

Bermudez: We all share the American dream // The newly elected assemblyman says he won't neglect the Orange County part of his district.

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Body

BUENA PARK Rudy Bermudez believes that the best way to serve his largely Hispanic constituency is by focusing on everyone.

"We all want better schools, affordable health, we all want be able to prosper," he said. "The Latino agenda is no different than anyone else's agenda. It is the **American dream**."

The Democrat from Norwalk believes this broad focus is why he was elected to represent the 56th Assembly District. Most of the district is in Los Angeles County, but it also covers Buena Park. Orange County residents make up 18.6 percent of his district's 423,403 population.

OVER HALF OF DISTRICT POPULATION IS LATINO

"I'm focusing on the entire district, not just L.A. County and not just one particular city," he said. "I look forward to entrenching myself in Orange County and being involved in both municipal and school district elections and water board elections."

The district is primarily Latino, state figures show. Hispanics make up 52.5 percent of its residents, whites 23.8 percent, Asians 17.5 percent and African-Americans 4 percent.

About 52 percent of registered voters in Bermudez's district are Democrats and 30 percent are Republicans. In Buena Park, it's closer. Democrats lead Republicans 40.7 percent to 39.7 percent.

Bermudez, 44, a parole agent, began his political career when he joined the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District board. He was first elected in 1991 and served eight years.

While he served on the board, the district opened three new schools, reduced class sizes and improved security on school campuses. Bermudez was elected to the Norwalk City Council in March 1999. As a council member, he wanted to attract new businesses and retain existing ones, was committed to reducing the utility user tax -- it has been reduced by 1 percentage point in his time in office -- and strengthening law enforcement by enacting community-based policing.

Buena Park Mayor Patsy Marshall said what the city needs most from Bermudez is fiscal protection, given the state budget deficit.

"The pressing need right now is the budget up there and that they're not going to take too much from the cities," she said. "Try and take as little from the cities as possible."

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State budget tops

list of priorities

And, indeed, Bermudez said at the top of his priority list is the state budget's \$21 billion deficit.

Other issues he'd like to focus on in Sacramento include transportation, health, public safety, water, economic development and growth. He wants to work on expansion of the Santa Ana (I-5) Freeway in north Orange and south Los Angeles counties and creating swifter modes of transportation through light and heavy rail. He aims to protect the community from violent offenders and wants to ensure that fire departments have adequate resources and work together.

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Graphic

Swearing in: Assemblymen Rudy Bermudez, D-Norwalk, left, and Fabian Nunez, D-Los Angeles, second from left, take the oath of office Monday in Sacramento.

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