

# Latino representation in Watsonville gets a boost

## Three Latinos will sit on City Council

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Sentinel staff writer

**WATSONVILLE** — Two years after Latino activists here won a four-year legal battle for district elections, Latino representation on the Watsonville City Council will soon triple.

Vice Mayor Oscar Rios will be joined by Al Alcalá and Tony Campos after the Nov. 5 election. All three, along with incumbent Councilwoman Betty Bobeda, are running unopposed. The election will still take place.

Watsonville's Latino activists are pleased.

Shirley Castillo, president of the Watsonville chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens, called the increased representation "justification" for the 1989 lawsuit against the city.

"I think the Watsonville Latino

community should really take pride in what was achieved by pursuing this lawsuit," Castillo said Wednesday. "It not only benefited our Latino community, but the Latino community statewide."

The legal battle was waged by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund against the city's open-election policy. MALDEF argued that Watsonville — being more than 60-percent Latino — should have more Latino representation and district elections would increase the odds.

The Watsonville council has never had more than one Latino council member. Including Rios, there have been only two in the history of the city. Campos, a Watsonville Realtor, became the first Latino council member in 1987. He lost a re-election bid in 1989.

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MALDEF attorney Joaquin Avila said Wednesday that he isn't surprised that it took two elections in Watsonville before Latino representation increased.

"Sometimes it takes several elections before people start to file for office or gather enough resources to mount a campaign," he said.

Avila called the current development "very positive," adding, "It's an indication that the Watsonville Latino community is becoming fully politically empowered."

Celia Organista, a member of

LULAC and a Latino community leader, maintained the challenge for Watsonville Latinos is not over.

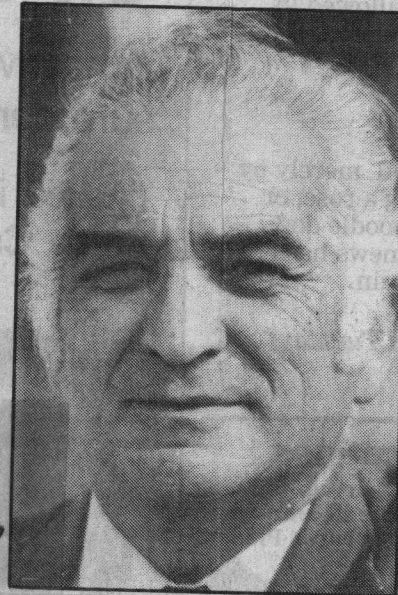
"We can't think that just because no one is running against them, we shouldn't work," she said. "We really have more of a challenge because we need to convince people to become part of the process. It'll be harder to convince people to come out and vote when there's no competition."

Vice Mayor Rios, who is in line to become mayor, agreed. He said he will campaign "as if I was running against two or three people." He said his focus will be on educa-



**Tony Campos**

No opposition puts candidates on the council



**Al Alcalá**

## Four seats draw four candidates

**WATSONVILLE** — Watsonville Councilman Paul Milladin spent \$13,900 in 1989 to get elected. His successor won't have to spend a cent.

That's because Watsonville's Nov. 5 City Council election is a forgone conclusion. Only four people have filed for the four open seats.

Vice Mayor Oscar Rios and Councilwoman Betty Bobeda will be re-elected in their districts, the downtown-residential District 2 and the eastside District 7, respectively.

The two new council members will be Watsonville insurance agent Al Alcalá, who will replace Councilman Paul Milladin in Dis-

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tion in the Latino community and getting people to vote.

Alcalá, a Watsonville insurance agent who currently is on the Planning Commission, said that three Latinos on the council means "true representation" for residents.

"I think it's an excellent mix," Alcalá said. "The process (of getting improved Latino representation) isn't something you do overnight. Maybe we can get other Latinos interested for the future."

Organista added, "It'll be great to have three Latinos on the council. I think it's just a matter of time before we have a Latino majority."

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