

MEASURE V NETS VICTORY

Half-cent tax hike a boon to Salinas libraries, services

When early results showed that Measure V was headed for victory, a small crowd at a Salinas restaurant exploded in cheers and hugs.

Measure V, the half-cent tax hike to fund libraries, recreation centers and other services, was ahead by a healthy margin Tuesday night.

"That would be a good leading indicator," said Dennis Donahue, co-chairman of the Measure V campaign.

Later in the evening, Mayor Anna Caballero took up the victory chant.

"What's exciting about this victory is that there was a great sense of despair nine months ago, and together we changed that around," she told an elated audience.

Facing an \$8 million budget deficit, the Salinas City Council voted last year to cut libraries and recreation services as a stop-gap measure. The libraries

began closing early this year, but after Caballero launched Rally Salinas to raise money to keep the city's three libraries open, they remained in operation for a combined 33 hours a week.

The campaign drew an unprecedented amount of support from a coalition of labor, business and religious leaders, who together walked precincts this weekend and worked the phones Monday and Tuesday to get out the vote.

It's estimated that the half-cent tax will raise about \$11 million per year for the next 10 years, money that will be used to restore library and recreation center services as well as fund more police officers and firefighters. An oversight committee independent of the City Council will oversee those funds.

"We created a great sense of community," Caballero told the crowd. "But our job is not done.

We need to decide what gets replaced, what gets to improve. But today we proved that every vote counts."

An hour after polls closed at 8 p.m. Tuesday, a local television station continued flashing the early numbers released by the Registrar of Voter's office — and every time supporters saw a modest lead at the bottom of the screen, they cheered.

Later, they learned their numbers were lower than initially predicted because of a glitch in the early absentee ballot reports. But the measure's percentage grew steadily, matching the predictions of non-scientific pollsters and consultants.

"It's difficult to imagine this is going to be reversed," Donahue said.

By 9:20 p.m., when a second round of results came in, supporters declared victory.

