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The Desert Sun

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2010 ELECTION ANALYSIS

Bono Mack won big, but slipped in desert

Parties will use voting data to plot 2012 strategy

BY ERICA FELCI
The Desert Sun

Rep. Mary Bono Mack solidly defeated Democratic Palm Springs Mayor Steve Pougnet to secure re-election. But despite national momentum that favored the GOP, Bono Mack's margin of victory in the desert cities was smaller than just two years ago.

Recently finalized election results show the Republican incumbent earned 49.03 percent of the vote in desert cities. That's less than 3 percentage points more than Pougnet's desert showing, and about 7 percentage points less than what Bono Mack secured during the Democratic wave of 2008.

Election results also show:

■ Bono Mack, 49, won the unincorporated areas and in nine of the 14 cities in the 45th Congressional district. That includes the desert communities of Indian Wells, La Quinta, Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage.

■ Pougnet, 47, won five cities, of which four are Coachella Valley communities that have a Democratic majority. That includes Indio, which Democrat Julie Bornstein did not win during her 2008 congressional bid.

■ In each city Bono Mack won, her margin of victory was slimmer than 2008. This year's ballot included American Independent Bill Lussenheide, who appealed to the district's conservative base.

The precinct-by-precinct analysis does more than provide a comprehensive breakdown of how Bono Mack won the nationally watched congressional campaign.

The results also help both political parties determine where to focus their voter outreach efforts for the next election cycle, which could feature a second showdown between Bono Mack and Pougnet.

"Any result like that is a learning experience," said Bornstein, whose 2008 defeat showed the Democrats what strongholds they needed to build in future campaigns.

Please see ELECTION, A18

State races at a glance

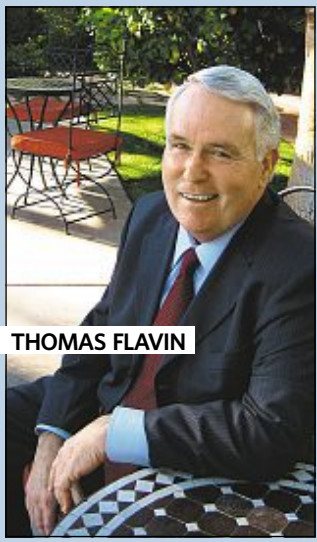
Both political parties will use the 2010 election results to shape voter registration and other outreach efforts. Those efforts will begin in January. Their analysis will include a look at the election breakdown for the Coachella Valley's three state legislative races:

■ Democrat Juan Vargas won the 40th Senate seat, including winning the four blue Riverside County cities that are in the district.

The only Riverside County city Republican Brian Hendry won was the city of La Quinta, which favors the GOP in terms of voter registration.

■ Republican Assemblyman Brian Nestade secured his re-election by getting more than 57 percent of the vote. The only cities that supported Democrat Jose Medina in the 64th Assembly race were Moreno Valley and Riverside.

■ The 80th Assembly District spans both Riverside and Imperial counties. Democratic Assemblyman V. Manuel Pérez won every Riverside County city in the district except for La Quinta, which supported Republican Steve Sanchez.



THOMAS FLAVIN

11 people to watch in 2011

Big challenges ahead for these newsmakers

BY ERICA FELCI
The Desert Sun

Let's face it: Times have been tough in the Coachella Valley during the past year.

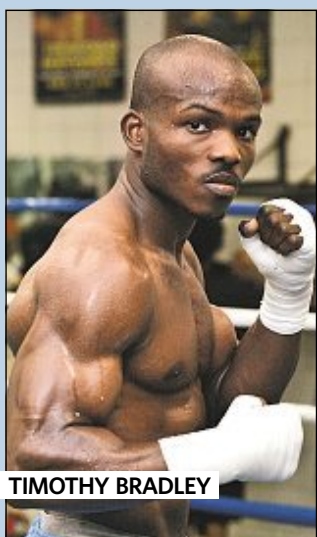
The economic downturn hampered tourism and real estate sales. Unemployment rates were stuck in the double digits. And even shining jewels such as the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival faced unprecedented problems.

Yet a new year ushers in renewed optimism that those days are behind us.

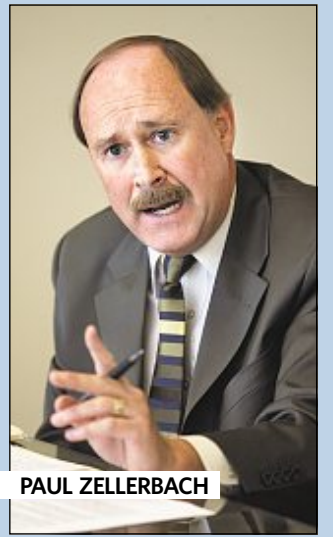
As we look ahead, a group of Desert Sun editors and reporters identified 11 people who are poised to write a new chapter for the Coachella Valley.

Some of the names are familiar. Some are not. But each has the potential to headline the stories that will shape 2011.

Please see PEOPLE TO WATCH, A18



TIMOTHY BRADLEY



PAUL ZELLERBACH



MARY BONO MACK



MICHAEL COSTELLO



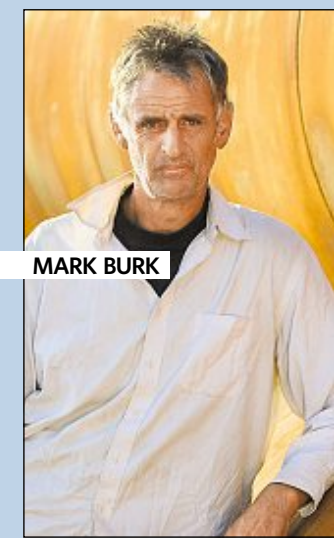
JAN HARNIK



ROBERT MARTIN



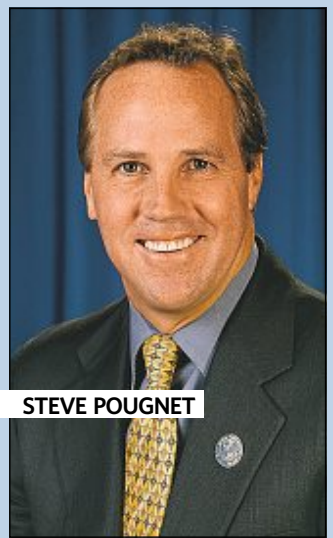
V. MANUEL PÉREZ



MARK BURK



REBECCA SPENCER



STEVE POUGNET

Anger at God common during times of crisis, new study finds

According to a study in the January issue of the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, nearly two out of three people report that they've felt angry at God.

The survey found that skeptics and nonbelievers were more likely to blame the object of their skepticism and nonbelief than were Protestant

Christians, who were more likely to interpret personal crises as a sort of test sent from above.

Among other groups who often take it out on God: The youth. And white people.

What's more, holding onto your anger worsens your health, experts say. See story, A9

Dirty Harry meets Five Bucks (Expect some trouble.)

You heard right. Between 3:30 and 6:30p, drinks are \$5 and our entire bar menu is half off, including our featured wines and premium well drinks. Everything from baby back ribs to Harry's favorite, the Dirty Harry Burger, not for the faint of heart. Come in for Hog Happy Hour and stay awhile. Looking for trouble? You just might find it.



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ELECTION: Redistricting may tilt 2012 vote

Continued from A1

"I think anyone who would look at running in 2012 would be wise to look at the voting patterns in the last two elections."

The race for the 45th Congressional District dominated the local 2010 election season, with the Palm Springs duo spending nearly \$4.3 million on their efforts to sway voters.

The district spans Riverside County and includes every Coachella Valley city except Desert Hot Springs. It favors Republicans in terms of voter registration.

Though Pougnet's fundraising far outpaced Bono Mack's previous Democratic challengers, she won the Nov. 2 election with 51.49 percent of the vote.

She was trailed by Pougnet with 42.14 percent and Lussenheide at 6.38 percent.

That means of the 206,801 votes cast, Bono Mack received 106,472 votes. Pougnet received 87,141 votes and Lussenheide received 13,188 votes.

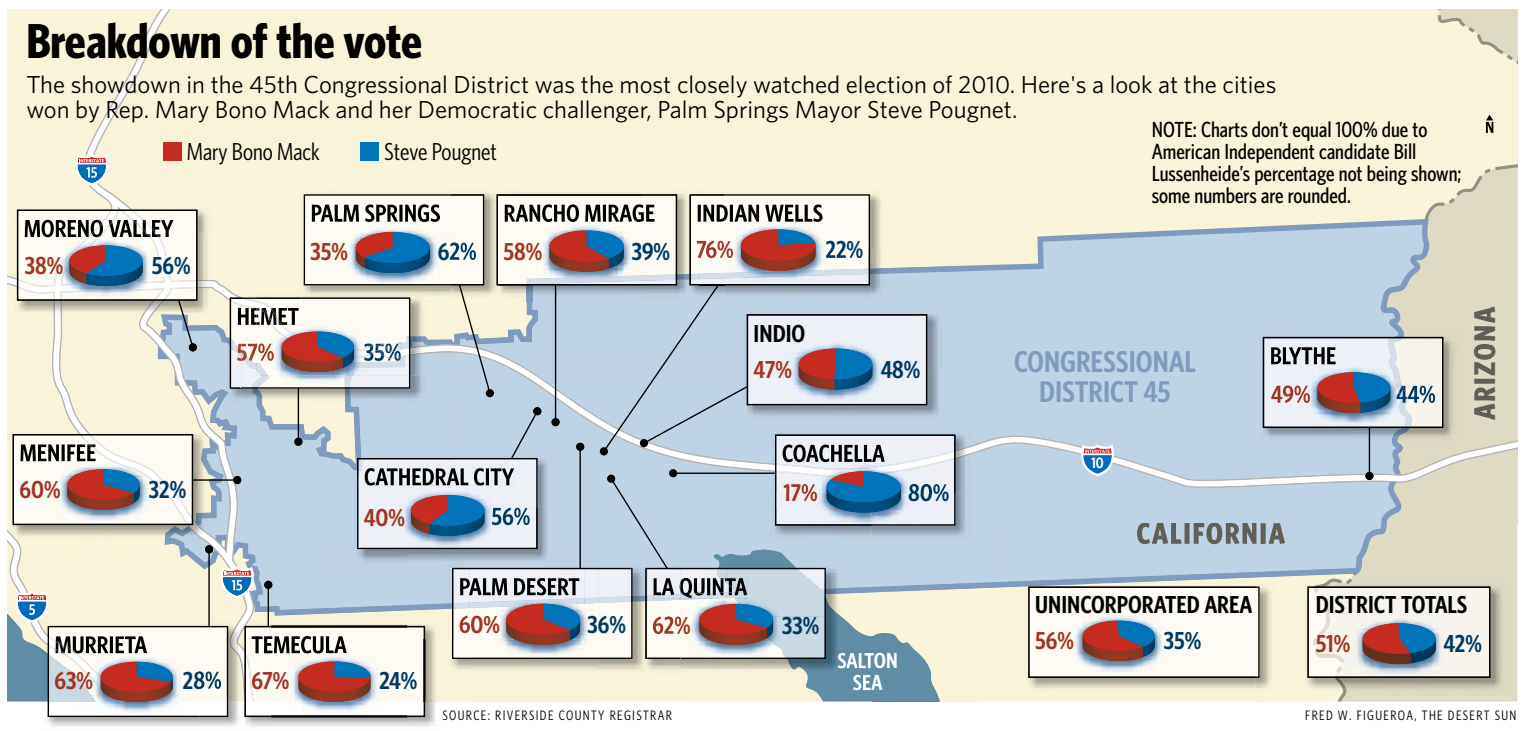
Bono Mack won every community that she won in 2008 except for Indio, which Pougnet won by 217 votes.

Bono Mack also was the top vote-getter in Menifee, which was incorporated in 2008 and not recognized as a city in Riverside County's 2008 election breakdown.

Before the election, Bono Mack's camp had predicted the incumbent's victory would surpass the 16-point victory she saw in 2008.

Though this year's political climate generally benefited Republicans more than Democrats, election results show Bono Mack won by 9.35 percentage points.

When asked about the results, Bono Mack's political director Marc Troast



did not provide insight on why the congresswoman's victory margins were smaller than she saw in 2008.

Instead he released a brief statement by e-mail.

"Liberal loser Steve Pougnet spent five times what any candidate has ever spent against the congresswoman and got the same pathetic percentage," Troast said in the e-mail. "It's shocking to think he is even considering running again."

A nationwide analysis by Pougnet's campaign indicates Bono Mack's win was the third-smallest margin of all reelected Republican incumbents.

Only Rep. Dave Reichert of Washington and Rep. Dan Lungren of California's 3rd District did worse, according to the Pougnet campaign analysis.

Pougnet said he's compared his results to the 2006 midterm, which show he got about 22,500 votes more than then Democratic candidate David Roth. Bono Mack's 2010 tally was a 6,800-vote increase from her 2006 results.

"To see that her margin of victory shrunk significantly shows the demographics are clearly changing," Pougnet said.

"I'm very happy with the results. Obviously, I would have preferred to have won."

Both political parties in January will begin revving up their efforts for the 2012 campaign cycle.

The local congressional race could prove to be a repeat of this battle:

Pougnet already filed the paperwork to start a 2012 campaign, though he has remained mum on whether he actually will run.

Bono Mack already has started her next re-election effort.

The biggest unknown for both candidates is what district they'll be seeking to represent.

A new, 14-member California commission has started the process of redrawing the boundaries of the state and federal legislative districts. They have until August to finalize the maps.

"No one knows what our district will look like, but nationally, I think people will hold the party in the White House responsible" for the direction the country is going, Riverside County

GOP chairman Ken Minesinger said of 2012 elections.

"And here in California, the Democrats own the state. I think people will hold them accountable, and that certainly bodes well for us."

The city-by-city breakdown in the 45th District and other campaigns also will be used to focus voter registration and outreach efforts that party officials will resume in early 2011.

"We certainly take a look at different cities and we target those," Minesinger said.

"Two years is not too far off."

Erica Felci covers local politics for The Desert Sun. She can be reached via e-mail at ericafelci@thedesertsun.com

PEOPLE TO WATCH: Eleven plus six will make the news

Continued from A1

Thomas Flavin



No single person is in a better position to help create much-needed jobs than **Thomas Flavin**, the newly tapped chief executive of the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership.

The California native comes to the desert agency after five years at the helm of a public-private economic development partnership in Seattle.

"There's a lot of opportunity here," Flavin told The Desert Sun when he started the job last month.

"I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and go to work."

Let's hope so.

CVPEP spent 2010 without a permanent executive to enact the very blueprint valley leaders said would get the desert's economy on track.

By October, the agency's performance was getting mixed reviews from the desert's most notable leaders.

While unemployment rates in the Coachella Valley's nine cities stabilized — and in some cases improved slightly — Riverside County's jobless rate remains higher than the statewide and national averages.

Flavin has the tools and know-how to help change that.

Rebecca Spencer



Rebecca Spencer has an equally tough job ahead of her.

She heads the Riverside County Registrar of Voters after the county executives fired embattled Registrar Barbara

Dunmore.

Spencer is technically serving in an interim role as the county searches for a permanent replacement.

But the former chief deputy registrar still has the potential to make big changes.

Years of election-night delays and other mishaps have left a bad taste in voters' mouths.

With a presidential election year on the horizon, now is the time to enact the policies that ensure the county will quickly provide results in future elections.

Paul Zellerbach



The elections office is not the only Riverside County department the public wants changes from in 2011.

Voters last summer ousted District Attorney Rod Pacheco and replaced him with Riverside County Superior Court Judge **Paul Zellerbach**.

He takes the job Monday after making a lot of promises:

He says he will reevaluate staffing

levels to reflect budget realities. He also plans to work with the public defender's office and judges to ease crowded court dockets.

And he vows to ensure death penalty cases don't languish for years before reaching a courtroom.

"As a prosecutor, I've always believed that justice delayed is justice denied," he said recently.

Zellerbach has admirably spent the six months since his election preparing for his new role without really knowing the what fiscal reality he's walking into.

Riverside County's executive office estimates the district attorney's office faces a \$9 million deficit; Pacheco's aides insist they have a \$2 million surplus.

And both estimates came out before the district attorney's office conducted Operation Eastern Encore, the massive gang crackdown in Indio that came with an unknown price tag.

V. Manuel Pérez



During his successful reelection campaign, Assemblyman **V. Manuel Pérez** said he would fight for enterprise zones and improve the manufacturing and green-collar economies.

"My priority here in the 80th Assembly District is to create great paying jobs with benefits and health care, renewable-energy generation, manufacturing, distribution — all that counts," Pérez told The Desert Sun in October.

Voters believed him. So did Assembly leadership: The Coachella Democrat was again named the chairman of the Assembly's Committee on Jobs, Economic Development and the Economy.

He's had two years in that position to lay the groundwork for an economic recovery.

Now a veteran by Sacramento standards, this could prove to be the year real momentum happens.

Jan Harnik



Jan Harnik campaigned for Palm Desert council with the pledge that "Jan Can" — and would — restore "integrity, accountability and access to city hall."

This year will prove whether her walk backs up her talk.

The once-predictable Palm Desert's council dais has degraded into a source of squabbling and public efforts to undermine fellow colleagues.

"It just looks like the respect for the City Council has diminished, by personal and public problems and people pursuing their own agendas," resident Patrick Schruben told The Desert Sun after he left the polls on Nov. 2.

Though Harnik herself came under attack during the fall campaign, she's already expressed a desire to put such

Honorable mentions

The Desert Sun narrowed down its 2011 people to watch list to 11 headliners. But they aren't the only ones who are likely to make news this year. Other notables include:



■ **Scott White:** The new president of the Palm Springs Desert Resort Communities Convention and Visitors Authority already has a bold agenda for the tourism agency.



■ **Carolyn Stark:** The former executive director of UC Riverside's Palm Desert campus will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to wherever she lands.



■ **Brian Nestande:** The Palm Desert assemblyman will be the GOP caucus chairman, making him the No. 2 Republican in the Assembly.



■ **Larry Thiel:** As chairman of the 2011 Bob Hope Classic, he'll lead a tournament in its second consecutive year without a title sponsor.



■ **Dan Martinez:** The Indio native-turned-city-manager is helping the his hometown rebound from a tumultuous 2010.



■ **Andrew Copley:** The chef-owner of Palm Springs' Copley's on Palm Canyon is developing a similar restaurant in D.C., extending his culinary influence.

discord aside and move forward with decisions that will improve the quality of life in the city.

Robert Martin



Morongo Band of Mission Indians tribal chairman **Robert Martin** once said "online gaming is a central part of tribal gaming's future."

Martin will be fighting for that future in 2011 as legislation is discussed at both the state and federal levels to legalize online gaming.

Morongo has long used the federal effort to leverage the idea of legalizing in-state gambling in California.

Such efforts proved to be highly controversial before they fizzled out.

But as the state seeks new revenue options to curb its annual budget crisis, Martin is likely to be at the center of any new alliance.

Steve Pougnet



Palm Springs Mayor **Steve Pougnet** dominated headlines last year for his nationally followed congressional bid, but it is his ambitious plan to rebuild or replace the long-vacant Desert Fashion Plaza that will put him in the spotlight this year.

After a years-long impasse with the property's owner, developer John Wessman, Pougnet is trying to sell voters on a tax increase. The \$50 million or so that's raised would allow the city to purchase and rebuild the Museum Market Plaza, which includes the Desert Fashion Plaza and Town and Country Center.

"I do not believe I was elected to let that site sit vacant and hurt our downtown merchants for another 10 years," Pougnet told The Desert Sun last month.

Pougnet is now betting both his political future and the city's economic future on the plan.

Wessman has been adamant that he

won't sell the property, indicating a legal battle between the city and developer is on the horizon.

And Pougnet has to sway voters to raise taxes during a difficult economy.

Mary Bono Mack



Pougnet's political rival, Republican Rep. **Mary Bono Mack**, is positioned for a notable 2011 as well.

She's back in the majority party after the GOP took control of the House. And she's finally earned a gavel, becoming the first Republican woman to be named chairperson of a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee.

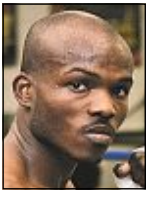
Bono Mack is not usually one of the names in the national conversation about influential GOP women.

And the divisive congressional campaign against Pougnet brought out plenty of detractors among her constituents.

But it also brought out a more assertive side of Bono Mack.

When combined with her 12 years of congressional experience, this could be the year a different type of congresswoman emerges.

Timothy Bradley



Cathedral City's **Timothy Bradley** could start 2011 by setting off a domino effect that elevates his position within the boxing world.

Bradley, who had only one, non-title fight during 2010, will fight Devon Alexander on Jan. 29 at the Pontiac Silverdome, located in a suburb of Detroit.

But this is far more than just a showdown between the top fighters of the 140-pound division.

Should Bradley win, it could lead to a fight with the highly marketable boxer Amir Kahn.

That victory could set up an even more coveted fight, perhaps with someone such as Manny Pacquiao, who

is widely considered to be the best in the business.

Michael Costello



Palm Springs fashion designer **Michael Costello** didn't win season eight of "Project Runway."

But that television experience has opened doors that could make him a household name.

A 20-look resortwear line to debut this spring already has drawn interest from a major but unnamed department store.

And he's working on a television pilot with fellow designer Mondo Guerra.

"I asked God to take me as far as I could go (on the show), and he did," Costello said after "Runway" aired. "I didn't win, but it was worth it."

Mark Burk



Television also could open doors for former golf pro **Mark Burk** this year.

Burk, 53, spent two years homeless, living in abandoned construction pipes along the railroad tracks in Indio. But he never gave up on his dream of qualifying for the PGA Champions Tour.

His quest is being chronicled in a 10-part "docu-reality" series called "Pipe Dream" that starts Jan. 11 on the Golf Channel.

It's clear in the first two episodes that Burk's story is a complicated one. Besides improving his rusty swing, he struggles to find a job and is embroiled in a legal battle with his former live-in girlfriend.

But love him or hate him — and there are people in the golf community on both sides — there's something inspirational about holding onto a dream when life crumbles around you.

And isn't that hopeful feeling exactly what defines a new year?

Larry Bohannon, Leighton Ginn, Debra Gruszecki, Blake Herzog, Maricar Mendoza, and Judith Salkin contributed to this story.