and the Road Department for that matter, has and develops its own budget and is accountable for their own expenditures within that budget. Over and above that there is the Finance Committee and the Board of Finance who along with the Finance Director, develop the financial plans for the County and approve overall expenditures and investments. If you have been to a County Commission meeting, you have already seen this approval process in action.

It is true that your tax bills are generated by the Treasurer's office, but these bills are based on the value of each property, as determined by the County Assessor. The Treasurer's function is to collect the taxes as assessed and address payment issues with those bills. Questions regarding fees and penalties, which are typically shown on a Notice of Assessment that is clearly marked, "This is not a tax bill", are rightfully directed to the County Assessor. These two functions are specifically handled by separate offices to ensure transparency and accountability in the process. Regarding a recent issue with a tax bill my opponent mentions regarding fees and penalties, the problem was addressed with a family member and confirmed to be an error on behalf of the Assessor's office, for which a correction was printed in the May 3rd issue of the Cibola Beacon.

My opponent also continues to call for an "independent look at the books" when this was essentially done by the NM State Auditor previously, which my opponent routinely mentions. In fact, an independent audit of each County department is already completed by an outside agency annually and financial statements are provided to the County Finance Director on a monthly basis for review and correction as needed. In the recent audit my opponent refers to, the Treasurer's office was one of the better departments with only a couple of minor procedural findings that were addressed immediately after they were brought to the office's attention.

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Lastly, my opponent continues to talk about controlling spending, but in reality, the Treasurer's office has very little, if any control of overall spending by the County. This is a function of the Board of Finance and the new County Manager who incidentally, has made and continues to make vast improvements over the previous administration. Perhaps my opponent would do better to run for a County Commission seat where he could accomplish more of the goals and ideas he has, but most are already in place or not even within the power of the County Treasurer's office at all.

I would encourage all voters to be informed of what the duties and qualifications for County Treasurer are before voting would remind everyone that the deadline to register is May 10th, 2016, if you wish to vote in the Primary election.

Thank you,

Kathy Lente Gonzales

Candidate for Cibola County Treasurer