

# Governor appoints Villegas to board of supervisors

**By Anne Ternus-Bellamy**

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Longtime West Sacramento City Council member Oscar E. Villegas has been appointed to the Yolo County Board of Supervisors by Gov. Jerry Brown, but there won't be much of a honeymoon period for Villegas as he'll have to be elected by voters in just four months in order to stay in office.

Villegas, 47, fills the first district seat vacated by Mike McGowan when he took an appointed position with the California Department of Motor Vehicles in December. McGowan's term ran through 2016, but state law requires a gubernatorial appointee to run for office in the next general election, which in this case, would be in June. The winner of that election — or a run-off in November if necessary — would then serve out the remainder of the four-year term, said county spokeswoman Beth Gabor.

Even before the governor's office announced Villegas's appointment on Friday, there were signs he would be challenged for the seat in four months.

The Northern California-Dolores Huerta Latino Democratic Club issued a press release Friday morning criticizing the appointment of Villegas over the club's choice for the office, community activist Norma Alcalá.

The club said the Yolo County Democratic Party Central Committee had vetted both Villegas and Alcalá for the supervisor position and voted 23-0-1 that Alcalá was “the best qualified person for the job.”

Meanwhile, Eloisa Morales, vice chair of the Latino club, expressed disappointment that in appointing Villegas, the governor ensured the Yolo County Board of Supervisors remained an all-male governing body.

“(We) want to remind the governor that women live in Yolo County, too,” Morales said. “The last thing the Yolo Board of Supervisors needed was another man.”

However, Villegas’s appointment received high praise from a wide variety of local elected officials — including at least one woman.

“Replacing Mike McGowan is a challenge,” state Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis, said in a press release, “but I can think of nobody better suited than Oscar Villegas to meet that challenge and represent the people of West Sacramento and the Clarksburg region.

“I have already worked closely with Oscar on a wide variety of issues during his time on the West Sacramento City Council,” Wolk said. “He is a homegrown leader who cares deeply about his community and has the skills and good working relationships in the region that will enable him to come to the Board of Supervisors and immediately get to work. I especially look forward to Oscar’s help with our efforts to protect the Delta. This is a critical time and we need all hands on deck.”

Sharing Wolk’s enthusiasm was Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis, who called Villegas “an excellent choice to represent the communities of West Sacramento and Clarksburg on the board.”

“His many years of state and local government experience will serve us well as we tackle economic development, water, agriculture, and other critical issues,” Provenza said. “I’ve been extremely impressed by Oscar’s ability to collaborate and work to develop common-sense solutions to difficult problems. I appreciate his professional approach and his deep commitment to our Yolo County community. I look forward to working closely with Oscar. I know he will be ready to hit the ground running.”

Yolo County Sheriff Ed Prieto also praised the appointment, calling Villegas “an experienced leader who cares personally about our community.”

“The communities of West Sacramento and the Clarksburg region are going to be receiving the best representation possible,” Prieto said.

And Davis City Council member Lucas Frerichs, who has worked with Villegas on the Yolo County Transportation District Board of Directors, weighed in as well, saying, “I’ve been extremely impressed with his approach towards collaboration and pursuing common-sense solutions to (oftentimes) difficult issues. I look forward to working with him in his new capacity helping to represent and govern Yolo County.”

Villegas, a Democrat, has served on the West Sacramento City Council since 2000 and was most recently re-elected in 2012.

In addition to serving on the council, Villegas is a field representative for the California Board of State and Community Corrections and has served in several different positions with the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs.

He also has served on the West Sacramento Planning Commission, the Sacramento-Yolo Port District Commission, the Sacramento County Regional Sanitation District Board, the Yolo County Transportation District and the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Board.

Villegas grew up in the Bryte neighborhood of West Sacramento and earned a bachelor’s degree from Sacramento State University. His wife, Katie Villegas, is executive director of the Yolo County Children’s Alliance and is a trustee on the Washington Unified School District Board of Education. The couple have two children, Elena and Vincent.

There was no word Friday of whether Alcala planned to challenge Villegas in the June election.

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