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They elect the president



Electoral College, including 4 locals, votes on Monday

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San Carlos Councilman Mark Olbert is one of four mid-Peninsula residents who will represent California in the Electoral College and vote for president on Monday in Sacramento.

Olbert will join Celine Purcell of Redwood City, Olivia Reyes-Becerra of Stanford, Steve Spinner of Atherton and 51 other members of California's Electoral College delegation who will cast their votes in the assembly chamber of the state capitol. Hillary Clinton won Cali-

SACRAMENTO — California's 55 members of the Electoral College will meet at the Capitol in Sacramento on Monday to cast their votes for president. Among the electors is San Carlos City Councilman Mark Olbert (photo inset).

a difference of 4,269,978 — more than her margin of victory in the national popular vote.

The 55 electors are required by state law to vote for California's winner, so there's no mystery about how Monday's vote will go in Sacramento.

Electors in the 49 other states will meet at the same time on Monday to cast their votes for president.

In about half of the states, electors aren't required to vote for the winner in their state. Republicans in those states are being inundated with emails from Democrats asking that they vote for Clinton instead of Trump.

In San Carlos, Olbert said that he has received two or three emails and one letter about his role in the Electoral College. One email asked him to do anything he can to keep Trump from becoming president. He said the other correspondences he's received asked him to vote for another Republican other than Donald Trump.

A vote for Clinton

Olbert said that he wasn't too sure that he could legally do that. Also, he says he feels a strong sense of duty to vote for the person that his district overwhelmingly supported — Clinton. Clinton prevailed in San Mateo County with 75% of the vote.

The letters that Olbert received seem to echo the actions of Vinz Koller, an elector from Carmel. The AP reports that Koller has filed a lawsuit asking a judge to overturn the law. He says in court filings that he believes Mitt Romney, John Kasich "or another qualified compromise candidate" would be the "correct choice" but he's unwilling to risk a criminal

conviction.

Olbert, a retired financial executive and councilman, says that he understands that no system for electing a president is perfect, but he understands people's complaints about the Electoral College.

"People in Wyoming have 15 or 20 times the amount of voting power as people in California. There are fewer people in Wyoming than in San Mateo County," he said. "That's not fair, but fair is a fuzzy concept."

Eliminating the Electoral College

He said that while it's possible that a constitutional amendment could switch the nation from the Electoral College to a direct election of the president, he's not holding his breath.

A constitutional amendment would require for two-thirds of both the House of Representatives and the Senate to approve the amendment, which is unlikely since Republicans control both chambers. But even if that were to happen, the amendment would have to be ratified by two-thirds of the states.

Olbert said he can't imagine small states giving up their power to play a role in selecting a president.

This is Olbert's first trip to the state capitol to cast a ballot as an Electoral College member.

"I'm very excited to have been appointed and given this responsibility," Olbert said.

To be selected as a member of the state's electoral college, each of the state's 53 representatives will nominate an elector, the other two members of the state's electoral college are selected by Senators Diane Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. Rep. Jackie Speier,

D-San Mateo, appointed Olbert.

Olbert said that he's not completely sure how the voting will happen on Monday. He says his understanding is that there will be a closed-door meeting at 1 p.m. Then at 2 p.m. the public will be able to see them cast their votes.