

## Town council eliminates competition with improper electic

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Posted: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 5:00 am

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The Town of Quartzsite, Ariz., recently used unlawful restrictions to limit the choices of voters in Ordinance 09-15 prohibits otherwise qualified candidates from running for council if they owe the town a good idea - who would oppose a ban on debtors running their town? But in reality, this ordinance current council members and prevent potential opponents from running for office.

The March 8 recall election was no different. Voters were asked whether they wished to recall five council members. The council limited the options for replacement council members. At least three potential candidates were disqualified under the ordinance. In at least one case, evidence establishing a candidate's debts to the town harmed a current council member, initially appointed to fill a vacancy and a target of the recall, with an amount of tax money.

This is why limitations on who may run for local office are set at the state level. Allowing current competition is the proverbial fox guarding the henhouse. An Arizona statute, A.R.S. § 9-232, establishes the qualifications for council candidates. A council member must be at least 18 years old and a qualified elector living in the town. The town recognized that towns cannot set qualifications beyond those established by this statute.

If Quartzsite thinks it is a good idea to place additional limits on who may run for town council, it should pass a new law with those limits. Otherwise, it should repeal the unlawful ordinance and in the next election elect the qualified candidates they believe will best represent them.

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