



## Local candidates open up

Politicians seeking the 8th Assembly and 5th Senate spots take the podium and speak to Woodland.

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8th District Assemblywoman Lois Wolk, at the podium, speaks to attendees of a talk at Woodland Community College on Wednesday night. Below, Yolo County District 4 Supervisor Mariko Yamada speaks to the crowd. (Matthew Henderson/Democrat)

State senate and assembly candidates Lois Wolk, Manuel "Manny" Cosme and Mariko Yamada talked about issues that concern local students and community members on Wednesday at Woodland Community College.

At a question and answer event, co-sponsored by WCC and the Latino Community Council, candidates answered two prepared questions regarding the importance of community colleges and promoting more diversity at the state capitol.

All candidates agreed about the important roll that community colleges have in the state and local level.

Wolk, running for the 5th Senate district spot being vacated by two-term Sen. Mike Machado, spoke about the need to support community college as the state supports K- 12 education.

Three quarters of California high school graduates go to community college, and Wolk said they're the key to the state's economic health and are becoming the center for new jobs.

"As soon as California has the resources that we need to put in, and further education in all levels, I will make sure that the added fee for community college is dropped," she said.

Republican Senate candidate Cosme, a veteran and product of the New York community college system, said community colleges are in a unique position to teach and inspire the future small business owners who will help fix the state's economy.

"Community college is like an incubator for those who want to open up a small business," he said. "It's been wonderful for my business and the community at large."

Yamada, Yolo County District 4 Supervisor and the Democratic Assembly candidate, also supports community colleges and their place in the state's education.

"It should be the back leg of the stool, that's it's viewed as a critical value to all the complements of the education systme and as a gateway for opportunities for a strong middle class,

The candidates had similar stances on diversity in the Capitol.

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Cosme talked about engaging Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans and other groups in politics, but also making sure that they are continuing to engage diversity.

"In as much as we want to promote a much more diverse group of legislators, we also need to hold them accountable," he said.

Yamada, who grew up in a diverse area, know the importance of having diversity.

"But we don't want to answer it in these window dressing ways, because, let's face it, that's what has happened," she said. "What I plan to do to support more inclusion in the state capitol is to encourage people to apply for appointments that are reflected in the district. But I will also continue to stand up, as I did in my career, in civil rights investigation for all people."

Wolk spoke about the opportunities available at the capitol that help a diverse population of students become involved in politics. She said she would continue to make sure these programs are available, as she has done in the past.

"Please look at our voting records, I'm proud of mine," she said.

Republican Senate candidate Greg Aghazarian was scheduled to take part as well. Aghazarian, who was running late, arrived about five minutes after the event had ended.

Despite his timing, Aghazarian took time to talk to community members and spoke about the importance of the community college system.

"A very important part of a community is its community college," he said. "When it comes to higher education - higher education that most

closely reflects the needs and potential of a community - those lessons being are taught in the halls of the community college."

"So we need to make sure that the community colleges have the tools they need to achieve and be successful," he added.

Woodland Community College student Supriya Mukherjee said she was already going to vote for Democratic candidates Wolk and Yamada before the event. While the candidates answers didn't change her mind, she did find them useful.

"It was informative in the sense I got to see the other side," she said.

Mukherjee said she was also happy that candidates were so focused on education.

"I think all three of the candidates have this common feel for education and that's what I feel the state needs to focus on," she said.

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