

2004 gay marriage move put Multnomah County on 'right side of history', former Chairwoman Diane Linn says



Former County Chairwoman Diane Linn, (from left) poses with former commissioners Maria Rojo de Steffey, Lisa Naito and Serena Cruz Walsh during a celebration Monday at the Melody Ballroom. (Laura Gunderson/ The Oregonian)



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Amid the crowd of couples, advocates and current elected officials attending same-sex weddings at the Melody Ballroom Monday afternoon, four former Multnomah County commissioners cheered the end of [a decade-long battle](#).

Judge Michael McShane's ruling to overturn Oregon's ban on gay marriage reaffirmed a decision former Chairwoman Diane Linn and commissioners Lisa Naito, Serena Cruz Walsh and Maria Rojo de Steffey made 10 years ago. Together, they [hatched the plan in 2004](#) to legally recognize gay marriages in Multnomah County.

GAY MARRIAGE

"It was our belief then that it was illegitimate to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation," Cruz Walsh said Monday.

More than 3,000 people obtained marriage licenses at the county building before Oregon voters approved a constitutional amendment eight months later, banning gay marriage in Oregon. The Oregon Supreme Court invalidated the Multnomah County marriages on the grounds that a county ordinance could not overrule state law.

"My last marriage memory is of rights being taken away," Cruz Walsh said Monday. "Today was a good day."

Linn said Monday's decision puts her and her fellow commissioners "on the right side of history."

At the time, the commissioners' decision wasn't without controversy.

Naito and Cruz Walsh, after being approached by gay rights advocates about allowing gay people to marry, took the idea to Linn and Rojo de Steffey. The group spent five weeks talking strategy and legal issues.

The group contacted then-County Attorney Agnes Sowle, who issued a legal opinion that refusing marriage to gay couples violated the Oregon constitution.

Commissioner Lonnie Roberts, the lone opponent of gay marriage on the county board at the time, was not included in the conversations.

Linn used her executive authority to require the county to start issuing marriage licenses in March 2004, without holding a board vote on the matter.

When the news came out, a backlash ensued.

During some 10 hours of hearings in the days after Linn's decision, gay marriage opponents vocally criticized it. Naito said commissioners received threats to their families.

"There were those who basically said fire and brimstone will rain upon our heads," she said.

Linn, while defending the move on gay marriage, apologized publicly for the behind-the-scenes decision-making.

But then Rojo de Steffey, Cruz Walsh and Naito became angry that Linn had left them out of the decision to apologize. They turned against her, and the partnership began to unravel. Linn would eventually brand Naito, Cruz and Rojo de Steffey the "mean girls" of the county board, commencing an era of board infighting ensued.

On Monday, the four women posed for photographs together at the **Melody wedding festivities**.

Naito and her colleagues shrugged off the controversy surrounding their 2004 decision. Linn put it this way: "If you're going to get in the kitchen, you're going to have to stand some heat."

Looking back, Linn said she knew that the 2004 decision wouldn't stick for long. Proponents of the Defense of Marriage act were already organizing across the country and in Oregon to get gay marriage bans on the November ballot.

[Orlando nightclub shooting: Another ho-hum day in America? \(Letters to the Editor\)](#)

[Oregon couple announces long-awaited wedding with adorably cheesy 'Frozen' video](#)

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"We knew that was in the offing," Linn said. "It was going to happen. We wanted to do a proactive counter-attempt to show this affection between real people and families and children living among us, and elderly people who had been together their whole lives, waiting to get married."

Current Multnomah County Chairwoman Marissa Madrigal resumed the process on Monday. She officiated two weddings in the hours after Judge McShane's decision made marriage a constitutional right to all Oregon adults.

"It was the right thing to do 10 years ago, and it's the right thing today," she said of the judge's ruling. "I think, as a society, we're in a much better, much more loving place."

--Kelly House

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Progressives capture City Hall and Council, fending off Chevron money



Tom Butt (center), with his wife and campaign manager, reacts as unofficial election results show him winning Richmond's mayoral seat. (Photo by Bonnie Chan)

Richmond Confidential

By [Alice Kantor](#) Posted November 5, 2014 1:51 am

In a surprise victory, Tom Butt was elected Richmond Mayor tonight after a multimillion-dollar campaign by the Chevron Corporation failed to defeat Butt or elect a slate of candidates the giant oil company had supported.

According to tallies as of Wednesday morning, Butt received 51.43 percent of votes, beating his nearest opponent Nat Bates, whose campaign was supported by Chevron, by 16 points.

An ecstatic Butt, speaking from his headquarters, praised his campaign workers and marveled at the unexpected margin of victory: "I've never had such a bunch of people who are dedicated and worked so hard. It's far away above anything that I've ever experienced."

Butt's election also helped bring victory to a slate of progressive candidates including Jovanka Beckles, Gayle McLaughlin and Eduardo Martinez, who each won a seat on the City Council.

The progressives' sweep of city hall and the city council further means they'll be able to fill Butt's vacated council seat.

A number of observers said that Chevron's aggressive spending may have backfired.

Uche Uwahemu, who ran third in the mayoral race, said, "The election was a referendum on Chevron, and the people obviously made it clear they did not appreciate the unnecessary spending by Chevron, so they took it out on the rest of the candidates."

A cheer went up at Butt headquarters when his victory was announced, and his supporters hugged and danced to Butt's rallying song, "The Arkansas Rattlesnake."

Butt and the other progressive candidates were considered underdogs in an aggressively fought campaign that involved hundred of thousands of dollars spent against them on billboards, flyers and even a mobile screen. Butt's comparatively shoestring campaign spent about \$58,000. Chevron spending, which totaled over \$3 million, attracted national attention to Richmond, a city of 107,000 people.

Voter turnout was low, with an estimated 11,000 people casting ballots. Results are unofficial as more votes are being counted.

After the polls closed at 8pm Tuesday evening and results started coming in, Butt opened up a lead over Nat Bates and held that lead throughout the evening.

"It's a bloodbath, obviously," said Bates after the fourth round of results were out. "I think citizens will eventually suffer."

Bates will retain his seat as a City Council member.

Butt's campaign manager, Alex Knox, said, "I didn't expect a full slate victory, but it's a clear statement. I hope it means that this kind of money won't be spent the same way again, that maybe it will change how corporations buy elections."

Chevron's outlay in the campaign amounted to about \$281 per voter, based on tonight's results.

Progressive candidates in Richmond have gained ground in recent years, embarking on a series of progressive initiatives, including banning plastic bags, increasing bicycle lanes and green-lighting marijuana dispensaries.

Asked about his priorities if elected as mayor, Butt said, "My top priority is to continue the trend towards increasing the quality of life for all in Richmond, making it safer, cleaner, greener, healthier and more prosperous equitably."

In a statement released today a Chevron spokesman said; "The voters have spoken, and Chevron will work hard to find common ground with this city council to push for sound policies that allow Richmond to grow and thrive. This city, which we have proudly called home for more than a century, has far more opportunities than challenges. The council should remain focused on all those opportunities, and Chevron will continue to work to create economic opportunities for all residents."

David Thigpen contributed to this article.

Chevron money rains down on Richmond election

San Jose Mercury News

By Jennifer Baires
of the Contra Costa Times

Posted: 10/31/2014 09:14:46 AM PDT

Chevron's stake in Richmond contests

Chevron has contributed mightily to the Moving Forward political action committees to support or oppose several candidates running for mayor and City Council in Richmond, where the oil giant operates a major refinery. The money has been spent on mailers, door hangers, billboards and electronic and other advertising.

Campaign for or against	Moving Forward PAC spending*	Candidates' own campaign spending**
Nat Bates (mayor)	\$456,286	\$19,624
Donna Powers	339,470	23,598
Against Gayle McLaughlin	334,542	48,676
Against Eduardo Martinez	286,756	48,773
Against Jovanka Beckles	286,671	56,371
Charles Ramsey	260,256	15,623
Al Martinez	35,550	1,780

*Cumulative campaign finance filings from Aug. 27 through Oct. 23

**Campaign expenditures through Oct. 18

Source: Campaign disclosure forms, city of Richmond

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

RICHMOND -- With its mighty East Bay refinery under attack from environmentally minded politicians here, Chevron is pouring staggering sums of money into this blue-collar town's local election -- raising eyebrows across the nation and questions about the role global corporations should play in local politics.

Council candidates who accept matching funds in this city of 107,000 people are limited to raising \$65,000 for their election campaigns. Chevron has contributed \$3 million to three local political action committees, roughly \$72 per registered voter. That is about seven times the amount tech billionaire Meg Whitman spent per voter on a losing 2010 governor's race that was the most expensive nonpresidential race in U.S. history. The investment -- more than double Chevron's then-record-breaking \$1.6 million spending on the last election cycle -- reflects the company's strained relationship with a community where it was historically embraced as an economic engine before a slate of progressives rose to prominence, including a Green Party mayor. "I can't even point to a race where something like this is happening," said Thad Kousser, a political-science professor at UC San Diego who specializes in California state politics and elections. Kousser added that because campaign expenditure laws vary by state and city, it's impossible to compare the numbers and definitively say whether, as many have suggested, this is the most money spent by a company in a local election.

"It's not at all unusual for businesses that have a lot at stake in elections to spend money; it's the scale of the donations. You rarely see the kind of money that people spend in U.S. Senate campaigns all coming from one source, on one political side, in a city as small as Richmond." The spending -- which can be seen in mammoth billboards, stuffed mailboxes and relentless online and television commercials -- comes as the company battles a lawsuit by the city over damages stemming from a major 2012 fire at its 3,000-acre refinery that sent thousands of nearby residents to hospitals. It also comes after eight years of city leadership by Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, who has protested outside the refinery's front gates and battled the city's largest taxpayer and employer at every turn. For the company's part, spokesman Braden Reddall defended the enormity of Chevron's contributions.

"The amount of money we spend to inform voters must be viewed in the context of the more than \$500 million in local taxes, social investment and spending on local vendors from Chevron over the past five years, and our \$90 million social and environmental commitment to the city that will follow once our \$1 billion refinery modernization is

allowed to proceed," he wrote in an email.

The result of all that money flowing from Chevron's coffers is a sophisticated campaign that promotes its preferred candidates -- Nat Bates, Charles Ramsey, Al Martinez and Donna Powers -- while attacking a slate of candidates -- McLaughlin, Jovanka Beckles and Eduardo Martinez -- supported by a grass roots political activist organization known as the Richmond Progressive Alliance.

The campaign mailers and advertisements, sent out by the Chevron-backed Moving Forward committees, make no mention of the refinery or the candidates' positions toward it. Instead, they largely focus on the travel habits, attendance records and leadership qualities of the people they oppose, often in sharply critical terms.

Billboards and mailers portray McLaughlin, who is running for City Council after being termed out as mayor, as a jet-setter who spent her tenure traveling the world, including lobbying for the release of Cuban spies, while ignoring the city she leads. Mailers call Eduardo Martinez a "radical anarchist" and place his face on milk cartons and missing pet signs as a criticism of his attendance on city and school district boards; and a television commercial done in the style of the once-popular reality show "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" lambastes Beckles for expensive dinners (including a \$39 lamb chop) while traveling on city-supported trips.

On every advertisement, the only mention of Chevron is tacked onto the name of the PAC that paid for it, some variation of "Moving Forward, a coalition of labor unions, small businesses, public safety and firefighters associations. Major Funding by Chevron, an energy provider."

Alex Doniach, a spokeswoman for Moving Forward and an employee at the public relations firm Singer Associates, Inc., stressed that Moving Forward is a coalition and that there is not a minimum contribution required to be part of the alliance. But, according to the most recent campaign disclosure statements filed with the city clerk, 99.7 percent of contributions came from Chevron.

Last week, a group of residents, activists and local union members gathered out front of City Hall to protest Chevron's war chest and announce they were fighting the company's influence with their own political action committee, Richmond Working Families.

"We need to stand up against corporate money flowing freely into our election," said Stacey Wilborn, a city employee, during the committee's news conference. "We need to keep Richmond a city that is here for its citizens, not its corporations."

Other speakers echoed Wilborn's remarks, saying they were tired of what they saw as an attempt by Chevron to buy their vote. "Our election is not for sale," the two dozen attendees chanted in unison at the end of the conference.

Doniach said the goal of the PAC is simply to educate voters.

"Moving Forward believes this is an important election for Richmond's future," she said. "There are a lot of candidates up for election, and we're committed to communicating factual information to Richmond voters so they can make an informed decision on Election Day.

"We really believe Richmond's future is at stake here," she added, without elaborating on what exactly is at stake.

When asked for specific examples of why the committee backs certain candidates, Doniach said, "We are supporting candidates who we believe are best suited to improve the local economy."

What the advertising blitz might mean for the candidates Chevron supports won't be determined until Election Day, but experts warn that more money doesn't always mean more votes.

"Americans tend to be bipolar in their approach to large amounts of money in that they both value it and they're very skeptical of it," said Justin Levitt, a professor of constitutional law and the law of democracy at Loyola Law School.

"It turns out that spending lots of money buys you a seat at the table for sure," he said. "It raises the prominence of candidates, but it turns out it doesn't usually buy victory. At least where people are concentrating."

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