

CALIFORNIA

June 2, 2026 Primary

Endorsements, Contributors & Opposition Research

Major candidates for Governor, Lt. Governor, Treasurer, Insurance Commissioner, and Superintendent of Public Instruction

Compiled May 5, 2026

What's in this briefing

Per major candidate:

top endorsements, top contributors, and documented vulnerabilities opponents may use in attack ads.

1

Governor

8 major candidates - 6 D, 2 R

Most fragmented field; no party endorsement

2

Lieutenant Governor

5 major candidates

Open seat; Kounalakis termed out

3

Treasurer

3 major Democratic candidates

Kounalakis vs. Caballero is the central contest

4

Insurance Commissioner

5 major candidates - 4 D, 1 R

Open seat; wildfire crisis dominates

5

Superintendent of Public Instruction

5 major candidates (nonpartisan)

Wide open; major unions split

How to read each candidate slide

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

Most consequential individual, organizational, and editorial-board endorsements. Sourced from campaigns, party orgs, and reporting.

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

Largest individual donors, PACs, IEs, and dominant donor industries. Figures reflect filings reported through Q1 2026.

VULNERABILITIES

Documented past statements, votes, business or personal conduct that opponents are likely to use in attack ads. Neutral list, not endorsed by Claude.

01 Governor

Open seat. Newsom termed out. 61 candidates qualified; 8 have led media coverage.

8 MAJOR CANDIDATES

Katie Porter

DEMOCRAT

Former U.S. Representative (CA-45/CA-47)

Front-runner for a top-two slot; small-dollar fundraising leader.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Federation of Labor Unions, AFL-CIO (co-endorsement)
- California Environmental Voters
- United Nurses Associations of CA / UNAC-UHCP
- McClatchy California editorial board (Sacramento, Modesto, Fresno, Merced, San Luis Obispo)
- Asm. Cottie Petrie-Norris and many former House colleagues
- Elizabeth Warren

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Total raised through 12/31/2025: ~\$6.07M; cash on hand ~\$3.23M
- Refuses corporate PAC and federal-lobbyist money
- Heavy small-dollar online base (her Senate-race signature)
- Industries: education, women's-issue groups, entertainment/TV-film, publishing, retired professionals
- Notable PAC support: progressive women's groups (EMILYs List network)

VULNERABILITIES

- April 2026: Washington Post / viral video of Porter shouting 'Get out of my f---ing shot!' at a 2021 staffer
- Multiple ex-staffers allege hostile workplace, racial-slur and sexual-harassment-handling complaints (Politico, Free Beacon, Newsweek)
- Leaked texts berating staff who got COVID
- May 2026 ad joking about her temper backfired in friendly outlets
- On The View, deflected by suggesting critics target women and people of color
- Lost 2024 U.S. Senate primary to Schiff - 'can't win statewide' frame

Tom Steyer

DEMOCRAT

Billionaire investor; founder of Farallon Capital and NextGen America

Dominant money story; \$147M+ self-funded - second-largest in CA history.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- Our Revolution (Sanders-founded)
- Courage California
- Environmental - Sierra Club, Cal Env. Voters, NRDC Action Fund, Third Act
- Ro Khanna, Betty Yee, Alex Lee, Ash Kalra
- Labor - CA School Employees Assn (CSEA), CA Nurses Assn (CNA), CA AFL-CIO, IFPTE Local 21, IATSE, Food & Water Action
- YIMBY Action & Abundant Housing LA

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Self-funded ~\$147M of ~\$147.3M total - 2nd largest self-financed CA gov campaign ever
- Steyer-aligned IE committees crowded the airwaves through spring 2026
- Individual donors are a minor fraction of his haul
- Effectively a one-donor campaign

VULNERABILITIES

- Farallon financed coal mines and coal-fired plants in Indonesia, China, Australia (incl. Adani-run Australian terminal)
- Filings show he kept Farallon-fund stakes for years after his 2012 'departure'
- Past Farallon-affiliated investments in private prisons / detention companies undermine his anti-ICE messaging
- 2020 presidential bid: spent ~\$340M, won zero delegates - electability frame
- 'Need to Impeach' brand polarizes a top-two general electorate

Xavier Becerra

DEMOCRAT

Former HHS Secretary; former CA Attorney General

Surging in polls but carrying two simultaneous federal-record scandals.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- CHIRLA Action Fund
- Asian American Action Fund (AAAFund)
- California Faculty Association (CFA) - dual with Thurmond
- Latino Caucus, immigrant-rights advocates
- Equality California
- Dolores Huerta

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Q4 2025/early 2026 raised ~\$1M - trails Porter (\$2.8M) and Steyer (self-funded)
- Donor base overlaps establishment LA / Bay Area Democratic networks
- Reportedly shares 21+ donors with former Swalwell campaign
- Industries: health care, organized labor, attorneys, Latino business

VULNERABILITIES

- HHS missing-children: NYT (2023) - lost contact with ~85,000 unaccompanied minors; reportedly likened the process to 'an assembly line'
- Feb 2024 HHS OIG audit cited serious sponsor-screening deficiencies
- Nov 2025 Politico: chief-of-staff Sean McCluskie pleaded guilty to federal conspiracy/bank/wire fraud for siphoning hundreds of thousands from Becerra's campaign
- Reporting describes him as low-profile during COVID; CNN contributor: 'was not effective' as HHS Sec
- AG-era court rebukes on public-records / police-misconduct disclosure

Antonio Villaraigosa

DEMOCRAT

Former Mayor of Los Angeles; former Assembly Speaker

Veteran politician; documented personal and ethics history follows every campaign.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California State Building & Construction Trades Council
- PORAC (Peace Officers Research Association of CA)
- CA Pipe Trades Council, Operating Engineers, Iron Workers DCIW
- CA State Assoc. of Electrical Workers
- California Federation of Labor (co-endorsement)
- Former U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer (campaign co-chair); LA Mayor Karen Bass

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Donor base: trade unions, building/construction PACs, real-estate and developer interests
- Industries: construction, real estate, energy/utilities, public-safety unions, hospitality
- Detailed itemized donor data not yet posted to OpenSecrets; rely on Cal-Access/FPPC

VULNERABILITIES

- 2007 affair with Telemundo reporter Mirthala Salinas while still married; wife filed for divorce citing adultery
- 2010: settled and paid \$42,000 in fines for accepting 80+ free entertainment/sports tickets while mayor
- Past ethics investigations on campaign finance and unreported gifts
- Critics: housing/homelessness record thin; UCLA study noted 'main additional shelter' was state prisons / county jails
- Lost 2018 governor primary to Newsom

Matt Mahan

Mayor of San Jose

DEMOCRAT

Tech-money moderate polling in single digits despite ~\$36M in committee spending.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- Rep. Sam Liccardo (mayoral predecessor); Rep. Ami Bera (post-Swalwell)
- State Sen. Catherine Blakespear; Asm. Maggy Krell
- Tech boosters: Garry Tan (Y Combinator), Arjun Sethi (Kraken), Mike Solana (Founders Fund)

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Total raised: ~\$36M (campaign + allied IEs)
- Top individual donors: Sergey Brin, Joe Lonsdale (Palantir), Michael Moritz
- Major IEs: 'CA Back to Basics' and 'Govern For California' - ~\$25M raised, ~\$19M ad spend through April 18, 2026
- Industries: Silicon Valley tech, venture capital, charter-school advocates, real estate

VULNERABILITIES

- April 2026 reporting: staff upheaval, top strategist exit, persistent single-digit polling
- Hired a Republican strategist to head his governor campaign
- Asm. Ash Kalra and Alex Lee: tool of 'millionaire tech elitists'
- Opposed 2023 San Jose municipal-union contract that raised wages and parental leave - labor frames as anti-worker
- City Hall staffers raised concerns about blending official and personal-brand social media
- Closed-door 'transition committees' on homelessness/public safety flagged as transparency violations

Tony Thurmond

DEMOCRAT

Sitting State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Long-tenured public servant; bottom of the major Democratic field on dollars.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Faculty Association (CFA) - dual with Becerra
- IBEW locals
- Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA)
- Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club
- Education-leader and local-elected endorsements statewide
- Various unions including IUEC Local 8, IBEW Local 952

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Total raised through Q1 2026: ~\$1.6M across ~1,769 contributions
- Donor base: K-12 educators, school administrators, individual progressive donors
- Industries: education, public-sector labor, civil-rights nonprofits

VULNERABILITIES

- Sept 2021 Politico: ~24 senior CDE officials departed; ex-employees alleged 'toxic' workplace and abusive management
- July 2020 hire of Daniel Lee as 'superintendent of equity' - a Philadelphia resident - appeared to violate CA residency rule for state employees
- 2023 Chino Valley meeting ouster recycled by both flanks
- Bottom-tier fundraising and weak polling open 'wasted vote' attacks

Steve Hilton

REPUBLICAN

Former U.K. political strategist; former Fox News host

GOP fundraising leader; biography provides plenty for opponents in both parties.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- President Donald Trump
- Vivek Ramaswamy
- U.S. Reps. Tom McClintock (R) and Kevin Kiley (I)
- Running mate: former state Sen. Gloria Romero (Lt. Gov. ticket)
- Did NOT receive formal CAGOP endorsement (no candidate cleared 60% in April)

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Total raised: \$7.14M+ through 18,000+ contributions - leading GOP candidate
- Donor base: small-dollar conservative grassroots (national Trump-aligned audience)
- Some California real-estate and energy executive donors
- Industries: real estate, energy, retired/conservative donors, conservative media network

VULNERABILITIES

- Born in U.K., U.S. citizen only since 2021; renounced British citizenship for £492
- Bianco questioned the speed of his naturalization in primary debate
- Pro-Brexit; former adviser to U.K. PM David Cameron - 'foreign political consultant' frame
- Trump endorsement is double-edged in a top-two CA general
- Failed to win formal CAGOP endorsement at April 2026 convention
- Bay Area multimillionaire running on affordability

Chad Bianco

Sheriff of Riverside County

REPUBLICAN

Tough-on-crime, anti-Newsom messaging; Oath Keepers history is the central liability.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California sheriffs and law-enforcement associations
- Riverside County GOP
- Failed CAGOP endorsement at April 2026 convention (49% of delegates)

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Trails Hilton in fundraising by ~half - ~\$3-4M raised through April 2026
- Donor base: law-enforcement PACs, conservative individual donors, Inland Empire business
- Industries: agriculture, public-safety unions (rank-and-file), small business, gun-rights groups

VULNERABILITIES

- Confirmed dues-paying member of the Oath Keepers in 2014 (exposed in 2021 hack); NPR/ABC/LAist
- May 2026 debate: said 'very proud' of his Oath Keepers affiliation when pressed by CNN's Kaitlan Collins
- Cal State San Bernardino hate-and-extremism expert: 'extremely problematic'
- March 2026: deputies seized ballots in a Riverside redistricting referendum dispute (Democracy Docket)
- Refused to enforce CA pandemic public-health orders in 2020-21

Gubernatorial Primary

Personal Perspective - not a club position

1 Vote for a Democrat likely to exceed 20% of votes

California's top-two primary sends only the top two vote-getters to November — regardless of party. With many Democrats splitting the vote, the safest play is to back whichever Democrat is polling highest.

The threshold: Any Democrat polling above ~20% is mathematically safe — Republicans are unlikely to have 2 candidates both exceed that mark.

2 Vote by May 28–30

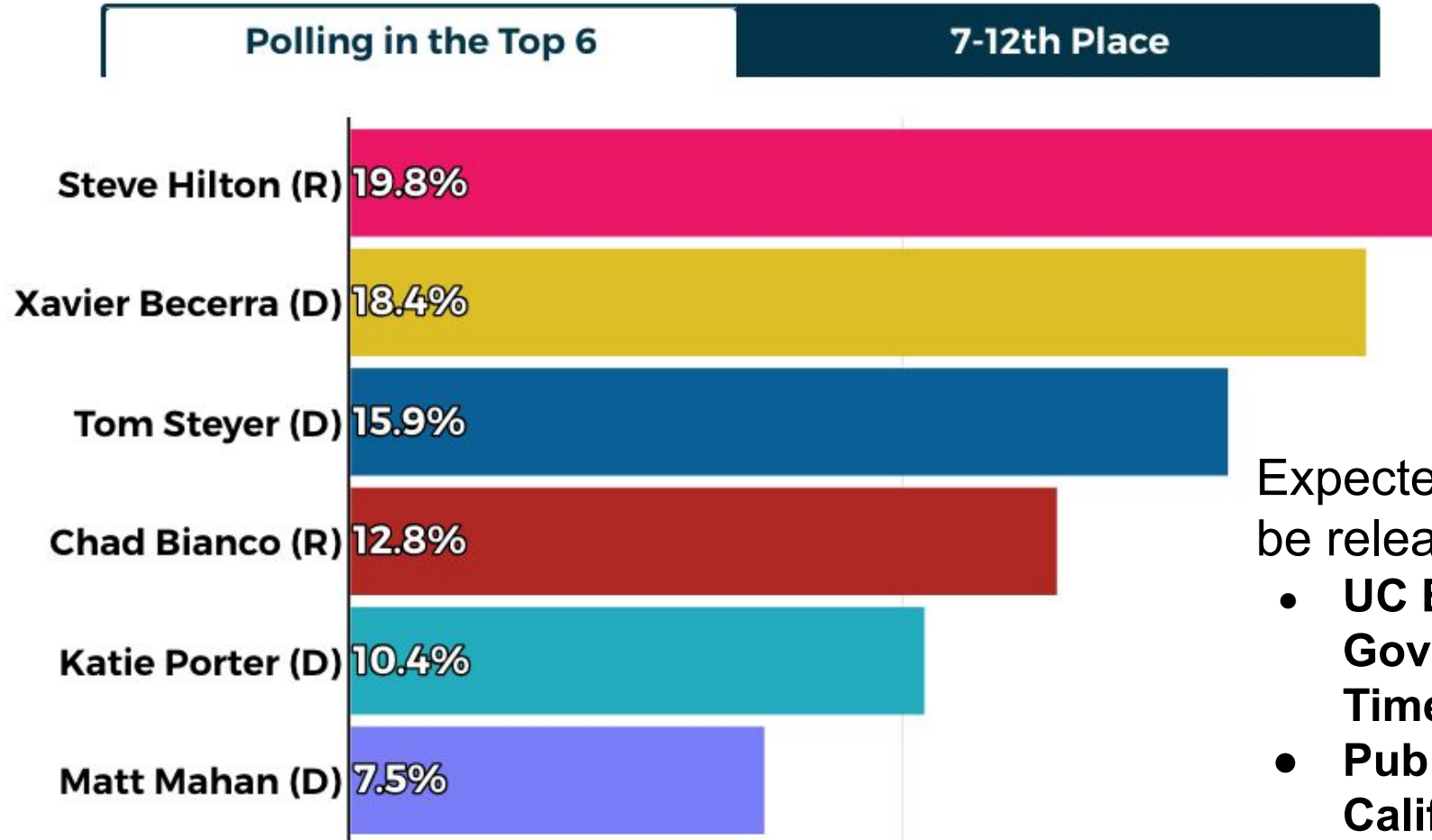
The field is volatile. Waiting until the final days before Election Day (June 2) gives you the most current polling picture before committing. Dropping your ballot at a vote center or drop box May 28–30 captures that information advantage.

Not Election Day itself: Late returns slow California's already sluggish count. May 28–30 captures the same information with less friction.

Last Updated on May 15, 2:10 PM ET

2026 California Governor Primary Polling Average

Switch Between Polling Tiers



Expected remaining major polls to be released before election day are:

- UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) / LA Times
- Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC)
- Emerson College

02 Lieutenant Governor

Open seat. Kounalakis termed out. Three major Democratic candidates and one CAGOP-endorsed Republican.

<https://calmatters.org/california-voter-guide-2026/lieutenant-governor/>

https://ballotpedia.org/California_lieutenant_gubernatorial_election,_2026

3 Dems 1 Republican

Considered a largely symbolic position, the lieutenant governor is next in line if the governor is absent or vacates the office. The lieutenant governor, a position held by Newsom from 2011 to 2019, also serves on boards that oversee the University of California, California State University and community college systems. In the rare event of a tie vote in the state Senate, the lieutenant governor can cast a tie-breaking vote.

Three Top Democrat Candidates. out of 16 total. Honorable mention Janelle Kellman and [Oliver Ma](#) [Source](#)

- [Josh Matthew Fryday](#) (D): The former Navy officer had been head of Gov. Newsom's volunteer office since 2019. He also was mayor of Novato and COO of climate advocacy group NextGen America.
- [Fiona Ma](#) (D): One of the higher profile names in the field, Ma has served in several state official roles. She has been state treasurer since 2019 and was previously on the Board of Equalization. Ma served four terms in the state Legislature.
- [Michael Tubbs](#) (D): The leader of a nonprofit devoted to combating poverty in California, Tubbs became the youngest and first Black mayor of Stockton at 26 in 2016. In 2021, he was appointed as a special economic advisor to the governor.

Josh Fryday

DEMOCRAT

Director of California Volunteers (Newsom administration)

Newsom-anointed candidate; second-fastest fundraiser in the race.



TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- Governor Gavin Newsom (most consequential individual endorsement)
- California Teachers Association (CTA)
- California Federation of Teachers (CFT)
- California School Employees Association (CSEA)
- California Environmental Voters
- VoteVets; California Legislative Jewish Caucus
- Sen. Barbara Boxer; Pete Buttigieg; State Sens. Hurtado and Stern

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Raised ~\$2.6M in <10 months through year-end 2025; cash on hand ~\$1.97M
- Donor base: Newsom-network donors, education unions, veterans' groups, North Bay tech / venture donors
- Industries: technology, education, real estate, veterans/defense

VULNERABILITIES

- Heavy reliance on Newsom endorsement and Newsom donor list - 'continuity of a discredited administration' frame from R and from progressive D
- California Volunteers / #CaliforniansForAll programs are politically appointed - any auditor/controller findings become his to own
- Limited prior elected experience: one term as Mayor of Novato (~50,000 pop.) - 'not ready for statewide' attack

Fiona Ma

Sitting State Treasurer

DEMOCRAT



Money and union-endorsement leader; carries a settled sexual-harassment civil case.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
- Teamsters California, various labor unions
- LIUNA California
- California Nurses Association
- Majority of Assembly Democrats
- Highest delegate support at 2026 CDP convention (no formal endorsement issued)
- Equity California
- California YIMBY
- LT Governor: Elena Kounalakis

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Cash on hand entering 2026: ~\$4.5M - largest in the field
- Top donor sectors: real estate, hospitality (restaurants/hotels), Asian-American business networks, organized labor
- Major PAC support: building-trades and hospitality IEs

VULNERABILITIES

- Sept 2024: California paid \$350,000 to settle a 2021 sexual-harassment lawsuit by former state tax official Judith Blackwell
- Lawsuit alleged Ma exposed herself and crawled into bed with Blackwell on shared official trips
- State settled before scheduled trial; Sacramento Co. judge had cleared harassment claims to proceed
- Ma denied wrongdoing and called the suit 'frivolous' - settlement amount remains an attack hook
- Flirted with running for governor before downsizing - 'no stable plan' frame

Michael Tubbs

Former Mayor of Stockton

DEMOCRAT



National-media darling with a 2020 home-town loss that opponents will not let voters forget.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- SEIU California
- Former U.S. Sen. Laphonza Butler
- U.S. Reps. Sam Liccardo and Ro Khanna
- Dolores Huerta
- Oakland Mayor Barbara Yee
- California Yimby
- California Legislative Black Caucus
- Various Young Democrats Clubs
- California Working Families Party
- AFSCME

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- >\$400K raised in his first week; ~87% of 973 first-week donors gave under \$100
- Notable individual donors: Ram Shriram (\$5,000), Michael Seibel (\$9,100), Snap CEO Evan Spiegel
- Outside support: Steve Phillips \$10M IE effort with Quinn Delaney and Wayne Jordan
- Industries: tech, philanthropic/anti-poverty foundations, Bay Area VC

VULNERABILITIES

- Nov 2020: lost re-election to Kevin Lincoln 57-43, after winning in 2016 with 70%
- Coverage attributed loss to '209 Times' misinformation, frequent absence from Stockton, opposition from police and firefighter unions, frustration over local crime and homelessness
- Universal Basic Income pilot (SEED) celebrated nationally but a recurring Republican 'free money' attack

03 Treasurer

Job responsibilities: "merely clerical", "lacks creativity"

- Sell bonds
- Award tax credits
- Oversee pension funds
- Invest billions in idle cash for maximum return

2 major candidates: Kounalakis vs. Caballero

Eleni Kounalakis

DEMOCRAT

Sitting Lieutenant Governor; former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- Hillary Clinton
- Nancy Pelosi
- Governor Gavin Newsom
- CA Labor Federation
- Teamsters CA (labor union)
- National Union of Healthcare Workers

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Largest cash account in the race by far
- Individuals: Tsakopoulos family / Bay Area developers / Greek-American business community
- Industries: real estate, finance, hospitality, Democratic women's-issue PACs



Anna Caballero

DEMOCRAT

State Senator; State Assemblymember; Salinas Mayor; cabinet member of Jerry Brown

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- Robert Rivas
- Monique Limón
- CA Latino Legislative Caucus
- CA Conference of Carpenters
- CA State Assoc. of Electrical Workers
- CA Democratic Legislative Women's Caucus
- CA Young Democrats

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Out-raised Kounalakis since the start of 2026, though Kounalakis has more cash banked
- Central Valley agribusiness, Latino-business networks, building trades unions
- Industries: agriculture, construction, labor



Kounalakis vs. Caballero

DEMOCRAT

	Kounalakis	Caballero
identity	Greek	Hispanic
firsts	first woman CA lieutenant governor first Greek American CA lieutenant governor	first woman Salinas mayor first Latina D28 state assemblymember first Latina D12 state senator
policy interests	higher education, environment, housing	agriculture, rural economy, housing
criticisms	treasurer as stepping stone	not environmental enough

04 Insurance Commissioner

Open seat. Wildfire-coverage crisis dominates.

Job responsibilities:

- **Rate Regulation:** Approval gate for premium rate increases for auto, home, and workers' comp
- **Oversight:** Validates that companies have financial reserves necessary to pay out claims.
- **Consumer Protection:** Investigates consumer complaints, recovers overcharges for policyholders.
- **Licenses:** over 500,000 brokers, agents, & adjusters
- **Enforcement - investigation and prosecution of fraud**
- **Disaster Response & Climate Change:** Helps consumers recover from natural disasters & crafts policies to encourage insurers to cover in high-risk zones.
- **Represents CA** to shape national insurance regulations and policy

5 MAJOR CANDIDATES

Ben Allen

State Senator (SD-24, Santa Monica); chair, Senate Env. Quality Committee

Establishment Democratic favorite by endorsement count.



DEMOCRAT

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- U.S. Sens. Adam Schiff and Alex Padilla
- Senate President pro Tempore Monique Limón
- Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas
- Former Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones
- California Environmental Voters & Sierra Club
- California Professional Firefighters; teacher and broadband groups
- More than two dozen sitting state legislators

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Total raised: ~\$1.16M; cash on hand ~\$2.64M as of 12/31/2025
- Pledge: no contributions from insurance companies or executives
- Industries: technology/broadband, environmental groups, attorneys, education unions, climate-philanthropy donors

VULNERABILITIES

- Plastics bill SB 54 originally failed in 2020 after multimillion-dollar industry lobbying - opponents on right call it overreach, on left point to compromises in implementing rules
- Long Senate voting record (entertainment, broadband, environmental) provides attack mining
- Westside LA base; financial-services and broadband PAC contributions in Senate career - 'corporate Democrat' compression

Steven Bradford

Former state Senator (SD-35); former Assemblymember

Switched to IC from Lt. Governor; former 12-year Edison executive.



DEMOCRAT

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA)
- State Building and Construction Trades Council
- Teamsters California / Joint Council 7; ILWU Local 13
- Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA)
- Treasurer Fiona Ma; Secretary of State Shirley Weber
- Former Sen. pro Tem Toni Atkins; Speaker Emeritus John A. Pérez
- U.S. Reps. Adam Gray and Luz Rivas

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Donor base: organized labor (trades, public-safety, longshore), Black political infrastructure, utility-sector executives carried over from Senate career
- Industries: organized labor (esp. trades, public safety), utilities/energy, telecom

VULNERABILITIES

- 12 years as a Southern California Edison public-affairs executive before the legislature
- In Assembly, chaired Committee on Utilities and Commerce - jurisdiction over electricity, gas, telecom, private water
- Energy-and-Policy Institute and other watchdogs flag the revolving-door optics
- Mid-cycle switch from Lt. Governor to IC - 'looking for any seat' frame
- Past utility-friendly Senate votes will be cited by reformer-coalition critics on the left

Jane Kim

*Former San Francisco Supervisor; former CA director, Working Families Party
Sanders-aligned progressive; runs a 'no insurance money' pledge.*



DEMOCRAT

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (VT)
- U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna
- Malia Cohen - CA Controller
- Eleni Kounalakis - Lt Gov.
- Dolores Huerta
- SEIU California
- California Teachers Association (CTA)
- California Nurses Association
- UFCW Western States Council
- Working Families Party
- Our Revolution

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Pledge: no contributions from insurance companies or executives
- Donor base: progressive small-dollar online network, Bay Area Asian-American donors, public-sector union PACs
- Industries: public-sector labor, retail/grocery (UFCW), progressive advocacy

VULNERABILITIES

- Lead author of 2011 'Twitter tax break' (Mid-Market payroll-tax exemption) - progressives still hold it against her; pro-tech moderates note it
- 2018 SF mayoral special election: finished third with ~24% in first round
- Long record of votes opposing some SoMa development projects - housing-supply groups recycle it
- Past Working Families Party leadership gives Republicans a 'far-left' frame for November

Patrick Wolff

Financial analyst; first-time candidate; 2x U.S. Chess Champion

Self-funder; data-driven outsider campaign.



DEMOCRAT

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- Limited institutional endorsements
- Outsider, data-driven campaign messaging

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Largely self-funded: ~\$600,000 of personal money
- Industries: finance/asset management individual donors, chess and Harvard alumni networks

VULNERABILITIES

- Has never held public office
- Got his California P&C insurance license during the campaign - 'cramming for a license to run an agency' (Capitol Weekly)
- Without a deeper donor base, opponents argue he can be vastly outspent in a general

Stacy Korsgaden

Independent insurance agent (40+ years licensed); CAGOP-endorsed

Industry insider running on deregulation in a post-wildfire environment.



REPUBLICAN

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Republican Party (formal endorsement)
- California Republican Assembly
- Various Republican county central committees

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Smaller money operation than leading Democrats
- Relies on GOP base and independent insurance-agent networks
- Industries: insurance agents/brokers, small business, agriculture

VULNERABILITIES

- 37+ years as a Farmers Insurance agent (sold agency in 2023) - industry-insider regulating insurers, especially after the 2025 LA wildfire-coverage crisis
- Has called for repealing or rolling back Prop 103 (1988 voter initiative giving the commissioner pre-approval power over rates) - Consumer Watchdog will hammer this
- Per Consumer Watchdog: declined to commit to a 5-year ban on insurance-industry job after leaving office
- Only major Republican in a Democrat-heavy electorate - loses 'consumer crusader' framing in a general

05 Superintendent of Public Instruction

Officially nonpartisan. Race wide open; major teacher and labor unions split.

5 MAJOR CANDIDATES

Richard Barrera

DEMOCRAT (NPP RACE)

President, San Diego Unified School Board (18 years on the board)

CTA endorsement is his shield; San Diego Unified's record is his exposure.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Teachers Association (CTA) - 310,000 members
- No SPI candidate has won statewide without CTA in 44 years
- San Diego-area education and community-organizing groups

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Funded primarily by CTA's IE committee plus individual educators
- Industries: K-12 public-education union infrastructure, San Diego progressive donors

VULNERABILITIES

- On his watch as multi-term board member and current president, San Diego Unified has experienced ~14% county-wide enrollment decline (Voice of San Diego/inewssource)
- School closures and persistent achievement gaps for Black and Latino students
- Times of San Diego op-ed (Feb 2026): teacher union 'wrong' to endorse Barrera; framed as union-anointed insider
- Pre-board career: president of UFCW Local 135; Times of San Diego cites multiple public allegations and lawsuits during his presidency involving harassment, gender discrimination, and retaliation, and argues Barrera 'chose power' over reform
- Limited statewide name ID outside San Diego

Al Muratsuchi

State Assemblymember (AD-66); former Assembly Education Committee chair

Long Assembly voting record creates plenty of votes that can be cherry-picked.

DEMOCRAT (NPP RACE)

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Federation of Teachers (CFT)
- California School Employees Association (CSEA)
- California Federation of Labor Unions, AFL-CIO
- Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)
- Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas
- State Sens. Lena Gonzalez and Maria Elena Durazo
- Former State Superintendent Jack O'Connell

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Total raised: ~\$648,575
- Top organizational donors: SEIU \$41,500; ILWU \$20,400; CSEA PAC \$19,600; CTA \$18,115; ACSA \$9,800
- Industries: K-12 labor (CFT, CSEA, classified employees), longshore (ILWU), public-sector labor

VULNERABILITIES

- AB 715 (antisemitism, 2025): criticized the bill but abstained on the floor - drew attacks from both Pro-Palestine groups (CodePink, Truthout) and Pro-Israel critics
- AB 84 (charter accountability, 2025) collapsed in the final days of session; rival SB 414 passed - high-profile loss
- AB 345 (oil 2,500-foot setbacks, 2020) failed in committee 5-4
- Heavily aligned with CFT/CSEA while CTA went to Barrera - 'second-choice teacher-union candidate'

Anthony Rendon

Former Speaker of the California Assembly (2016-2023)

Speakership built him a vast donor list and a long list of scars.

DEMOCRAT (NPP RACE)

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Federation of Labor Unions, AFL-CIO
- SEIU California
- California Association of Professional Firefighters
- Dozens of state and local elected officials

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Strong fundraising tied to his Speaker-era network of donors and PACs
- Industries: public-sector labor (SEIU, firefighters), early-childhood education, downtown-LA civic and labor donors

VULNERABILITIES

- SB 562 (single-payer, 2017): as Speaker, shelved the bill citing missing funding/delivery details
- Triggered a National Nurses United-led recall threat; iconic 'knife-in-the-bear' image
- NNU and other progressives have repeatedly framed the move as serving insurance-industry interests
- Faced 2022 internal Assembly leadership transition negotiation with Robert Rivas
- Indivisible and other progressive groups ran public criticism campaigns over housing/climate/reform bills that died in his Assembly
- Less of a 'classroom' figure than competitors - last ran an early-childhood program before politics, more than a generation ago

Joshua Newman

Former state Senator (SD-29); former Senate Education Committee chair

Building-trades-backed; 2018 recall is the central oppo line.

DEMOCRAT (NPP RACE)

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- State Building and Construction Trades Council of California
- 12+ unions in trades (electrical, insulation, commercial/industrial)
- County and district school superintendents and trustees (Cold Spring SD, Fresno Unified, Fullerton Joint Union HS, Humboldt County)

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Donor base: building-trades PACs, Orange County moderate-Democrat network, business and law-enforcement donors
- Industries: building/construction trades, business community, charter-school-friendly donors

VULNERABILITIES

- Recalled June 2018 with 59.5% in favor of removal after voting for SB 1 (12-cent gas tax / 20-cent diesel / DMV fees)
- His recall ended the Democratic Senate supermajority
- Voters fired him once' (R) and 'fragile statewide credibility' (D) - usable from both sides
- After winning the seat back in 2020, voted for some bills now flagged by environmental and progressive groups
- Charter-friendly donors wary of him given some labor-aligned votes

Sonja Shaw

President, Chino Valley Unified School Board

REPUBLICAN (NPP RACE)

Anti-trans-policy record is the central oppo line in any Democratic-leaning electorate.

TOP ENDORSEMENTS

- California Republican Party (CAGOP)
- California Republican Assembly; American Independent Party
- Sacramento County GOP and most CA county GOPs
- Moms for Liberty California chapter
- California Rifle & Pistol Association PAC
- Newspapers: SoCal News Group editorial boards (OC Register, LA Daily News, Daily Breeze, Long Beach Press-Telegram, Pasadena Star-News, San Gabriel Valley Tribune, Whittier Daily News, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, Riverside Press-Enterprise, San Bernardino Sun, Redlands Daily Facts)

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- Donor base: conservative parental-rights and school-choice donors, charter-school networks, evangelical and Inland Empire small-business donors
- Industries: charter schools / school choice, conservative advocacy, faith-based PACs

VULNERABILITIES

- July 2023: led 4-1 'forced outing' policy at Chino Valley Unified
- August 2023: AG Rob Bonta sued, calling the policy discriminatory and a privacy/equal-protection violation
- September 2023: TRO issued; later permanently halted as 'discriminatory' and 'unconstitutional'
- On-record board statements characterizing transgender students as 'mentally ill' or 'perverted' and saying they need 'non-affirming' parental responses to 'get better' - direct attack-ad fodder
- Oct 2024: led passage of 'No Deception' policy in response to AB 1955
- Moms for Liberty / CRPA endorsements help in the GOP base, hurt with moderates / independents in November

Sources & methodology

Cite, then re-confirm.

Endorsements & contributors:

CalMatters Voter Guide; Ballotpedia; CA Secretary of State Cal-Access; campaign endorsements pages; Transparency USA; OpenSecrets (federal); CA Federation of Labor; California Teachers Association; California Environmental Voters; CAGOP; California Republican Assembly; San Francisco Chronicle / Sacramento Bee / McClatchy editorial pages.

Vulnerabilities (oppo):

Reporting from Washington Post, NPR, ABC News, NBC News, CBS, NYT, Politico, Time, EdSource, Capitol Weekly, KQED, Capital Public Radio, Voice of OC, Voice of San Diego, Local News Matters, San Jose Spotlight, Free Beacon, Newsweek; court rulings (San Bernardino Superior Court re: Chino Valley); Democracy Docket; Consumer Watchdog; Energy & Policy Institute; Ballotpedia recall pages.

Notes:

Figures reflect filings reported through Q1 2026 unless noted. Items based on reporting from the past 30 days (e.g., May 2026 debate moments, Apr 2026 staff-treatment video) may move further before the June 2 primary - re-confirm before campaign use.

Executive Board Election

Nominating Committee: Peggy Shen Brewster, Sandi Spires, Susan Salop

Slate:

President: Doug Kunz

Vice President: Mike Serrone

Secretary: Gail Rubino

Treasurer: David Newswanger

Political Director: Martin Pyne

Communications Director: Ambrosia Studley

Membership Director: Kristel Wickham

Director at Large: Tara Martin-Milius

Director at Large: Guy Johnson