



Julie Anderson for Pierce County auditor

POSTED BY PATRICK O'CALLAHAN ON OCTOBER 19, 2009 AT 8:07 PM [SHARE THIS](#)

This editorial will appear in tomorrow's print edition.

ABOUT

This blog offers readers a behind-the-scenes glimpse of The News Tribune's opinion sections. We post observations, our editorials prior to publication, commentary we can't fit into the print edition and interesting ideas we've come across. Staff bloggers are Patrick O'Callahan, Cheryl Tucker and Kim Bradford; guest bloggers are Karen Irwin, Michael Allen, Richard Davis and David Seago.

MORE INSIDE OPINION

[Blog archives](#)

[Inside Opinion on Twitter](#)

OTHER EDITORIAL PAGES

[Aberdeen Daily World](#)

[Bellingham Herald](#)

[Everett Daily Herald](#)

[Kitsap Sun](#)

[Longview Daily News](#)

[Olympian](#)

[Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#)

[Seattle Times](#)

[Spokesman-Review](#)

[Tri-City Herald](#)

[Vancouver Columbian](#)

[Walla Walla Union-Bulletin](#)

[Wenatchee World](#)

[Yakima Herald-Republic](#)

POLITICAL AND POLICY COMMENTARY

A funny thing happened to the Pierce County auditor's office in the two years since citizens voted to make it nonpartisan: It seems to have become more partisan than ever.

Its current occupant, Jan Shabro, was appointed by the Republican majority on the County Council early this year after former Auditor Pat McCarthy was elected county executive.

In appointing Shabro, the council rebuffed the Democratic Party's nominees – which included Shabro's chief challenger, staunch Democrat Julie Anderson. The contest this year looks as partisan as any in the past.

Perhaps it's understandable that the Republicans and Democrats want to keep their stamp on the office. The auditor gets to print her name on every ballot sent out, which is a nice way to pick up name familiarity. That makes the position a good springboard to higher office, as McCarthy's election demonstrated.

Still, the county's chief elections officer ought to be more than nominally nonpartisan, if only to avoid the perception (inaccurate so far) that a particular party has its thumb on the scale when the ballots are counted. Running elections is pure administrative work, as are licensing, animal-control and the other responsibilities of the office. There's no liberal or conservative way to chase pit bulls.

Looking at this choice in terms of administrative experience, we think Anderson has the advantage.

A former lawmaker and County Council member, Shabro has impressive credentials as a legislator. Anderson – a member of the Tacoma City Council – has worked as an administrator in state government and as a director of nonprofit organizations. She has displayed a formidable attention to detail that would serve her well as auditor.

The third candidate in the race, Will Baker, deserves special mention. He's been arrested many times for disrupting public meetings, and he's been convicted of disorderly conduct.

He's made a hobby of running for office, and we would ordinarily regard his candidacy as a joke. Under ranked-choice voting, however, he could conceivably win if he garners enough second-choice votes. Not all diehard Republicans and Democrats are aware of Baker's past, and some might choose him over the better known candidate from the other party. When he ran for state auditor as a Republican in 2004, he won a dismaying one-third of the total vote.

Another perennial candidate with no apparent qualifications, Dale Washam, managed to get himself elected assessor-treasurer on an RCV ballot last year. The assessor-treasurer's office is now in predictable disarray. Let's not repeat the mistake with a candidate who, unlike Washam, actually has a criminal record.

CATEGORIES: [ELECTION](#), [SNEAK PREVIEW](#)

TAGS: [AUDITOR](#), [ENDORSEMENTS](#), [JAN SHABRO](#), [JULIE ANDERSON](#), [PIERCE COUNTY](#)

Opinion of the News Tribune, IRV has elected Perennial Candidates with no apparent qualifications (elected with 37% support)