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Swanson to join Assembly race

■ Ex-chief of staff for Lee runs in 16th District, makes education a priority

By Cecily Burt

STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Sandre Swanson was sitting quietly at home, alternately enjoying his retirement from public life and wondering what to do next. Then he felt a big smile spread across his face.

"I decided to follow my passion," he said, "and my passion is to help a lot of people."

And with that Swanson, 56, longtime chief of staff for Congresswoman Barbara Lee and former Congressman Ron Dellums, jumped back into the political fray as a candidate for the 16th State Assembly District representing Oakland, Alameda

Please see **SWANSON**, Local 2



RAY CHAVEZ — Staff

SANDRE SWANSON, former chief of staff to U.S. Reps. Ron Dellums and Barbara Lee, is running for state Assembly.

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Sandre Swanson to enter Assembly race

► **SWANSON**, from Local 1

and Piedmont.

Swanson, who retired a year ago after spending 30 years in public life, set up his campaign committee last year and will announce his candidacy at an event in Oakland on Thursday.

He plans to "win or lose on the issues," and he vowed that if elected, he will not skip from one election to another to stay ahead of term limits, as many professional politicians do.

"I will have a social contract with the public," he said. "I will not, 90 days into it, be preparing to run for another office. I will concentrate on the issues."

Swanson says he will focus on five main issues: schools, health care, economic development and jobs, housing and crime. All of them can be traced back to his desire to help children succeed in life and to make funding for education a priority.

"I argue with those who say there is a lack of money. It's a lack of priority — there's plenty of money for other things," he said. "An educated work force helps build new businesses for California."

Swanson last ran for public office nearly 20 years ago, when he was edged out in a race for the Alameda County Board of Supervisors by Don Perata, who is now a state senator.

He may not have held the top job, but 20 years worth of experience working the front lines for Dellums and Lee, not to

mention the long list of local, state and federal contacts, will let him hit the ground running, he said.

He worked for 10 years collaborating with local governments, the military and interested civilians to craft the structure of Oakland and Alameda's Base Reuse authorities to transfer control of the Army base and Air Station to private use. He helped wage the successful battle to bring the new federal building to Oakland, and he's worked to get funding for wetlands and small business.

Oakland City Councilmember Larry Reid (Elmhurst-East Oakland) is endorsing Swanson for a variety of reasons, not the least his decades of service to the people living in the East Bay.

"Sandre has made a tremendous contribution to our community, moving us through the base closure process for both the city of Alameda and the city of Oakland, and he's smart and he understands politics," Reid said.

"And there's no African American from Northern California in the Assembly," he said. "So for me, it's about trying to make sure there's somebody in Sacramento who understands the issues as it relates to the African-American community, but more important, understands the issues that affect the 16th district and the entire state, especially issues of education."

Swanson was 21 and a student body president at Laney College in Oakland when he got the attention of college administrators — and the press — by threatening to protest unless they addressed student concerns about overcrowding, a limited curriculum and high book prices.

He may not protest anymore, but he's still tenacious about the problems facing his constituents.

Swanson visited San Quentin prison on Wednesday and what he heard convinced him that more money needs to be funneled into education and jobs,

but that is not the only answer. He would like to build a coalition of community members to help launch more programs such as "No More Tears," where inmates volunteer as mentors to try to stop ex-offenders from coming back in.

"Out of 5,800 prisoners, 80 percent will be released at some point, and 70 percent of those will go back," he said. Nearly half of the prisoners incarcerated statewide are illiterate, many are unemployed and half are parents, meaning their children are growing up without them. The state spends \$30,000 per year per prisoner, money that would be better invested in education that would help people find jobs, not crime, he said.

In addition to Swanson, Oakland City Attorney John Russo and Oakland Planning Commissioner Clinton Killian have filed papers with the Secretary of State of their intention to run.

Swanson's Web site is www.sandreswanson.org.