



# East County Democratic Club

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### COPS TO POLICE LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

**The East County Democratic Club announces formation of Citizens' Oversight Panels (COPS).  
Seats on local panels will be filled at elections meeting on January 28, 2007;  
Applications accepted until January 26, 2007**

**EL CAJON, CA, January 6, 2007** -- Citizens' Oversight Panels (COPs) are being organized to police all local boards, councils, planning groups, and other governmental bodies and officials. Citizens are encouraged to apply for seats on these panels to oversee governmental operations and decisions. Applications will be accepted through January 26, 2007; elections will be held on January 28, 2007 at 3:30pm at the community room of the Rancho San Diego Library. The library is located at 11555 Via Rancho San Diego, El Cajon, 92019

“The gerrymandered districts in most areas of the country results in little, if any, turnover of elected officials,” commented Raymond Lutz, President of the East County Democratic Club, and convener of the COPs elections meeting. “Local bodies rarely give incumbents the boot, and this is not healthy. Although the vast majority of decisions will wind up the same by any reasonable official from any party, we are worried about those few questionable votes, when the elected officials will make decisions for personal gain, to benefit their friends or campaign contributors, or to promote their personal religious beliefs. With many years in those positions, the temptation is even worse. Reasonable oversight by the COPs can put a stop to that sort of activity, keep honest people honest, and improve our community.”

Lutz went on to suggest that the recent airing of partisan and religious videos on the government channel (Cox 24) by the City of El Cajon would never have been approved had reasonable oversight been in place. “News media may report on the actions of these boards, but they rarely object to decisions that are patently out of line, only citizens can do that. Videos from Republican operative and evangelical David Barton promoted a right-wing evangelical revisionist view of history paid for by taxpayer funds, clearly violating the Constitution, which forbids promotion of any religious viewpoint. After I complained, they were immediately pulled. But they aired for four years too long simply because no one was watching. The COPs program will put an end to that type of unethical behavior.”

The COPs program engages leading citizens to participate at a higher level on these bodies, becoming aware of the issues and standards of operation. When elections for seats on those bodies occur, COPs participants will be prime candidates. Participation on a COP will mitigate the advantage of incumbents. COPs will be able to point out episodes of unethical behavior of incumbents, presenting “citations” to elected officials for particularly egregious decision making, thereby alerting the media to decisions that would otherwise be lost in the shuffle. COPs will prepare a dossier of bad decisions for review by the public at the time of the election, instead of being conveniently forgotten as ancient history.

“In a democracy, the most important position is that of the citizen,” said Lutz, taking a quote from Barack Obama. “The trouble is that the sheer number of elected officials make it difficult to manage even for those who are elected to do so. Many of these nooks and crannies have little or no citizen oversight, increasing the temptation for poor decision making. The COPs program provides an organizational structure that lets citizens work together to ensure adequate oversight without feeling personally responsible to cover everything.”

The responsibilities of COP participants is designed to be limited so that community involvement can be enjoyed without becoming burdensome. Each panel will have a chair, a co-chair and preferably enough members for each to cover one of the sitting body’s members. Each COP volunteer will coordinate to attend as many meetings as possible and make summary reports to the website for review by the public.

To apply for COPs participation, download an application from the website of the East County Democratic Club at [www.eastcountymunicipalclub.org](http://www.eastcountymunicipalclub.org) and submit it prior to the January 21, 2007 deadline. The election meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm at the Rancho San Diego Library community room; the public is welcome. All club members are eligible to vote.

The film “Sir! No Sir!” will be shown in the same room just prior to this meeting, with the screening starting at 1:30pm. Doors open at 1pm, for refreshments and social networking. The film is hosted by the Current Events Theater, and admission is free.

**About the East County Democratic Club** – Officially chartered by the San Diego Democratic Party, the East County Democratic Club services the area of Serves the communities of El Cajon, Rancho San Diego, Jamul, Alpine, Lakeside and outlying San Diego County, and provides an environment that fosters Democratic ideals, where Democrats in the East County area can network, stimulate activist interests, become informed about issues, support the Democratic Party Platform, and contribute by taking an active role in shaping the politics of our city, county, state, and country.

The club offers memberships to registered Democrats regardless of residence; non-Democrats may participate as Associates. Dues are \$15 per year for individuals, \$25 for couples, \$10 for seniors and students. Detailed membership information can be found on the website, [www.eastcountymunicipalclub.org](http://www.eastcountymunicipalclub.org).

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