

Redevelopment foes may get a new friend in Norby

OC supervisor in runoff for state Assembly seat

By Mike Sprague, Staff Writer

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Chris Norby (Courtesy Photo)

It looks like opponents of redevelopment in California will have a new friend in the state Assembly.

Orange County Supervisor Chris Norby won the primary to fill the North Orange County seat that includes a small part of La Habra, formerly held by Assemblyman Mike Duvall, R-Yorba Linda.

And Norby, 59, a Fullerton Republican, is

expected to win the Jan. 12 runoff in the 72nd District - considered a Republican stronghold.

Norby, who garnered 37 percent of the vote, will face Democrat John MacMurray, a La Habra teacher who received 27 percent and Green Party candidate Jane Rands of Fullerton, who received nearly 3 percent.

Republicans Linda Ackerman and Richard Faher received 20 percent and 13 percent of the vote. Turnout on Tuesday was about 17 percent.

A critic of redevelopment, Norby founded Municipal Officials for Redevelopment Reform and in his book, "Redevelopment: The Unknown Government" analyzed what he calls the distortions caused by "fiscalization" of land use, sales tax competition and eminent domain abuse.

"I think fixing redevelopment is part of fixing the state's fiscal mess," Norby said. "We've got a Byzantine mess of how we fund public services. (Redevelopment) hijacks money that would normally go for public services."

Redevelopment agencies receive their revenue from increases in property taxes, resulting from higher assessed values. Since that increase normally would go to the county or schools, a redevelopment project area causes a loss of tax revenues to the county.

An example of this will be when the now-closed Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility in Whittier is sold and goes on the tax rolls. Since

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no property tax is now assessed, all of the money that is paid will go to the Whittier Redevelopment Agency.

But John Shirey, executive director of the California Redevelopment Association, said he doesn't think that Norby will be successful in continuing his

Los Angeles Stadium project

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anti-redevelopment fight.

"It's not a partisan issue and if he continues to adhere to his anti-redevelopment position, he'll likely be a minority within the minority," Shirey said.

Shirey said Norby should take a broader view and realize that redevelopment is a good thing for the economy.

"Redevelopment is needed more than ever for its ability to put people to work and address local community needs," Shirey said.

Although a Republican, Norby said he believes he can work with Democrats to change the law.

"I've stood on a podium with (Reps.) Tom McClintock (R-Rocklin) and Maxine Waters (R-Los Angeles) in our struggle to curb eminent domain abuse," Norby said.

Pasadena attorney Chris Sutton, who has represented property owners and others who have fought redevelopment agencies and eminent domain, said Norby's impending election will be "a great thing."

"I hope he's going to be able to introduce some bills that get bipartisan support over financial aspects (of redevelopment) and over property rights," Sutton said.

Sutton said he would like Norby to introduce legislation that would seek voter approval of redevelopment bond issues, check the amount of indebtedness and make it more difficult for agencies to condemn private property.

Norby also was a vocal opponent of plans for a new professional football stadium in Industry.

"My concern was the public dollars spent on that," he said. "The NFL is a private business and should be funded by private money."

Industry officials have said the stadium is going to be paid for privately.

But Norby said he has no intention of challenging the law that grants billionaire

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Edward Roski Jr.'s proposed 75,000-seat Los Angeles Stadium complex final environmental approval by rendering a legal challenge against it moot.

Industry Mayor Dave Perez said he's not worried about Norby going to Sacramento.

"As far as him winning the election, I wish him well," Perez said. "But he'll be in a governing body with one voice and one vote."

The need for an election was created when Duvall resigned, saying the uproar was too much over the recording of a legislative hearing in July.

He was heard bragging about his alleged affair with a lobbyist, who he said is 18 years his junior, and another woman.

Norby has served on the Orange County Board of Supervisors since 2002. He was on the Fullerton City Council from 1984-2002.

He has been married four times and lives in his Fullerton home of 25 years with his wife, Martha, and their children Iris, Gary and Ana, and with his son, Alex, now a sophomore at USC.

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