

# The big election mystery

## Why do Hispanics win school, but not city, races?

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Why is it that an Hispanic candidate has never been elected to the Watsonville City Council, yet voters have repeatedly elected Hispanics to the Pajaro Valley school board?

There are many reasons, according to Hispanic leaders to whom the question was put.

They said it is particularly appropriate to ask the question at this time, because community interest in politics has been piqued by the upcoming City Council race.

Watsonville is expected to

elect its first Hispanic councilman in the May election.

The Hispanic leaders, most of whom have either served on the school board or have run for City Council:

—Summed up the failure of the nine Hispanics who've run for City Council since 1971 by saying they were not well-known candidates and suffered from unorganized campaigns.

—Explained that the five Hispanics who've been elected to the school board appealed to conservative Watsonville voters and to the greater Pajaro Valley community because they tended to be conserva-

tive or middle-of-the-road in politics.

—Agreed that Hispanics elected to the school board have all had a history of community involvement. They said voters in a small town like Watsonville appreciate this, and Hispanics who have run for the council have not had that history.

—Pointed out that comparing the City Council and school board races is difficult because city elections are decided only by voters within the city limits, while school elections encompass the city, slices of North Monterey and San Benito coun-

ties and much of the Aptos area.

—Contended that racism played a role. They said many conservative Watsonville voters see the City Council as a powerful board and don't want an Hispanic on it, and that Watsonville voters see the school board as politically weak and are not as "threatened" by having Hispanic trustees.

—Credited voters in Aptos for helping Hispanics win election to the school board. They said Aptos voters, particularly teachers who live in the area, tend to be more liberal than Watsonville voters. They said

school employees turn out to vote because they have a vested interest in the off-year school elections.

—Agreed the election of an Hispanic to the City Council is long overdue.

According to librarians at the Watsonville Public Library, the city has never elected any member of a racial minority to the council, which was formed in the 1950s. Nor have city voters ever elected any member of a minority to a city position in the 121 years since the first city elections were held.



ALEX SOLANO  
He stressed qualifications