

STEPHEN WHITBURN FOR SUPERVISOR

Contact: Barry Klein
917-239-5493

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Whitburn Calls For Immediate Staffing of County Fire Stations During Fire Season

San Diego, CA, September 22, 2010 - Stephen Whitburn, candidate for County Supervisor, called upon the Board of Supervisors to immediately staff County fire stations for the remainder of the fire season.

“We have been incredibly lucky so far,” said Whitburn. “But we know dry conditions and Santa Ana winds will put us at great fire danger in the coming months.”

The County maintains \$700 million in reserves but continues to underfund fire protection. The supervisors recently voted to add minimal improvements to the County’s fire readiness, which did not include additional fire fighting personnel, and failed to take immediate action to address a fire season that recent reports indicate could be especially dangerous.

“Ron Roberts and the Board never seemed to learn from the devastating wildfires of 2003 and 2007. After seven years, it’s long past time to act,” said Whitburn. “Unfortunately, our Do-Nothing Supervisors refuse to take any meaningful action today and in the process are gambling with people’s lives.”

Whitburn is requesting that the Board of Supervisors ask for a proposal from Cal-Fire to immediately staff the County’s 18 unmanned stations with full crews through the end of the year. These actions are expected to cost less than \$10 million—a fraction of what the County has in reserves.

“I understand the need for reserves,” said Whitburn. “I am suggesting we use a very small amount rather than continue to risk lives the way the County does every fire season.”

Whitburn is particularly concerned about the impacts of a wildfire in the County on District 4, where he is running. Wildfires tend to start in the County’s backcountry, pulling people and equipment from populated areas. During the 2007 fires, nearly every piece of equipment and fire fighter in the City of San Diego were deployed to fight wildfires, leaving practically no coverage for residents of the City for other emergencies.

“We can’t count on other jurisdictions to do our jobs for us,” Whitburn stated. “Mutual Aid is a wonderful system, but we need to do our part to protect ourselves.”

Stephen Whitburn is an award-winning journalist, community advocate, and spokesperson for the American Red Cross. As a member of the North Park Planning Committee, Stephen has worked hard to address the problem of increasing crime, boost the supply of affordable housing, and promote neighborhood businesses. He is outspoken in his belief that we need our County government to provide greater resources for job creation and fire protection. Fluent in Spanish, Stephen has been a liaison to the Latino community on public education for the American Red Cross.

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For additional information contact Barry Klein at (917) 239-5493.