



2022 General Election Preview Part II -- Democrat vs. Democrat Races October 17, 2022

As noted in our part 1 report, the November 8 General Election will have lasting, long-term implications on the functions of the Legislature because approximately one-third of the Legislature will be newly elected. Those who win will be key in determining the tenor of the Legislature for the next decade and will be largely responsible for determining who the leaders of Assembly and Senate will be during that time.

Democrats are in full control of the legislative process with three-quarters of the Legislature comprised of Democrats. Therefore, questions of leadership and policy direction depend on who and what type of Democrat is elected. For the most part, all Democrats support labor and are pro-choice. However, Democrats do divide on issues of taxes, environmental and business regulation, government spending, public safety, and occasionally on labor and employment matters. In recent years, and especially during Governor Newsom's time in office, progressive Democratic policies and politicians have been on the rise, with the impact of moderate Democrats in decline.

California's unique political primary system allowing the top-two vote getters, regardless of party, to advance to the General Election, the November election features eight competitive races where a Democrat is facing another Democrat for the privilege of representing a district in the Legislature. In some cases, there might be little or no difference between the candidates and in others, there appears to be some ideological difference between the two.

Senate Democrat v. Democrat Races

SD 4 Marie Alvarado-Gil vs. Tim Robertson. This Sierra mountains and foothills Republican seat will be won by a Democrat because the six Republican candidates in the primary split up the vote so evenly, the top two vote getters ended up being the two Democratic candidates. It will be interesting to see how and if Republicans vote in this race between labor union leader Tim Robertson and a charter school administrator Marie Alvarado-Gil.

SD 8 Angelique Ashby v. Dave Jones. While this is a replay of the primary which Jones won by 5 points, recent developments suggest it could be a lot closer in November. Ashby has earned recent endorsements from both Governor Newsom and former Governor Jerry Brown. Spending in this intraparty race could exceed \$10 million.

SD 10 Lily Mei vs. Aisha Wahab. This Santa Clara and Alameda County race exemplifies the ideological divide in the Democratic Party between moderates and progressives with Fremont Mayor Lily Mei representing the moderate, business voice of the party and Hayward City Councilmember Aisha Wahab representing the progressive, labor union voice.

SD 20 Daniel Hertzberg vs. Caroline Menjivar. This San Fernando Valley race is less about the ideological divide in the Democratic Party as both candidates would likely be progressive votes in the Legislature.

Instead, this race questions whether a legislative seat should be handed down to the offspring of the existing seat holder at the expense of other aspiring activists and leaders. Daniel Hertzberg is the son of outgoing Senator Bob Hertzberg, and he is facing community activist Caroline Menjivar.

Assembly Democrat vs. Democrat Races

AD 10 Stephanie Nguyen vs. Eric Guerra. This Sacramento County race between two locally elected city councilmembers is a proxy fight between the established Democratic party machine and its labor union allies and the moderates in the party. Guerra has the backing of the party while Nguyen has the backing of business interests and public safety unions.

AD 12 Sara Aminzadeh vs. Damon Connolly. This is a race between two Marin County progressive Democrats whose voting records would likely be identical if elected to office. Connolly, as a current Marin County Supervisor, enjoys more financial support from the unions, while Aminzadeh is generating support from a statewide network of women and environmentalists.

AD 20 Liz Ortega vs. Shawn Kumagai. This East Bay race is another proxy fight between the moderate wing of the Democratic Party and the progressive wing. Ortega is a leader of the Alameda County Labor Council and is running with full support of the party apparatus. Kumagai is a former legislative staffer and gay, military veteran, running with support from business interests and Asian-American and LGBTQ political activists.

AD 35 Leticia Perez vs. Dr. Jasmeet Bains. This Kern County race to replace Assemblyman Rudy Salas is another fight between a traditional, union supported Democrat and a new Democrat. Leticia Perez is a Kern County Supervisor with strong Party and union support. Dr. Bains is a family physician running with support from the California Medical Association and other business interests. It is a replay of the June primary which Perez won by just a couple hundred votes.

Summary

With a couple of weeks to go, it is difficult to handicap who will prevail in these races. Some of the moderates running in these races are vying to replace other moderates but, in some cases, the outgoing legislator is a progressive and that could be a significant change. But how it plays out won't be evident until bills are introduced, committee memberships are formed, and votes on bills begin to happen. The more immediate impact will be in the Assembly when votes for Speaker are cast when session reconvenes. Before the summer recess Assemblymember Robert Rivas made an unsuccessful run at unseating Speaker Rendon as the leader of the Assembly. The outcome of these races could be critical in how the votes for Speaker play out between Rendon, Rivas or another Democrat.