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San Gabriel Valley Tribune (San Gabriel Valley, CA)

March 12, 2005 Saturday

**SECTION:** NEWS**LENGTH:** 551 words**HEADLINE:** Voter apathy reigns**BODY:**

*Editor's note: It's Politics reports Saturdays on the ins and outs of San Gabriel Valley-area politics and city government.*

City Council elections were held Tuesday through much of Southern California, but judging by the turnout, few knew about it.

In the San Gabriel Valley area, you could say that about 75 percent of the voters either didn't know or chose not to participate.

Turnout ranged from 11.8 percent in San Gabriel to 28 percent in Rosemead.

Other cities included Monterey Park, 27.6 percent; La Verne, 25.4 percent; Azusa, 23.9 percent; Glendora, 21.4 percent; Temple City, 18 percent; Covina, 15.8 percent; San Dimas, 15.8 percent; and Monrovia, 15.2 percent.

This is nothing new for city council elections where a good turnout is considered anything above 20 percent.

The problem is that many people in Southern California live in one community and work in another, said Owen Newcomer, professor of political science at Rio Hondo College and a Whittier City Council member.

"Their main source of political news is television where they get regional and national news, but they don't know much about the community they live in," Newcomer said.

"They don't feel a tie to the community," he said. "Voting in a local election doesn't have much importance to them."

Another difference between the national and local elections is money, said Douglas Johnson, senior research associate with the Rose Institute.

"There isn't a well-funded, get-out-the-vote effort as there is with a [presidential or gubernatorial] election," Johnson said.

There are consequences to the low turnout.

"It means that you read into it any particular grand mandate from all of the residents," Newcomer said. "What it does say is that since fewer people participate, they have a lot more influence."

Johnson said one answer would be to move local elections to the general election in November when there's

higher turnout.

But many locally elected officials don't like that idea.

"I prefer to have it alone,' La Mirada Councilman Hal Malkin said, referring to city council elections. "It makes the local election defined. If you put it in a larger election, I'm not sure [the voters] will research the local issues.' HEALTH MEETING: The League of Women Voters will hold a meeting to discuss senior health and welfare at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Covina City Hall, 125 E. College St., Covina.

Speakers will include Vicki Stapleton, Barbara Case of Compassion USA and Corrine Woo from Kaiser Permanente. AWARD: Assemblyman Bob Huff, R-Industry, has named retired teacher Helen Doss as Woman of the Year.

"Education continues to be a top priority for the legislature,' Huff said. "Helen Doss has spent a lifetime working as an educator to help students excel, even in retirement.'

Doss retired from the Hacienda-La Puente Unified School District in 1997 after 38 years in the classroom.

She has been a delegate to the National Teacher's Association Convention twice and was a recipient of the Outstanding Individual Service Award from the California Republican Party. *Compiled by Mike Sprague. Mail items for It's Politics to the San Gabriel Valley Tribune, P.O. Box 581, Whittier, CA 90608; fax to [562] 698-0450; phone [626] 962-8811, Ext. 3022; or e-mail mike.sprague@sgvn.com .*

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