

## Familiar Names in Pool of Candidates

POLITICS: Incumbents are prominent in races for City Council, school board.

By Rick Orlov, Staff Writer

Posted: 11/13/2010 09:00:28 PM PST

The field of contenders for the next City Council and school board elections began to firm up Saturday, as more than 80 candidates made the deadline in the first stage of qualifying for the March 8 ballot.

Saturday was the last day for candidates to take out "declaration of intention" papers to run for City Council, Los Angeles Unified School District board and the Los Angeles Community College District board. However, the City Clerk's Office said a complete list of candidates will not be available until Monday.

The candidates now enter a petition-gathering period to qualify for the ballot.

Many of the names will be familiar to local voters, with incumbents seeking re-election in 11 of the 15 seats.

The Los Angeles City Council has one "open" seat - with no incumbent seeking re-election - of the seven districts on the ballot. In the 12th District in the northwest San Fernando Valley, incumbent Councilman Greig Smith decided against running for a third term, and a field of seven candidates is seeking to replace him. The four-year term pays an annual salary of \$178,789.

The most well-funded candidate seeking to replace Smith is his chief of staff, Mitch Englander, who has raised more than \$400,000. Others who have taken out declarations are businesswoman Lucie Volotzky, security officer Timothy Flanagan, energy utility auditor Yehuda "YJ" Draiman, accountant Armineh Chelebian, businessperson Dinesh "Danny" Lakhanpal, businessman/restaurant owner Navraj "Singh" Singh, neighborhood council representative Glenn Bailey and small-business owner Kelly M. Lord Jr.

Other Valley seats include District 2, where Councilman Paul Krekorian is being challenged by community activist Michael McCue, and District 6, where City Councilman Tony Cardenas faces six challengers.

The other City Council seats on the ballot feature incumbents seeking re-election - council members Tom LaBonge, Jose Huizar, Bernard Parks and Herb Wesson.

All of the races to be decided are nonpartisan. A May 17 runoff will be held between the top two candidates if none receives a majority of the vote.

The Los Angeles Unified School District has four seats to be decided in the election, in which Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the United Teachers Los Angeles union are expected to be competing for control of the board.

The elections are for four-year terms that pay \$2,000 a month for members who attend the meetings or up to \$45,637 for those who work full time and accept no outside pay.

The district drawing the most attention is the 5th, where incumbent Yolie Flores is not seeking re-election.

It is expected to be a closely contested primary with educator-parent Luis Sanchez, who has close ties with school board president Monica Garcia. Others who have announced include retired schoolteacher John Fernandez, social worker Robert Jose Fonseca, parent advocate Scott Folsom, parent-education advocate Pilar Buelna and teacher Bennett Kayser.

Incumbent board members Marguerite Poindexter Lamotte, Tamar Galatzan and Richard Vladovic are also facing challenges in their re-election bids.

The Community College District has four seats to be decided with two incumbents, Georgia Mercer and Sylvia Scott-Hayes, not seeking re-election for four-year terms in a job that pays up to \$2,000 a month for those who attend all meetings.

Mercer, who has been on the board since 1998, said she decided after her last election - where she was forced into a runoff - to not run again.

"I made the decision then that this would be enough," Mercer said. "The last election was so awful, it took me six months to get over it. And, I have some personal issues in my family that made me decide it's time to move on and let someone else do this."

Scott-Hayes also has served three terms. She said she believed it was time to give someone fresh an opportunity.

Those decisions have lead to some maneuvering.

Incumbent Mona Field, who had been considering not seeking re-election, is now among a field of six running for the Scott-Hayes seat.

In the bid for Seat 3 vacated by Field, six candidates have declared their intent to run.

The race for Seat No. 5 vacated by Mercer has attracted a field of nine candidates.

Incumbent Miguel Santiago in Seat 7 is being challenged by small business entrepreneur Erick Aguirre, teacher-radio host Mark Isler and teacher Lee Anne Collver-Richards.