

# CONEJO VALLEY EXAMINER

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May, 2002

## Local Election Heats up with Plans for Debate Wissot vs. Pavley: The Battle Begins

*by Joe Testa*

The battle for the 41<sup>st</sup> Assembly District race has started. While the district includes Calabasas, Agoura, Agoura Hills and Westlake Village and excludes the remainder of the Conejo Valley, the outcome of the race will directly affect everyone in California. Members of the State Assembly make laws that apply to all of us and influence both the local and state economy. Both candidates have agreed to attend a debate to be sponsored by the Conejo Valley Examiner later this year. Interviews with the incumbent, Fran Pavley and the challenger, Michael Wissot follow.

**Q:** What do you consider to be the top three issues of the November election?

**Wissot:** Above all the issues, the primary theme of this election will be Leadership Over Politics. Do we want bureaucrats in Sacramento that care more about special interests than the needs of local residents? Do we want to maintain the definition and image of a state legislator as handling a narrow agenda just to be politically expedient? The greatest challenge in electing better leaders to public office is raising the expectation bar for each individual office. If elected officials are going to talk about holding others accountable, then shouldn't residents hold their elected officials accountable? In this election let us insist on a better way. It starts by highlighting what the voters, rather than the politicians, have to say about which issues take priority.

Providing the highest quality of education should be an eternal pursuit in this country. What amazes me is when politicians and unions forget the most important ingredient - putting kids first. Another critical issue will be how we plan to restore the strength of our local economy by providing better fiscal management of your tax dollars. We can start this process by eliminating some of the grossly negligent pork-barrel spending. This election will also give us an opportunity to address public safety measures, so that we can empower our communities and strengthen our local law enforcement.

**Pavley:** I expect that they will be the three issues that I have been working on continuously since being elected to the legislature: education, the state budget, and preserving our quality of life.

Improving the quality of education in our public schools has always been, and remains, my top priority. It is also vital to California's economy. Being a middle school teacher gave me first-hand experience, and as a member of the Assembly Education Committee, I am working on such issues affecting our children as retaining quality teachers and investing in early childhood education.

California is faced with an estimated \$17 billion budget shortfall attributable to four main reasons: 1) loss of personal income due to the stock market and capital gains; 2) tax credits and reduction of the vehicle license fee last year that cost the state billions of dollars; 3) investment in our public schools, including class size reduction, accountability, testing, and teacher training; and 4) growth in our state of roughly 500,000 people every year. We are not alone. Over 30 states face similar budgetary

problems. Unlike the federal government, California must submit a balanced budget. Significant cuts will have to be made, and there's no way around that. It will be a tremendous challenge.

**Q:** What is your greatest criticism of your opponent?

**Wissot:** From a personal standpoint, I believe that my opponent cares as much as I do about education, the environment, fiscal management, transportation, public safety, and many other issues. The problem is that her ideas are inherently flawed and antiquated. This election is not about a Republican versus a Democrat, nor is it about who has the most political credentials. It's entirely about a one-dimensional candidate versus a leader who will focus on the issues that our community feels are most important. My opponent has spent the majority of the legislative calendar focusing on the environment. I have always been a keen conservationist and believe that our environmental policies must be steadfast. But from the time I've spent listening to residents throughout our district, they have indicated to me that there are a lot of other issues on which we should be focusing our attention. If you feel that there is only one issue that represents your needs and the needs of your family, then we can keep the course of "politics as usual." But if you are a firm believer in representative democracy and want to have a State Assemblyman who will fulfill the entire slate of responsibilities, then I will be honored to represent you in Sacramento and will do so with energy and integrity.

**Pavley:** I don't know him and have only seen him briefly at two events. I will be running a positive campaign, and presenting the voters with my own experience, record of accomplishments, and qualifications to serve in the State Assembly. I trust that he will do the same.

**Q:** Are you willing to debate your opponent at a public candidates' forum to be sponsored by the Conejo Valley Examiner?

**Wissot:** I am willing, able, and excited to debate my opponent at any public candidates' forum, so that residents can truly feel that this is their government and constitution.

**Pavley:** Certainly.

*This article appeared in the Conejo Valley Examiner in May 2002.*