



## **San Diego Association Helps its REALTOR®-Champions Win Most Votes in Jungle Primary – NAR Independent Expenditure Grant Makes the Difference**

It's a jungle out there in San Diego; in fact, in all of California, where the 'Jungle Primary System' applies.

In the jungle system, all candidates are in the first round which, technically, is a non-partisan race, although candidates can accept endorsements. Fifty percent plus one vote wins the race outright. If no one gets over 50 percent of the vote, the top two candidates go to a run-off in the general November election.

This year, the San Diego Association of REALTORS® (SDAR) endorsed three candidates, and with Independent Expenditure funding from the National Association of REALTORS®, it created targeted direct mailings for all three elections. On June 12, each of the three REALTOR® candidates had garnered the most votes: Scott Sherman won a seat on the San Diego City Council outright with 50 percent plus 39 votes; Ray Ellis will go to a run-off for a seat on the City Council; and Steve Danon will compete in a run-off for the office of San Diego County Supervisor.

Jordan Marks, the Government Affairs Director of San Diego's 12,000-member association, explains why the City Council race, in particular, was so important this year: "Every 10 years with the new U.S. Census, the city of San Diego is re-districted; this year, a new seat was added to the Council. The existing Council make-up had not been so business-friendly. With the election of one and possibly two REALTOR® champions who are small business owners themselves and understand our industry's issues, we are tipping the balance toward a Council that will work together with the business community to reach mutual goals, one that will be a real stake-holder in San Diego's economic future. This election represents a great opportunity to change the lay of the land.

The city of San Diego's election rules are especially restrictive, and prohibit SDAR's RPAC from donating directly to candidates. That's where Independent Expenditure funding comes in. "It allows us to help candidates – by working not *with* them, but *for* them, separately, on their behalf," explains Marks. "Without the candidate's knowledge that we're even engaged, we figure out where his campaign's weak spots may be, and with funding like the nearly \$100,000 grant we received from NAR, we can develop and target a direct mail piece that can help turn the tide of the campaign. San Diego is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest city in the country – it's expensive to communicate with our voting public – so efforts like this are key, especially in close races."

The full support of the SDAR leadership in San Diego also enabled the success of these three 'covert' campaigns. "In these independent expenditure efforts, the fewer people



involved, the better, in order to maintain the firewall between the association and the campaign – which is not supposed to know about it,” says Marks.

Winning this primary effectively saved new Council member Scott Sherman \$600,000, as he was spared from having to compete in the general election. “It was a cost-effective effort for us, too, allowing us to spread our own resources around elsewhere,” notes Marks.

“And when a newly elected candidate walks up to you after the election holding your mailer and saying ‘Thank you! This did it!’ -- that takes your relationship to a whole new level. The support from NAR effectively transformed our role from supporter-on-the-sidelines to that of an active leader in San Diego politics.”

“Working with NAR was practically a turn-key process, too,” he continues. “Besides their tremendously helpful and responsive staff, they have this incredible tool-belt of resources – their legal team made sure we were compliant; they have top consultants for polling and strategy development; and design, print, and mailing vendors.”

In a jungle, it’s good to have powerful and savvy friends.

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