

Two county races to be decided in primary

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — Two Okeechobee County Commission races and a 19th Judicial Circuit judge race will be decided in the Aug. 18 primary election.

The Okeechobee County Supervisor of Elections Office will start early voting on Monday, Aug. 3, and end on Saturday, Aug. 15. Voting will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily at the Historic Okeechobee County Courthouse, 304 N.W. Second Street, Okeechobee.

The primary election will be Aug. 18. Polls will open at 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m. on election day.

Races on the primary ballot are:

• Okeechobee Supervisor of Elections Republican primary:

Republican candidates Melissa Arnold, Faith Nielson and Rodney Rucks will be on this ballot. The winner will be on the ballot in the general election along with "no party affiliation" (NPA) candidates. Only registered Republications will vote in this closed primary race.

• Okeechobee County Commission District 1: Incumbent David Hazellief (R) is challenged by Mark Brandel (R). This will be an open primary because there are no Democratic, other party or NPA candidates. All registered voters may participate. This primary will decide this race.

• Okeechobee County Commission
District 5: Incumbent Kelly Owens (R)
is challenged by Jack Boon (R). This will
be an open primary because there are no
Democratic, other party or NPA candidates in
this race. All registered voters may participate.

This primary will decide this race.

- Florida House District 55: Ned Hancock (R) and Kaylee Tuck (R) are on this ballot. The winner will face other party candidates in the general election. This is a closed primary. Only registered Republicans will vote in this race.
- Circuit Judge, 19th Judicial Circuit, Group 11: This is a nonpartisan race. All registered voters may participate. Candidates are Victoria Griffin and Louis Larsen.

Okeechobee candidate forum set for July 16

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE – The Economic Council of Okeechobee will host a Primary Election Candidate Forum on Thursday, July 16 at 6 p.m.

Due to concerns about the need for social distancing to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, this year's forum will be a virtual event, live-streamed on the internet.

The event will be live-streamed on the Okeechobee Economic Council's Facebook page for the public to view in real time.

The forum will also broadcast on WOKC 100.9 FM and 1570 AM.

The public is invited to submit questions for the candidates running for office at okeechobeecandidateforum@gmail.com. Please specify which race your question relates to.

For those who can't watch the live event, the forum video will also be available for view after the event on the Okeechobee Economic Council's Facebook page.



Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE - Early voting in Okeechobee County will be in the Historic Okeechobee County Courthouse, 304 N.W. Second Street.

Riles challenges Goodbread in county race

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — Bradley G. Goodbread, the incumbent, is challenged in the County Commission District 3 race by Demetre Riles.

Bradley Goodbread

Bradley Goodbread has lived in Okeechobee County for most of his life. His family moved to Okeechobee when he was 5. He spent 11 years in Texas, with six years in college and five working in that state. He is a 1982 graduate of



Okeechobee High School.

In 1987 he graduated from Texas A&M University with a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture economics. In 1989, he earned a Master's of Agriculture in land economics and real estate, also from Texas A&M. He is self-employed in farming, ranching, trucking, real estate and a limo service.

Demetre L. Riles Sr.

Demetre L. Riles Sr. is a native of

Okeechobee. He is a 1991 graduate of Okeechobee High School. He holds the following degrees: associate's degree in general studies from Central Texas College, bachelor's degree in business communication from Liberty University and master's degree



in education training and development from Trident University. He is also a Master Mason.

He entered the U.S. Army in May 1993 and retired as a sergeant first class in May 2013.

The candidates were asked to answer each of the following questions in 100 words or less.

Why are you the best candidate for this position?

GOODBREAD: It has always been my view that running for political office is a way that you give back to your community by putting yourself in the position to give your county the benefits of your life experiences and education. My business experience is made up of 40+ years of being in the businesses of farming, ranching, transportation, commercial real estate appraisal, and hospitality as well as a few others. I graduated from Okeechobee High School in 1982 and then went on to achieve my Bachelor of Science Degree in agriculture economics from Texas A&M University in 1987 and my Master's of Agriculture in land economics and real estate in 1989 from Texas A&M as well. I believe that the combination of my education and business experiences has prepared me for the responsibilities to make well-rounded and common-sense decisions as county commissioner.

RILES: INTEGRITY. That is what makes me the best candidate for this position. I will bring with me 20 years of military experience that has allowed me to hone my ability as a leader and the diversity to work across the spectrum with people from all walks of life. As commissioner, I will first listen. I will seek to understand the needs of the people — and in order to do that, I must first listen, learn and prepare myself to serve. I will remain fair and open-minded. As commissioner I will build a relationship with the community as a whole. My goal is to work closely with each commissioner from each district to ensure that issues of the citizens of Okeechobee County are heard, addressed and resolved.

What, in your opinion is the biggest problem facing Okeechobee County today? How would you address it?

GOODBREAD: We need a broader local economy which would bring more higher wage jobs. So many of our young people graduate high school and leave Okeechobee in search of higher paying jobs or graduate from college and can't afford to move back and start a family because of the lack of higher wages. This can be done by bringing businesses here that would have middle and upper management positions, engineering positions as well as financial positions. The present BOCC started and funded, along with the city and a few local businesses, the Okeechobee Economic Development Corporation, which is tasked with bringing quality economic growth to Okeechobee. I would also like to see a trade school in Okeechobee to teach auto and diesel mechanics, air conditioning repair, electronics, plumbing, welding, commercial driver license training, etc.

RILES: There are several issues facing our beloved county: Population growth has slowed, low-wage jobs, poor community aesthetics, lack of new-home construction and declining public-school enrollment were among the findings, according to a study posted in the *Lake Okeechobee News*. To prioritize these issues I would first look at the economy — get with the team, devise a plan and determine the best course of action and EXECUTE. The only way to address our lagging economy is to be aggressive with the policies, community partnership, being sensible with the money, and transparent with people.

Some Florida governments are requiring cloth masks be worn inside all public buildings where 6 feet of social distance is not possible between individuals. Should Okeechobee County make this mandatory? If not, why not? If so, how would you enforce it?

GOODBREAD: This has been discussed by the board and a few weeks ago we voted to make social distancing, plexiglass shields (where possible) and masks mandatory in all county buildings, however we did not extend this mandate to private

See GOODBREAD — Page 8

Elect Mark BRANDEL

COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 1

- **★** Fiscal Conservative
- ★ Proper Plan for Growth
- ★ Balanced Decision Making
- ★ Effective Code Enforcement
- **★** Business Friendly Government
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Okeechobee Resident for 42 Years. State Certified General Contractor for 24 Years. United States Army Veteran

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT PAID FOR AND APPROVED BY MARK BRANDEL, REPUBLICAN, FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 1



About Your Candidate

District 3

Demetre L. Riles is a cum laude graduate of Trident University where he obtained a Master's degree in Education Training and Development. In addition, the Okeechobee native holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Communication from Liberty University. Moreover, Riles selflessly served his country for 20 years in the United States Army where he retired as a Sergeant First Class.

During his tenure as a soldier,
Riles completed a Primary
Leadership Development
Course, Basic Non Commission
Officer Course, Army Recruiter
Course, Advance Non
Commission Officer Course,
Station Commander Course,
Guidance Counselor Operations
V7 Course, and Airborne

Recruiter Ring, and Glen E. Badge with 3 Sapphires, Gold Development Ribbon, Army Medals (6) Good Conduct into the prestigious Sergeant several awards and decoration, Morrell Award for Recruiting Service Ribbon, Gold Recruiter Medal, NCO Professional Star, Global War on Terrorism Service Ribbon with 1 Bronze which include the induction Consequently, he received Excellence. Medals, Medals, (6) Army Achievement Medal, (8) Army Commendation Join Service Commendation Meritorious Service Medal. The Audie Murphy Club, **National Defense**

With the love of Okeechobee in his heart, Riles, returned to his hometown with a desire affect change in his

point guard for the Okeechobee Brahmans. To further expand 1990-91-- when Riles was a make a positive impact on the Recognizing the importance teaching the fundamentals of academic assistance while mentors youth and provides non-profit organization that created "Chobee Nation" a his reach and influence Riles leadership of Riles, the team as the High School Boys Varsity youth he accepted the position community. In an effort, to the basketball. won its first district title since Basketball Coach. Under the

Recognizing the importance of service, Riles, continues to serve the use of the community as a coach and an advocate for change he strongly believes in exercising servant leadership and actively listens

to resident's concerns. An ardent leader and supporter of economic development and business friendly initiatives Riles aspires to expand his reach and serve his community as County Commissioner. A role that will afford him the opportunity to act and make decisions on behalf of the people.

Once elected, Riles will focus on community development, code economic development, code enforcement, and public safety. As an active member in his community and a prior servant to his country he seeks to represent all the people all the time as he genuinely cares about the welfare of his community.

Bryant challenges Robertson in clerk of court race

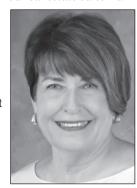
Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — Okeechobee County Clerk of Court Sharon Robertson, the incumbent, is challenged by former Judge Jerald D. "Jerry" Bryant in the 2020 election

Sharon Robertson

Sharon Robertson was born in the Louisiana Raulerson Hospital and is a lifelong resident of Okeechobee County. She is a graduate of Okeechobee High School and earned a Florida real estate salesman

license. She
earned certification from the
Florida Supreme
Court as a clerk
of the circuit
court, which included 360 credit
hours administered through
Florida State
University, and
has maintained
certification
through continu-



ing education each year.

From 1973 to 1983, she was employed by United Farm Agency/Wayne Fulford Real Estate, appraisals and bail bonds. From 1984 to 1995, she was employed by the Okeechobee County Clerk of the Circuit Court's Office and served as deputy clerk. She has served as clerk of court and comptroller since 1995.

Jerry Bryant

"Other than my time in the Marine Corps, attending college, and five years of employment out of the county, I have lived in Okeechobee since 1949," explained

Jerry Bryant. He graduated from Okeechobee High School in 1967. After completing his enlistment in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1973, he received an Associate of Arts degree in business administration in 1974. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in



accounting in 1978 from Florida Technological University (now called the University of Central Florida). He graduated from Stetson University College of Law in 1982.

Before earning his law degree, he was employed by Commercial Bank of Okeechobee and SunBanks of Florida.

His law career included work for the public defender's office, in private practice, as a Supreme Court certified circuit civil and family law mediator and as city attorney for the City of Okeechobee. Bryant was elected Okeechobee County judge in 2007 and served as a judge until 2019.

The candidates were asked to answer each of the following questions in 100 words or less.

Why are you the best candidate for this position?

ROBERTSON: I was hired by Clif Betts Jr. on March 1, 1984, and began my career with the clerk of circuit court. I was assigned to work in the county commission office as a deputy clerk. I was promoted to the position of circuit criminal supervisor in November 1989 by Gloria J. Ford. During this time, I was assigned as a court clerk for William L. Hendry, circuit judge. I became the supervisor over the Misdemeanor, Juvenile, Traffic and Child Support divisions, clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, and clerk to the Value Adjustment Board. I have served as your Okeechobee County clerk of court and comptroller for 25 years. I know my job from the bottom to the top. During this time, I have managed over 50 employees at one time, responsible for a state and county budget at a combined total of over \$2 million for FY 2019-20, have been a "watchdog" over the county funds, and have always been accessible to the citizens. I am responsible for the Information Technology Division for the clerk and the board of county commissioners departments, which include Fire Rescue, EOC, Road Department, Agri-Civic Center, Capital Projects, Budget and Finance, Public Works, Senior Services, Administrator and Deputy Administrator, Facilities Management Division, Human Resources, etc. I am an innovative, hardworking and an experienced clerk of the circuit court and comptroller who cares about Okeechobee County and its citizens. If elected, I will continue to serve my last four years as I have for the past 25 years.

BRYANT: The clerk's office needs a fresh set of eyes to review the entire operation and fresh ideas to improve them, making the office more efficient, cooperating fully with all county departments, and providing professional, knowledgeable service to its customers. I have experience and background in accounting, banking and financial reporting necessary to carry out the clerk's auditing and financial duties. My years as a lawyer and judge dealing with this office and at least 31 other clerk's offices in Florida provided insight into the needs of the office, for which I have goals and vision to address. I will bring the necessary leadership to establish a team effort for providing the public service our taxpayers

What (if anything) would you like to change about the daily operations of the Clerk's Office?

ROBERTSON: During my 25 years as your clerk, I have continually implemented changes to the daily operations of the clerk's office to improve efficiency and performance, being ever mindful of budget dollars. During this pandemic, I am now able to offer a virtual process to issue a marriage license. I have entered into an agreement with RealAuction to provide an online platform for the sale of tax deeds and foreclosures. I have also implemented a virtual process to witness court documents remotely. I have other changes that I would like to implement, but, due to

budget constraints, they are not possible at this time. For example, I would like to use in-court processing for county court but this would require two clerks in the courtroom instead of one clerk and the purchase of more hardware.

BRYANT: I would improve the efficiency of each of the 926 statutory responsibilities of the clerk. Effective and ongoing employee training and tools to do their jobs efficiently and timely should be implemented. Technologies have been available for years to enhance clerks' operations and should be put in place. Positive, can-do attitudes and teamwork should be required. New cost-saving and revenue producing programs should be explored, such as payment programs for delinquent fines and credit card rebate program for expenditures. Consulting with judges and county department heads for input and improvement ideas will develop a team spirit.

What do you see as the biggest problem currently facing the Clerk of Court's Office and how would you address it?

ROBERTSON: The biggest problem facing the Clerk of Court's Office is the lack of funding, especially with the state (court) budget. Currently, the clerks across the State of Florida are experiencing a cut of \$59.2 million from our budget to meet our expected revenues. I have already started taking steps to reduce my state and county budgets by placing a hiring freeze on vacant positions.

BRYANT: Leadership. As a Marine, I was meritoriously promoted to sergeant. As a law student, I was elected president of my legal fraternity. As a Kiwanian, I was elected club president and lieutenant governor of our region. As a banker, I was promoted to supervisory and officer positions. All of these were the result of my recognized leadership. As county judge, I took the initiative to establish the fifth Misdemeanor Drug Court in the state, followed by felony and juvenile drug courts. I have specific

ideas and the leadership skills for bringing the clerk's office into the 21st century. I believe I kept my promises as county judge and will strive to keep this promise as clerk of court.

How can the court system continue to adapt to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic?

ROBERTSON: The court system continues to adapt to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic by using Zoom for all non-essential court hearings. The court system has implemented social distancing and wearing of a face covering while in the Judicial Center. They have adopted best practices for the management of evidence in remote hearings in civil and family cases. The Supreme Court created a work group for continuity of court operations during this pandemic. They have also adopted a procedure for a defendant who is booked into a county jail on an out of county warrant to be processed and sentenced in the host county, thereby eliminating the need for the defendant to be transported. The clerk of circuit court, being the gateway to the court system, has played an integral role in assisting the court in implementing these best practices during this pandemic.

BRYANT: First, my hope and expectation are that the COVID-19 pandemic will resolve itself in the not too distant future and we can cautiously return to normal lives.

The "court system" is controlled by the Florida Supreme Court and the 19th Judicial Circuit Court administration, who dictate protective procedures for court operations. To the extent necessary, I would cooperate with them and interface clerk's precautionary measures with their directives. Regarding other clerk's responsibilities, I would enact and frequently review reasonable protective measures to assure the employees and the public are safe. However, those measures would include means to continue efficient, professional services to the public, law enforcement and the legal community.

Are you registered to vote?

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE – The primary election will be held Tuesday, Aug. 18. The last day to register to vote or to change your political party affiliation for this election is July 20.

To update your voter registration information, go online to voteokeechobee.com or call the Okeechobee County Supervisor of Elections Office at 863-763-4014.

To change your party affiliation, go line to registertovoteflorida.gov/home.

To use the Florida Voter Registration Application, you must print and sign the completed application and mail or deliver the completed application to: Okeechobee County Supervisor of Elections office at 304 NW Second Street, Room 144, Okeechobee, FL 34972.

Two of the Okeechobee County races

on the Aug. 18 ballot will be open primaries because the candidates for these races are all in the same political party. The Okeechobee County Commission District 1 and Okeechobee County Commission District 5 races will be open primaries. All registered voters may vote in these races.

The Supervisor of Elections race will have a closed primary because three canddiates are Republicans and two are "no party affiliation." Only those registered Republican may vote in this Republican primary race.

The general election will be held Nov. 3. The deadline to register to vote in the general election is Oct. 5.

As of July 9, Okeechobee County had 6,873 registered Democrats, 10,125 registered Republicans, and 4,488 registered to other parties or NPA.

Boon challenges Owens for county commission seat

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE – Incumbent Okeechobee County Commissioner Kelly Owens is challenged by Jack Boon for the District 5 seat.

Kelly Owens

Kelly Owens has lived in Okeechobee for 27 years. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in education from Florida Atlantic University with an emphasis on elementary education. Other certifications include Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and law en-



forcement officer, after attending the police academy at Palm Beach State College. She met the requirements and received the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) Certified County Commissioner distinction in 2017.

She has served as a county commissioner since in 2016. Past private business experience includes the position of vice president of a family-owned painting business and as a leadership services consultant advising governing boards in the areas of policy development, ethics, finance and Florida state law as it pertains to responsible governance. She was employed by the Okeechobee County schools 1994-2004 as a teacher and served on the Okeechobee County School Board during 2004-2012.

She also worked in law enforcement and fire/rescue prior to moving to Okeechobee.

Jack Boon

Jack D. Boon has lived in Okeechobee for 18 years. "My family and I moved here shortly after I retired from the U.S. Navy," he explained. He has a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies.



Boon joined the U.S.
Navy in 1980, after high school, and served until 2000. From 2000 to 2004, he taught school, two years of which were in Palm Beach County schools. In 2004 he entered into law enforcement and worked for the Okeechobee City Police Department until retiring in 2019. After re-

tirement, he started Boon Investigations and Protection Services, a private investigation business.

He has also been employed by the Okeechobee County School District for the last two years as the Okeechobee High School swim coach. He has been employed Okeechobee County as the coach of the Shockwaves Swim team for the last seven years.

The candidates were asked to answer each of the following questions in 100 words or less.

Why are you the best candidate for this position?

OWENS: I bring a unique blend of private business practice and public service experience to this position. The primary responsibilities of a county commissioner include providing for a balanced budget, setting policy and effectively lobbying at the state and federal levels for our community. I have 15 years of experience in budget and policy management and have built solid working connections at the local, state and federal levels. Finally, while serving as a fulltime county commissioner, I have earned the trust of our community by representing Okeechobee in a professional manner and being a voice of reason upon which our citizens can relv.

BOON: My years in public service make me uniquely qualified for the position of county commissioner. The military and teaching taught me time management, discipline and an appreciation of financial responsibility. Law enforcement taught me problem-solving and communications skills. I believe these combined experiences make me the best candidate for the position of county commissioner.

What, in your opinion, is the biggest problem facing Okeechobee County today? How would you address it?

OWENS: Our challenges include the lack of businesses to provide a solid tax base, failing infrastructure and an extremely difficult budget year based on impacts from COVID-19. The county commission is entering its third year of a successful public/private partnership aimed toward bringing businesses to our area and assisting existing businesses to expand. We're currently offering assistance to small businesses negatively

affected by recent shutdowns. Further, grant acquisitions to address infrastructure needs (roads, drainage) are a priority, which will make us more attractive to new businesses. Continuing to participate in public/private partnerships, improving the Airport Industrial Park, and aggressively seeking grant funding are effective ways to address these critical issues.

BOON: One of the problems facing Okeechobee is the lack of higher paying employment. I would do my best to entice companies to invest in Okeechobee County and bring industries that improve our standard of living.

Some Florida governments are requiring cloth masks be worn inside all public buildings where 6 feet of social distance is not possible between individuals. Should Okeechobee County make this mandatory? If not, why not? If so, how would you enforce it?

OWENS: Safety precautions currently in place for our county include the requirement that members of the public "must wear masks while inside any county office." The county, without necessitating the adoption of an emergency order, listed this as a reopening requirement. As such, we avoided putting our employees in the position of becoming mask police. Recently, masks were required to attend a public meeting in the commission chambers where social distancing was not possible, and attendees complied. Enforcement of emergency orders mandating masks causes a burden on law enforcement. Finally, the allowable exemptions list is long, vague and difficult to prove, practically rendering mask mandates useless

BOON: I do not believe that Okeechobee County should make masks mandatory. This is something that each person needs to decide for themselves. If a person is in a vulnerable category, they need to exercise appropriate safety precautions. We should make hand sanitation stations readily available to the public in all public buildings and encourage proper social distancing.

What should the county do to keep Okeechobee County residents safe during the COVID-19 pandemic?

OWENS: The county takes its lead from the recommendations/regulations issued by

the governor. Supporting the health department in their efforts to obtain and expand reliable, free testing will secure valuable data about current trends of the virus in our community. Education is a key component to safety — providing residents factual information regarding the best measures to stay safe such as social distancing, hand washing, and taking reasonable measures to avoid exposure. The recurring adoption of the local state of emergency allows the county to obtain and maintain necessary resources to provide for the safety of our citizens. Elected officials should lead by example and practice the CDC guidelines.

BOON: The media has ensured that we, as the public, only see the most disturbing numbers and shocking issues dealing with COVID-19. The truth is COVID-19 is here to stay; we cannot keep our doors and businesses closed and hope to weather this storm. The county's responsibility is to ensure that all public buildings are as safe as possible and to encourage businesses to do the same. We need to follow the guidelines set forth by the state and Health Department, while finding a balance that keeps our local economy solvent.

Do you follow social media? Should elected officials be held to a higher standard than the general public when it comes to making comments on social media? Why or why not?

OWENS: I have a County Commission Facebook page and Twitter account, which I use to keep our constituents apprised of important happenings in our community. I believe in our constitutional right to freedom of speech and I also believe an elected position is one of public trust. As such, I hold myself to a higher standard based on the belief that elected officials have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a professional, ethical manner at all times. I'm confident that my character, both in word (verbal and written) and deed, speaks for itself and has built both trust and respect between myself and our community.

BOON: Yes, I follow social media. I recognize that everyone is entitled to their opinion, even if it is different from mine; this includes public officials. However, public officials need to be mindful of what they post because the public tends to look at them for guidance and insight into this ever-changing world.



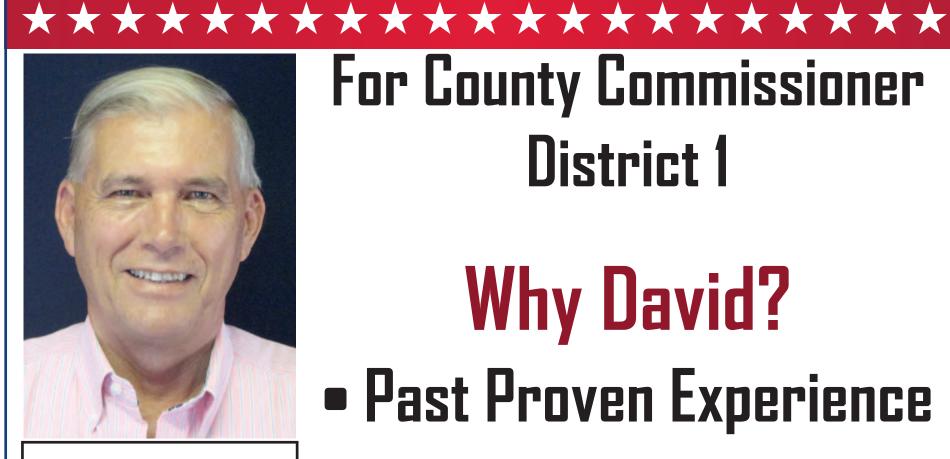


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Integrity 🖈 Experience 🖈 Commitment

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For County Commissioner District 1

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 - Fiscally Responsible
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Paid by David Hazellief, Republican, for County Commissioner

Brandel challenges Hazellief in commission race

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — In the Okeechobee County Commission District 1 race, incumbent David Hazellief is challenged by Mark Brandel.

David Hazellief

David Hazellief is a fourth-generation resident of Okeechobee County. He is a graduate of Okeechobee High School and Indian River State College. He is self employed in ranching and real estate. He has served



Mark Brandel

Commission.

Mark Brandel has lived in Okeechobee for 42 years. His education included "three years college interrupted by Uncle Sam." Since being honorably discharged from the Army in 1972, he has been in management positions for both national



and regional retail chains and became involved in managing a commercial tower construction company prior to becoming self-employed in 1996, as a state-certified general contractor.

The candidates were asked to answer each of the following questions in 100 words or less.

Why are you the best candidate for this position?

HAZELLIEF: Being in the community every day gives me the opportunity to hear issues from many different residents. It is important to take into account the concerns of people from all walks of life, from the different industries in our community. and every neighborhood in Okeechobee. The appreciative responses I receive from constituents who have contacted me regarding their issues and concerns and let me know that I am representing them well.

BRANDEL: I believe I bring a fresh perspective for the future of our county. After living here for 42 years and being actively involved in the county in both civic organizations and county appointed boards, I have had the opportunity to work with a broad cross section of the residents and have had many opportunities to see and hear their concerns and needs. I realize we cannot depend on current revenue sources to meet our service needs. By working with various organizations both at the state and national level such as the Department of Economic Opportunity, CareerSource and various regional organizations, for example, we can nurture relationships and develop means to increase revenue and help us achieve our goals.

What, in your opinion, is the biggest problem facing Okeechobee County today? How would you address it?

HAZELLIEF: The need for sustainable, higher wage middle-class employment opportunities. Okeechobee demonstrates how much we want our youth to be successful every year through an abundance of graduating senior scholarships. But what employment opportunities do we have for them in our community? This is why we, the current Board of County Commissioners, established the Okeechobee County **Economic Development Corporation** and have worked to secure millions of dollars in grant funding to improve our infrastructure so that we can attract new, sustainable industries. By continuing these efforts we will be able to offer our future generations employment and higher wage opportunities.

BRANDEL: Unfortunately, there is not one major issue facing us. There are a multitude of issues which affect our growth as well as the economic vitality of our residents. Challenges such as workforce development, access to capital, infrastructure needs (sewer, water, broadband), land use and environment issues. As a rural area, we have less internet access, fewer educational institutions, and less economic growth. We need organizations such as CareerSource to increase their presence here, allowing businesses to benefit from the value-added services they provide. We must continue to support OUA in Tallahassee to secure grants to improve our sewer system. As far as broadband, we need to work to develop public-private partnerships with telecommunication providers to secure those needs for our community. Working as a unit, the commission can influence change in each of these areas.

Some Florida governments are requiring cloth masks to be worn inside all public buildings where 6 feet of social distance is not possible between individuals. Should Okeechobee County make this mandatory? If not, why not? If so, how would you enforce it?

HAZELLIEF: The Okeechobee County Commission has already addressed the issue of face masks in public buildings: we highly recommend them to be worn and to practice social distancing. As to the wearing of masks becoming mandatory, I feel the commission will follow the governor as he has implemented the needed restrictions to bring Florida through this pandemic.

BRANDEL: It is becoming obvious that wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing is the most reliable method to controlling the spread of this virus. We should encourage our citizens to wear a mask while in public when social distancing is not viable. Many counties throughout the state are encouraging or making it a requirement to wear a mask in public. Enforcing such an order is not viable; rather, continued education of the public on the dangers of this virus should be the focus of the Health Department and the county. We as a county should follow the lead of the Florida health officials during the pandemic.

What should the county do to keep Okeechobee County residents safe during the COVID-19 pandemic?

HAZELLIEF: The county is supplying the protective equipment needed to the hospital, nursing homes, doctor's offices and other agencies that provide essential services to our local population. We also support the distribution of food through the food bank and other local agencies, and through the diligent efforts of the sheriff's office and our Senior Services Department, our senior community members continue to have hot meals delivered to them daily. Also, we have supported the school system to provide thousands of lunches and breakfasts to students who are no longer able to attend school due to COVID-19.

BRANDEL: As stated above, continued education on how to avoid the virus is one step. Making available additional testing opportunities for our residents is necessary, washing our hands along with keeping our hands away from our face, wearing a mask, if desired, and practicing social distancing is what guidance we should be giving our residents.

Do you follow social media? Should elected officials be held to a higher standard than the general public when it comes to making comments on social media? Why or why not?

HAZELLIEF: I utilize several avenues of social media professionally and realize they can be a powerful tool of information, both good and negative. As an elected official I feel a duty to maintain a level of professionalism that will accurately depict all the people I represent. I also find resolution is much more successful when I speak to people personally. This is why I primarily respond to people in person or via telephone with their concerns.

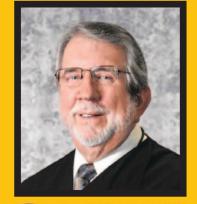
BRANDEL: Social media is a doubleedge sword. I believe elected officials should be held to a higher level of responsibility as well as a higher standard of professionalism, and we have a duty to practice these standards daily. Social media is a good tool to provide valid and accurate information to our citizens. Elected officials should not be making derogatory comments on social media (or elsewhere). Remember, you have been elected to office, and as an elected official you should be respectful to the office and the people who placed their faith in you.





ELECT

CLERK OF



VOTE NOVEMBER 3RD

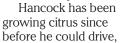
REPUBLICAN

Paid by Jerald D. Bryant, Republican for Clerk of Circuit Court and Comptroller

Hancock is candidate for Florida House of Representatives

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

Ned Hancock is a fifth generation citrus grower, a lifelong conservative, a proud Florida Gator, and a candidate for the Florida House of Representatives.





purchasing a 5-acre orange grove at the age of 14 with help from his grandfather. He learned valuable lessons at an early age and understands the importance of team work, that a man's word is his bond, and the value of a full day's work.

He said he is running for the State House because Tallahassee needs more people with a farmer's work ethic and Heartland values. He said he'll fight for education reforms that lead students to meaningful careers, push for economic development, and keep a watchful eye on the bottom line.

Former Governor Rick Scott appointed Hancock to serve on the Florida Citrus Commission in 2014, representing growers, processors, and packers. Prior to serving on the Citrus Commission, he was elected to the Highlands County School Board where he served from 1996-2012. Over the years, he has given his time to the Highlands

County Citrus Growers Association and numerous community organizations.

Hancock is president and owner of Hancock Citrus, a citrus care taking company that manages its family groves as well as those of clients. Ned and his wife Tammy live in Sebring where they raised three daughters, and can often be found spending time with their granddaughter, Clara Jean.

GOODBREAD

Continued From Page 2

property. When it comes to my views on government, I believe that is where our (the BOCC) authority ends. Anything more would be government overreach. I believe that both masks and social distancing should be practiced and it is the responsibility of the individual to employ these measures or the individual businesses to mandate them. Otherwise, it would take an executive order of the governor. The enforcement on the other hand would be a nightmare at best and an undue strain on our local law enforcement and take them away from true life and death emergencies.

RILES: CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain: (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. We have

to be consistent. Not everyone will like the idea of wearing a mask, but we have to operate in the best interest of public health at this point until further developments are made. Masks should be required in public places. This not a political pandemic, it's a global medical pandemic.

What should the county do to keep Okeechobee County residents safe during the COVID-19 pandemic?

GOODBREAD: We are trying to increase access to affordable testing through the state and the health department. The best ammunition is information! Information on the best procedures to employ to stay safe and the most up to date information on the status of the virus and the best ways to fight it. And don't forget to pray! The present BOCC also applied for and received a CARES Act Grant of \$1.8 million to help the small businesses and residents in our community survive the financial storm of the pandemic.

RILES: To keep our residents safe we must be transparent, honest about the numbers and proactive in our approach in reducing transmission. I would suggest weekly briefings to inform the public of our current status as it relates to the virus. I would also seek to provide education an relates to mask usage and disposal, hand washing, social distancing and proper use of gloves. In addition, added cleaning and sanitizing of public areas that reopen — hand sanitizing stations in public areas and garbage cans for proper glove and mask disposal.

Do you follow social media? Should elected officials be held to a higher standard than the general public when it comes to making comments on social media? Why or why not?

GOODBREAD: Yes, I follow social media. Social media is like a hammer ... it is a tool that can be very beneficial or very destructive, it just depends on how

you use it. Elected officials have to be very careful with their use of social media as not to run afoul of the Florida Sunshine Laws. Many times I have been asked to comment on an issue on social media and couldn't because of the Sunshine Law. I do my best to use social media to inform residents what is going on in the county, answer questions, advertise when our meetings are and share information during crisis such as hurricanes, storms, etc. Everyone on social media should be held to the same standard and it's the standard that our mothers taught us when we were children... "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." Wouldn't that be a breath of fresh air!

RILES: Public servants are required to be apolitical. Thus, they are held to a higher standard because of the office and should conduct themselves according to the standards of their office.



Five in race for Supervisor of Elections

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — Okeechobee Supervisor of Elections Diane Hagan is retiring at the end of her term this year, so there is no incumbent in the Okeechobee County elections supervisor race. Five candidates have qualified to run for this office: Melissa Arnold, Donna V. Howard, Faith Nielson, Lisa Rodriguez and Rodney Rucks. Two of the candidates — Nielson and Rodriguez — work in the Okeechobee County Supervisor of Elections Office as deputy supervisors of elections.

Melissa Arnold

Melissa Arnold is a native Floridian and has

lived in Okeechobee County for 26 years. She is a 1989 graduate of the University of Central Florida, earning a Bachelor of Science in business management. She has continued her education with classes at Florida Atlantic University and Indian River State



College. She is a small business owner, of Arnold Organic. Her previous employment includes teaching at Osceola Middle School and Indian River State College. She has also worked at Okeechobee Family Practice, Humana Healthcare Plans and Sandoz/Knoll Pharmaceuticals, in sales and physician education.

Donna Howard

Donna Howard is a 1989 graduate of Okeechobee High School. Her maiden name was Donna Peterson. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from the University of Central Florida, and holds a General Lines Insurance Agent – Florida Property & Casualty



Construction Risk Insurance Specialist (CRIS) designation from the International Risk Management Institute (IRMI).

Faith Nielson

Faith Nielson has lived in Okeechobee since 2002. She is a

graduate of Lower
Dauphin High School, and
attended Susquehanna
University. She owned an
interior design business,
then became a Realtor
in 2003. She has worked
as a substitute teacher
in Okeechobee County



schools. She began working an election worker and precinct clerk for the elections supervisor's office in 2006. She has been a deputy supervisor of elections since 2017.

Lisa Rodriguez

Lisa Rodriguez is a lifelong resident of Okeechobee County. She is a 1980 graduate of Okeechobee High School and attended Indian River State College. She has



worked in every Okeechobee County election since 1998. She has been a deputy supervisor of elections since 2014. Previous employment includes Okeechobee County Bank, Florida Power & Light, J. Neal Wright, DMD, Florida Community Health Centers, Pritchards & Associates and Okeechobee County School Board

Rodney Rucks

Rodney Rucks has lived in Okeechobee County for 47 years. He is a graduate of

Okeechobee High School, Indian River Public Safety Training Center Leadership Academy and Indian River Police Academy. He earned an Associate of Arts degree from Indian River State College and a Bachelor of Liberal Sciences degree from the University of Central Florida.



He has been employed by the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office since 2000. From 1998 to 1999, he was employed by the Okeechobee County Clerk's Office. Previous employers also include Pizza Heaven and Dry Lake Dairy.

Why are you the best candidate for this position?

ARNOLD: I am your clear choice if you want an experienced, innovative leader who has demonstrated the drive to take the Supervisor of Elections Office to the next level! My vision for this position includes an accurate accounting of the vote and subsequent reporting, a voter information table at all events and festivals, civics programs for our future voters, Florida Certified Election Professional (FCEP) staff certification and the addition of social media to create an informed citizenry with a voting mindset. If you share my vision of excellence, then vote for me for supervisor!

HOWARD: I am a hometown, educated, professional businesswoman who is already familiar with long-term recordkeeping, budgets, audits and statutes. I was appointed and am currently serving as a resident trustee on the City of Okeechobee's General Employee Pension Fund Board. I currently work as a claims manager for a large insurance brokerage firm and have been in their employment for over 15 years. I am smart, hardworking and believe that common sense is key. My goal is to increase voter education and voter participation, not influence who people vote for. That is why I chose to register as an NPA (No Party Affiliation) candidate. When asked, I identify as an American. I will strive to make the voting process easier to understand and as painless as possible for the hardworking citizens of Okeechobee.

NIELSON: As a current deputy supervisor of elections, I understand the challenges, demands and responsibilities of the office. I believe in exceptional customer service, honesty and integrity. I'm an educated leader in our community. I was married for 26 years to a USMC veteran,; however, in 2016, he was killed in an accident. I understand commitment and have a passion for hard work, customer service and attention to detail. I've got the

leadership ability and integrity to be your next supervisor of elections! I've learned a lot as an election worker since 2006. I helped campaign for our current supervisor and continue to work for her.

RODRIGUEZ: I have served as a deputy supervisor of elections since 2014 and have prepared for and worked in every election since 1998. This office demands an understanding of Florida Statutes, quality customer service, problem-solving skills, ethical practices and someone who will inspire confidence in the process. Elections today have ever-changing regulations, media attention and scrutiny that require a strong, experienced supervisor. My on-the-job experience and 22 years of election involvement make me uniquely qualified for this position. The voters of Okeechobee deserve experience.

RUCKS: Having worked 20 years in law enforcement, I have gained a respected rapport with our community and community leaders. This, along with having a bachelor's degree that emphasizes studies in public administration, criminal justice, legal studies and computer science, helps me be the best candidate for supervisor of elections of Okeechobee County. My degree also gives me the skills necessary to read and interpret state statutes, as well as the ability to keep up with future technology. Additionally, since graduating from the leadership academy, I am empowered to make the executive level decisions necessary for running to office.

What (if anything) would you like to change about the daily operation of the Supervisor of Elections Office?

"Voter outreach and education," Florida Statute 98.255, is an area in which I have the expertise to make significant changes to create the highest level of service possible. My vision is to make improvements that will more closely align our office with statute and the best practices of other Florida counties. I will:

ARNOLD: 1. Establish social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. 2. Participate in our local fair, festivals and expos to drive voter turnout, registrations and a voting mindset. 3. Require FCEP staff certification for all full-time employees. 4. Establish student council and civics partnerships in our schools.

HOWARD: Who will get to vote in the primary? When is the primary? What is a popular vote? Is it better to vote by mail? What this office needs is more education. If elected, I would like to go out to our schools so that we can educate our future voters. As for educating existing voters, I would strive to answer all calls and keep our existing website up-to-date. I want to initiate a SOE Quarterly Newsletter. It will contain things like basic definitions, important updates, voter statistics and our office's goals. I want to do the hard work for you by breaking down our very complicated voting system and translating it into layman's terms. My goal is to make you comfortable and confident when casting your vote. This office should do all it can to make your voice count.

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} \textbf{NIELSON:} I will upgrade our election \\ \end{tabular}$

technology and improve proficiency in elections management. I am a problem solver by nature, so I have the skills and drive needed to take on the intricate details of this position. I look forward to taking on the challenges. My goals for the office are: To expand our voter education and outreach through registration drives, social media, classroom education for local students; to make the office more easily accessible using social media; to continue to improve election staff skills and knowledge through training and education; and, to provide topnotch and friendly customer service to all voters of Okeechobee County with a highly efficient and competent office.

RODRIGUEZ: Currently by Florida Statute, 29 days before each election the books close to new registrations and party changes. In an effort to allow new voters additional time to register and current voters additional time to make party changes, I would extend office hours on book closing day.

RUCKS: As a newly elected supervisor, I would not make any immediate changes. It is my belief that a good leader would need to asses the daily operations before making any decisions. I would value the input of the current employees in order to make assessments regarding what is and is not working well in the day-to-day operations within the supervisor's office. Additionally, I would want to gain insight to the office morale. Once all of these assessments are complete, I would then move forward with a strategic plan to rebuild the office, but only if necessary.

How would you increase voter registration throughout the county?

ARNOLD: Increasing voter registration is a function of going where our citizens are, showing up and being available to the community. It is mutual respect and accountability, which to me is what leadership is all about; participation and showing interest in the diverse population within our community. Setting up a booth at the various activities, such as the Speckled Perch and Labor Day festivals, will increase voter registration opportunities for our citizens. This heightened activity level, coupled with advertising these events on social media, will let people know we will be available to them in a fun, neutral setting to answer their registration questions.

HOWARD: I read somewhere that the goal of every leader should be to communicate a thought in the smallest amount of words possible. If you use too many words, you lose your audience. If you hear nothing else ... your vote counts. And when your vote counts, you count. Our voting system is not perfect, but I challenge you to find something better than our democracy. If your vote did not count and the system was rigged, politicians would not spend so much time/money on trying to secure your vote. Our town is known for being patriotic. I would like to make casting your vote synonymous with showing your patriotism. Don't just tell your social media page your opinion ... express yourself by casting your vote.

Continued on Page 10

Continued From Page 9

NIELSON: To expand our voter education and outreach through registration drives at all community events. Utilizing social media to increase awareness of issues and the importance of having your voice heard through your vote. Increase classroom education for local students of all ages. Use voting equipment at local school elections to increase student involvement and awareness. I would also encourage the use of third party voter organizations and expanded cooperation with local partisan offices.

RODRIGUEZ: Conduct office-sponsored voter registration drives. Partner with local organizations and employers to provide new members, new employees and new homeowners with registration and election information; my way of taking the election office to the community.

RUCKS: To increase voter registration, I would set up booths during community events in order to register and educate new voters. I would also use these booths to recruit new volunteer poll workers. In addition to these informational booths, I would coordinate with the high school and IRSC in order to be able to go into those schools to educate and pre-register students.

How would you increase voter

ARNOLD: By attending fairs, festivals and other community events, we will send a clear message that we are accountable to our citizens. In return, this interaction reminds citizens of their civic duty to vote and be a part of our community's decision-making process. The addition of social

media will also be a vital component of my communication and outreach strategy to increase voter turnout.

HOWARD: Let's face it, in our society gimmicks work. 1) Stickers – We all make sure we get our "I Voted" Sticker on our way out the door. And many of us, glowing with pride, wear it all day long. 2) Food/ Treats – You may actually be more prone to vote, if free donuts were being distributed. 3) Patriotic Background Selfie Stations – Who among us can walk past a perfect photo opportunity just begging to be posted on our social media page?4) Social Media Challenges –We as Americans live for an opportunity to compete. Why not make it about casting your vote?

NIELSON: Increasing voter turnout can be fostered through voter education and awareness of community involvement. Speaking engagements, holding public classes on the use of voting equipment and how to vote are just two key pieces. Utilization of all local media outlets to grab the community's attention to the importance of voting. And opening honest dialogs with community leaders and reaching out to sectors of the community that remain silent and may not see the impact of not having their voice heard is also very important.

RODRIGUEZ: Use available media (social, newspaper and website) to educate voters in the voting process. I believe the more comfortable and informed a voter is with the process, the more likely they are to participate in elections. Conduct community outreach to inspire confidence in the election process.

RUCKS: It is important that voters feel comfortable with the voting experience. I believe if this happens, we can increase

voter turnout. I would make sure that sample ballots are sent out to the public well before election day so voters can be knowledgeable regarding candidates and issues. Because it is important for voters to know what to expect, on election day, sample ballots would also be available at each precinct for voters to look over prior to voting. I believe that a more efficient voting experience would also help to increase voter turnout. For working voters with time constraints, an Appointment/Express Lane could help to increase efficiency. When citizens are in the process of restoring their right to vote, our office would be available to assist them during this process.

Do you support efforts to increase use of vote by mail due to the COVID-19 virus? Why or why not?

ARNOLD: Yes and no. Florida Statute allows three ways to vote, which meets the needs of our citizens' diverse lifestyles and situations. If you are immuno-compromised, of a certain age, or concerned about your health, then it may be a good idea to vote by mail. However, if you prefer to vote early or on Election Day, you should vote by your desired method. It is best for each individual to have the right to choose. Promotion of all voting, by mail, early vote and Election Day, will be my priority as the increased promotion will drive a higher voting turnout.

HOWARD: Vote-by-mail is an important tool for many people who are at a higher risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus. However, make sure that you check with the SOE office to make sure your signature and all other personal information is current and up to date. If not, your ballot may be may be thrown out on suspicion of fraud and not be

counted. You have a better chance of your vote being counted if you attend in person.

NIELSON: Yes, I would encourage any voter who wants or needs to vote from home to order a ballot from our office. It is a good way to vote with many complex safeguards built-in. These ballots are opened and tabulated by the canvassing board at publicly held meetings. All voters will still have three ways to vote; vote by mail, early vote, or on Election Day at their precinct polling place. Social distancing and safety practices, for the safety of all voters and election staff, is of the utmost importance to

RODRIGUEZ: It is imperative that all registered voters have their voices heard. If increasing the option for the citizens of Okeechobee County to vote by mail is what it takes to make people feel safe during these times, then we have an obligation to meet that need. We have a responsibility to ensure all voting methods are available and as safe and secure as possible for all voters. I support the voter's right to choose the voting method that makes them feel the safest.

RUCKS: Vote by mail will be necessary for people that have tested positive for COVID-19. A person that is guarantined or symptomatic due to this fact would not be allowed in any public areas. Those who are asymptomatic should take advantage of early voting due to the fact there are less people voting during that time. Anyone who is voting by mail needs to update their voter signature card to ensure that their vote counts. If your voter registration signature doesn't match the privacy envelope signature when voting by mail, the vote would not be counted. It is important that voters know that they need to regularly update their signature card.

Su Supervisora de Elecciones quiere saber:

¿Está Listo para las Elecciones?

¿Está registrado para votar?

- ¿Ha cambiado su dirección *
 o su nombre?
- ¿Quiere recibir su papeleta por correo?
- ¿Tiene que poner su firma al día?
- ¿Quiere poner al día su parti do político?

Si respondió sí a alguna de estas preguntas, favor de comunicarse con la oficina de Elecciones al 863-763-4014 o visite nuestro sitio web www.voteokeechobee.com

IMPORTANTE: Florida es un estado de primarias cerradas.

Un votante tiene que estar registrado con el mismo partido que el candidato por el cual quieren votar en una elección primaria.

Calendario Electoral del 2020

Elección Primaria: 18 de agosto Elección General: 3 de noviembre

Your Supervisor of Elections wants to know:

Are You Election Ready?

Are You Registered to Vote?

Has Your Name or Address Changed?

- Would You Like to Receive a Ballot by Mail?
- Do You Need to Update Your Signature?
- Would You Like to Update Your Party Affliation?
- If you answered <u>yes</u>
 to any of these
 questions,
 - please contact the
 - Elections office at 863,763,4014
 - or visit our website at
 - www.voteokeechobee.com

IMPORTANT: Florida is a Closed Primary State.

A voter must be registered with the same party affiliation of the candidate(s) they wish to vote for in a primary election.

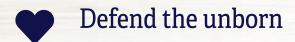
2020 Election Schedule

Primary Election: August 18 General Election: November 3

Thank you, Diane Hagan, Supervisor of Elections $\star\star\star\star\star$



Ned Hancock will:





Defend our Constitutional Freedoms

Support the rule of law and the men and women in law enforcement

Support President Trump

Republican Primary is Aug.18, 2020

www.VoteNedHancock.com f NedHancockFL Med@VoteNedHancock.com

Paid by J. Ned Hancock, Republican, for State House, District 55.





Republican for State House



for SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

"Experience Speaks For Itself"

☆ Current Deputy Supervisor of Elections

 \bigstar I am the only Republican candidate with over 20 years experience in business and elections

I'm asking for your vote.

• Primary Election: August 18, 2020

General Election: November 3, 2020

Please visit my website for more information:

ElectFaithNielson.com

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT PAID FOR AND APPROVED BY FAITH NIELSON, REPUBLICAN, FOR SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS