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# Editorial: In historic Contra Costa race, elect Connelly elections chief

For the first time, no candidate for county clerk-recorder will have the advantage of incumbency



Kristin Braun Connelly has had her eye on the office for years and has built a strong campaign of bipartisan support.

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By **EAST BAY TIMES EDITORIAL** |

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For the first time in Contra Costa history, no candidate for county clerk-recorder will have the advantage of incumbency.

Deborah Cooper, appointed in 2019 to fill out the current term, plans to retire at the end of it. So the race is wide open. Four candidates are vying to replace her, to assume the clerk job of running Contra Costa's elections and the recorder responsibilities for legal filings such as property deeds and marriage licenses.

After the ignominious resignation in 2019 of the last elected clerk-recorder, Joe Canciamilla — who ended up pleading guilty [to felony charges](#) after illegally spending at least \$130,529 of campaign funds — the Clerk-Recorder Office needs a leader of high integrity.

And at a time when false claims about widespread voter fraud have led to partisan challenges of our election system and threats to officials, it's more critical than ever that voters pick someone who can bridge political divides and provide the necessary managerial oversight.

The standout candidate who best meets those criteria is Kristin Braun Connelly, who has had her eye on the office for years and has built a strong campaign of bipartisan support.

A former attorney who serves on the board of the Acalanes Union High School District, Connelly works as president and CEO of the East Bay Leadership Council, which brings together public- and private-sector leaders to boost the region's economy and quality of life.

As for the three other candidates for the job overseeing about 82 employees and a \$26.5 million budget: Political consultant and Pinole Councilman Devin Murphy has good ideas about voter outreach but lacks the needed managerial experience and is too partisan for the job; Vicki Gordon, a former Contra Costa Community College District trustee, lacks the needed managerial experience; and Nick Spinner, a county systems and software engineer, lacks managerial experience and familiarity with the office.

This is a historic election for a post that usually slips under the public radar.

Since the positions of clerk and recorder were merged in 1957, the route to becoming Contra Costa's clerk-recorder has gone through the county Board of Supervisors. Only five people — Walter Paasch, James R. Olsson, Steve Weir, Canciamilla and Cooper — have held the job.



The first four either resigned, retired or died in office. Each time, that left county supervisors to fill the vacancy — and gave the new appointee the advantage of incumbency when the next election rolled around.

What makes this year different is that Cooper, appointed to finish Canciamilla's term, plans to serve it out and then retire at the end of this year. That means voters will pick her replacement, not county supervisors.

They should elect Kristin Braun Connelly.

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