

PROFILES OF CANDIDATES FOR CITY COUNCIL SEATS

Armineh Chelebian

By Kevin Modesti, Staff Writer

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Armineh Chelebian, one of the six candidates running for the City Council 12th District seat makes her opening statement before opening up the forum to questions from the public during the Chatsworth Neighborhood Council meeting held at Lawrence Middle School in Chatsworth, CA. January 5, 2011. (Ernesto Elizarraraz/LA Daily News) (Ernesto Elizarraraz)

Armineh Chelebian's candidacy for the City Council seat representing the northwest San Fernando Valley marks her fifth bid for public office.

The 49-year-old resident of Winnetka said that's evidence she is more committed than her opponents to a cause, which in her case means trying to bring "common sense" to government.

"Since when is not giving up a bad thing?" Chelebian said.

The Iranian-born accountant ran for the San Fernando Valley City Council on the Valley secession ballot in 2002; sought a Los Angeles City Council seat in 2003; and ran for the state Assembly in 2006 and 2008.

Tracing her activism to helping elect former Glendale Mayor Bob Yousefian, Chelebian has been a member of the Los Angeles County Republican Party executive board and is active with the Reseda Neighborhood Council.

She emigrated from Tehran at age 16 with her father, a civil engineer, her mother, a retail saleswoman, and three sisters. The family, of Armenian heritage, chose Southern California because the girls could attend Ferrahian High School in Encino.

With a degree in accounting from California State University, Northridge, Chelebian worked as a Medicare auditor for Blue Cross of California and now is an accountant in private practice. She and her husband of 24 years have two children.

The only woman in the District 12 race to succeed retiring Councilman Greig Smith said her political persistence reflects an immigrant's appreciation for American freedoms.

"No one is stopping me from pursuing my dream because I'm foreign, or because of my religion - I'm Christian - or because I'm a woman, or a certain age. There will be obstacles, but you still try," Chelebian said at a west San Fernando Valley diner between bites of a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich.

On the big issue facing City Hall, Chelebian admitted her call to trim "non-essential" items to balance the budget sounds similar to other candidates'.

She said the big difference among council hopefuls is "how connected they are to the existing (political) machinery."

"We're electing the same caliber of people, with the same connections, and expecting different results," Chelebian said.

Chelebian's campaign website is arminehchelebian.com.