

Sabotage of East L.A. Cityhood Plan Charged

Candidates Claim Debs, Other County Aides Are Involved

BY FRANK DEL OLMO

Times Staff Writer

A major slate of candidates for City Council in the East Los Angeles incorporation election on Nov. 5 charged Wednesday that county officials—particularly Supervisor Ernest Debs—are trying to sabotage the incorporation effort.

Members of the four-person slate backed by United Democrats for Incorporation charged that proponents of incorporation have faced bureaucratic harassment by the county ever since the latest effort to make East Los Angeles a city was launched in 1972.

Although Debs has been officially neutral in the campaign, the United Democrats slate accused him of instigating the county's opposition "under the table."

Spokesmen for Debs dismissed the allegations as "ridiculous."

The four candidates endorsed by United Democrats for Incorporation are Neill Soto, Alex Sotomayor, Richard Polanco and Salome M. Garcia.

Among the charges made against the county and Debs are:

—Surveillance of incorporation leaders by the Sheriff's Department.

—Alleged harassment of campaign workers by sheriff's deputies who patrol in the area.

—Unfair realignment of some voter precincts in the area by the county registrar of voters.

Use of obscure language of the incorporation measure on the ballot, written by the county counsel.

County officials in all the departments involved denied the charges.

The four candidates endorsed by United Democrats for Incorporation all have been affiliated with the Ad Hoc Committee for the Incorporation of East Los Angeles (ACTIELA), the group which launched the cityhood campaign.

The membership of United Democrats for Incorporation includes some key leaders of ACTIELA, including its chairman, Esteban Torres.

Torres denied Tuesday that the new slate was—in effect—an ACTIELA slate, as did the four candidates.

However, the official announcement for the press conference at which the United Democrats endorsements were made public was printed on ACTIELA stationery.

And while they did not take part in the press conference, Torres and other ACTIELA leaders were present.

Torres and other ACTIELA leaders said that their endorsements were made "as private citizens."

Nevertheless, the clear ties between United Democrats for Incorporation and ACTIELA automatically qualify the slate as a major force to be contended with in the incorporation election.

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Two other slates have been announced to date, one backed by the activist La Raza Unida Party and another by the Committee for Responsible Self Government.

The La Raza Unida candidates are George Garcia, Celia Rodriguez, Raul Ruiz, Arturo Sanchez and Daniel Zapata.

The third slate is made up of Linda M. Benitez, Alberto Sierra, Roy R. Neshak, Edward Rico Jr. and John P. Perez all of whom have been affiliated with ACTIELA in the past year.

On election day voters in the area will be polled on whether they are for or against incorporation. They will then choose a five-member City Council

from among 39 candidates. The council members would take office if a majority of voters approves incorporation.

Remaining candidates are Ralph Acevedo, Arturo S. Almanza, Manuel (Tank) Barrera, Joe R. Chavez, Alex Duran, Edward M. Granados, Al Hernandez, Marimara Alarcon Hernandez, Vernon (Benito) Juarez, David H. Lara, Robert L. Lopez and Ernest P. Mendivil.

Also Samuel Olague, Joe D. Rivera, Ray Rodriguez, Vincent Rubalcava, David Santiago, Bob Saavedra, John Ramirez Serrato, John Seigwein, Ben Talbert, Robert V. Torres, Alfred Valdez, Armida P. Vasquez and Ralph Vilalobos.