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Rosemead recall goes to the voters

By Christina L. Esparza Staff Writer
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ROSEMEAD - The U.S. Department of Justice will monitor today's recall election targeting Mayor Gary Taylor and Councilman Jay Imperial.

The court ordered the observers after the two councilmen complained the petition-gathering process that led to the recall violated the Voters Rights Act. They argued the petitions should have been circulated in multiple languages.

About 80 percent of Rosemead residents speak a language other than English at home, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Taylor and Imperial - who have both been members of the council since the mid-1970s - are facing recall because of their support of a recently opened Wal-Mart Supercenter at Walnut Grove Avenue and Rush Street.

Candidates Polly Low, Victor Ruiz and Jim Clouet are running to replace the two longtime councilmen. Low and Ruiz are backed by Save Our Community, the organization that spearheaded the recall.

"When the dust settles, how do we pull together?" Clouet said. He pledged to draw on his municipal experience to make Rosemead a "cleaner, greener" city.

Voters will be asked first whether Taylor and Imperial should be recalled and, if so, who should replace them. Low is sole candidate for Imperial's seat; Clouet and Ruiz are vying for Taylor's.

Asked about his chances, Taylor said, "It's 50-50. It's up in the air."

"Both sides have been working very hard," he added. "I wouldn't place a bet on it. I think we're just trying to serve the residents and do the best we can."

Polls will open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. Ballots will be counted in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 8838 E. Valley Blvd., after the polls close.

The recall election is a culmination of two years of legal battles, finger-pointing and protests. Experts say it's unusual for a recall effort to reach this point, when the motivation for the recall does not include malfeasance or corruption.

"Recalls that get all the way to a vote are usually something involving ethics or misdeeds," said Douglas Johnson, fellow at the Rose Institute at Claremont McKenna College.

The Wal-Mart Supercenter opened last week after the council voted 3-2 to direct the planning department to give the store its required permits.

City News Service contributed to this story.

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