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Benoit delays move to county board

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The Desert Sun*

Sen. John J. Benoit is delaying his transition to Riverside County supervisor until Dec. 1, reducing the potential price of the special elections for his state Senate seat.

Benoit, who originally was going to be sworn in on Monday, rescinded his earlier resignation letter and told leaders he will instead resign his state post on Nov. 30.

He will be sworn in as supervisor during the county board's Dec. 1 meeting.

The delay allows the special general election to fill the 37th Senate seat to occur with the statewide June election and save taxpayers from funding two special elections, Benoit told The Desert Sun.

The general election would be needed only if no candidate wins the majority in a special primary election.

Estimates show the primary alone, tentatively scheduled for April 13, will cost upward of \$1.3 million.

"This whole scenario presents a savings if there is a need for a special general election," Benoit said.

"This is the only way to allow it to possibly happen."

Benoit, R-Bermuda Dunes, was appointed to the county post last week. He succeeds Roy Wilson, the longtime supervisor who died in August.

The June 2010 election is the same election in which voters would be electing a new county supervisor.

Riverside County supervisors have pushed for a quick appointment and transition.

Between the vacancy and other absences, supervisors have lacked the four-fifths vote required for many financial decisions and were forced to delay key budget votes.

Supervisor Jeff Stone, the board chairman, said in a statement that he appreciated Benoit's decision. He noted there "did not appear to be anything so urgent" that it "would justify expending up to \$1.3 million in extra taxpayer funded special election costs."

Because of the county's November meeting schedule, Benoit will only miss one meeting before his new start date.