

Ollie Cantos, West Covina City Council Candidate, Calls for Unity in the Face of Polarization

By Lydia V. Solis

WEST COVINA — In the waning days of the 2022 election season, as candidates for partisan political office up and down the ballot jockey for the best political positioning, Ollie Cantos, candidate for West Covina City Council in District 4, has emphasized nonpartisan collaboration as the secret to building lasting partnerships.

“In today’s hyper-partisan environment in which people have become sorely divided based on political affiliation, local races are almost the last bastion of true partnership, irrespective of party affiliation,” Cantos said. “City Council is the level of government most closely tied directly to individual residents. We all patronize the same restaurants and stores, see each other at the same parks, visit the same places of entertainment and recreation, go to the same community events, and attend the same meetings run by the City. If we base our personal and working relationships solely on the political affiliations held by fellow neighbors, we deny ourselves the chance to come up with creative solutions that can only come about by bringing everyone together.”

Ollie Cantos has worked at the federal level under both Republican and Democratic administrations for more than 18 years. Positions include Special Assistant and later Special Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Justice, Associate Director for Domestic Policy at the White House, and Vice Chair of the President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID) under President George W. Bush. In President Barack Obama’s Administration, he was appointed Special Assistant to the As-

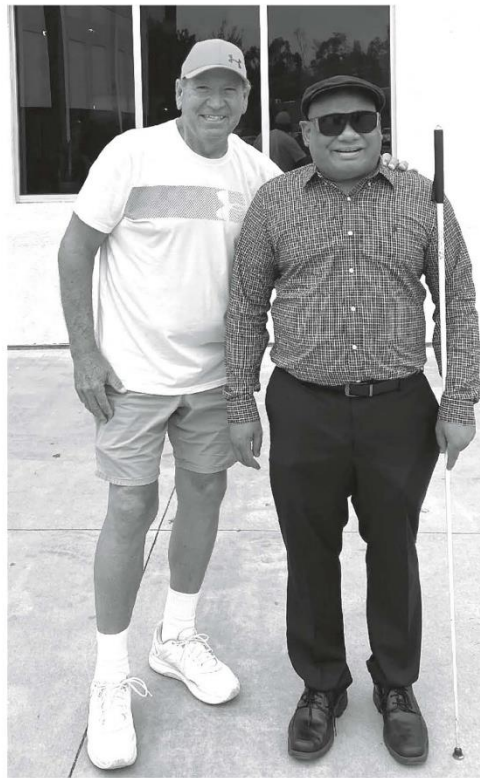


OLLIE Cantos cherishes Presidential Award “Pamana ng Pilipino (Legacy of the Filipino) Award” received in November 1996, at Malacañang Palace, from President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (Ollie’s file photo).



CANTOS with former President Fidel V. Ramos at the same Presidential Awards (Ollie’s file photo).

sistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, a leadership post that has continued through the administrations of President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden. Dur-



FORMER West Covina Mayor Steve Herfert, ardent supporter of Ollie Cantos

ing President Trump’s Administration, he was appointed to a term, returning him to PCPID. In all four administrations, he was given awards for his leadership by Cabinet secretaries and assistant secretaries.

Aaron Taxy, Chair of the nonpartisan Los Angeles County Business Federation’s Political Action Committee, known as BizFedPAC which endorsed Cantos, spoke of collaboration and said, “We appreciate the contributions that Mr. Cantos will bring to West Covina and his continuing commitment and support for creating local jobs and growing our local economy. His energy, enthusiasm, and long history of successful collaboration between sectors will lend themselves well to his being a positive force for good in the community.”

In an email distributed by Jerri Potras, a West Covina political activist, sentiments on partnership were similarly reflected. “Local offices such as city government were purposely designed by the late 19th and early 20th century reformers to be nonpartisan so that ‘neighbors’ would be free from party affiliation, bias, or designation and able to work together as members of their local community.”

Among Ollie’s most ardent support-

ers is former West Covina Mayor Steve Herfert, who served on the City Council for 25 years. He was instrumental in closing the BKK landfill, expanding paramedic services, establishing Little Manila, and constructing the West Covina Sportsplex.

“Ollie is an amazing leader,” he said. “He seeks to unify people by listening to every voice and finding solutions that work.”

Cantos’s candidacy, his focus on issues rather than partisanship, and his personal commitment to run his campaign by emphasizing common cause rather than divisive rhetoric, seem to have attracted support from different quarters. This includes an official endorsement from the San Gabriel Valley Examiner, positive coverage in the San Gabriel Valley Daily Tribune and other print and TV media outlets, and an

endorsement by the West Covina Neighbors political action committee whose efforts under the former name Stop the Tax Grab historically brought together residents from liberal to conservative, successfully blocking unwanted tax increases.

Earlier this week, in a post on the West Covina Forum, a Facebook group comprised of City residents, Cantos expressed a fervent hope in the future of partnership:

“Solutions to our community’s ills lie, NOT just within the body of the Council, but more accurately with each of us as we participate in the local levers of government and stay involved with community causes that we hold dear. None of this is to suggest that we simply engage in happy talk as pressing problems go unaddressed. But what it DOES mean – indeed, what it CAN mean if we so facilitate – is that we need to dispense with the rancor that has all too frequently typified how we treat each other.”

Only time will tell whether Cantos’s approach to bridge-building resonates with enough voters to sweep him into office on Election Night this November 8.

For further information about the Cantos campaign, see <http://www.OllieCantos.com> or text “Ollie Run” to (626) 597-2987.