



2026 California Primary Election

A Briefing for California Creamers Operators Association

The Alliance • Governor • State Legislature

Prepared by Walters Strategies • June 2026



Who Is the Alliance

A coalition of California agriculture, built to be heard in Sacramento.

WHO IS THE ALLIANCE

A Coalition That Works

California's major agricultural organizations, speaking with one voice.



Who Is Josh Walters

Two decades inside California politics, now leading Alliance strategy.



Josh Walters

Chief of Strategy

Alliance of California's Farmers & Ranchers



20+ years in Sacramento politics

Leadership roles in the State Legislature and the Senate Democratic Caucus.



Every arena of California politics

Candidate campaigns, independent expenditures, statewide and local races, and ballot measures.



Built to win for agriculture

Knows how Sacramento moves, and how to put dairy's priorities in front of the people who decide.

Two Ways We Work

The Alliance runs on two engines: relationships and electoral support.



Community Fund (c3)

Building Relationships

- Creates meaningful interactions with current and future policymakers.
- Fall Policy Forum: 24 to 48 hours together, educating legislators on our issues.
- Farm to Table Dinner: a signature Sacramento event that tells our story through food.



Electoral Support (c6)

Backing the Right Candidates

- Provides meaningful electoral support to current and future policymakers.
- Collaboration with partners acts as a force multiplier.
- The Alliance takes its own path, backing pragmatic candidates of both parties.

Providing Meaningful Electoral Support

California's Costs of Elections Creates Opportunities



California districts are enormous. Each Assembly district holds about **500,000 people**; each Senate district about **1,000,000**, larger than a U.S. House seat. Reaching that many voters is expensive.

Contribution Limited Environment + Expensive Communications



Media

California has some of the most expensive media markets in the country: Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Sacramento. TV time costs a premium.



Mail

Every mailer is a huge print-and-postage job. One mailer to a single Senate district runs **\$75,000 to \$100,000+**.



So who pays for it? Mostly outside groups: independent expenditures (IEs)

An **independent expenditure** is money an outside group spends to support or attack a candidate, separate from the campaign and **with no legal limit**. Direct donations to a candidate are capped at about \$5,900 per election. Because the costs above run so high, IEs are where most of the real money flows.



Diving into California's Political Landscape

STATEWIDE OFFICES

Who Advances in Statewide Offices

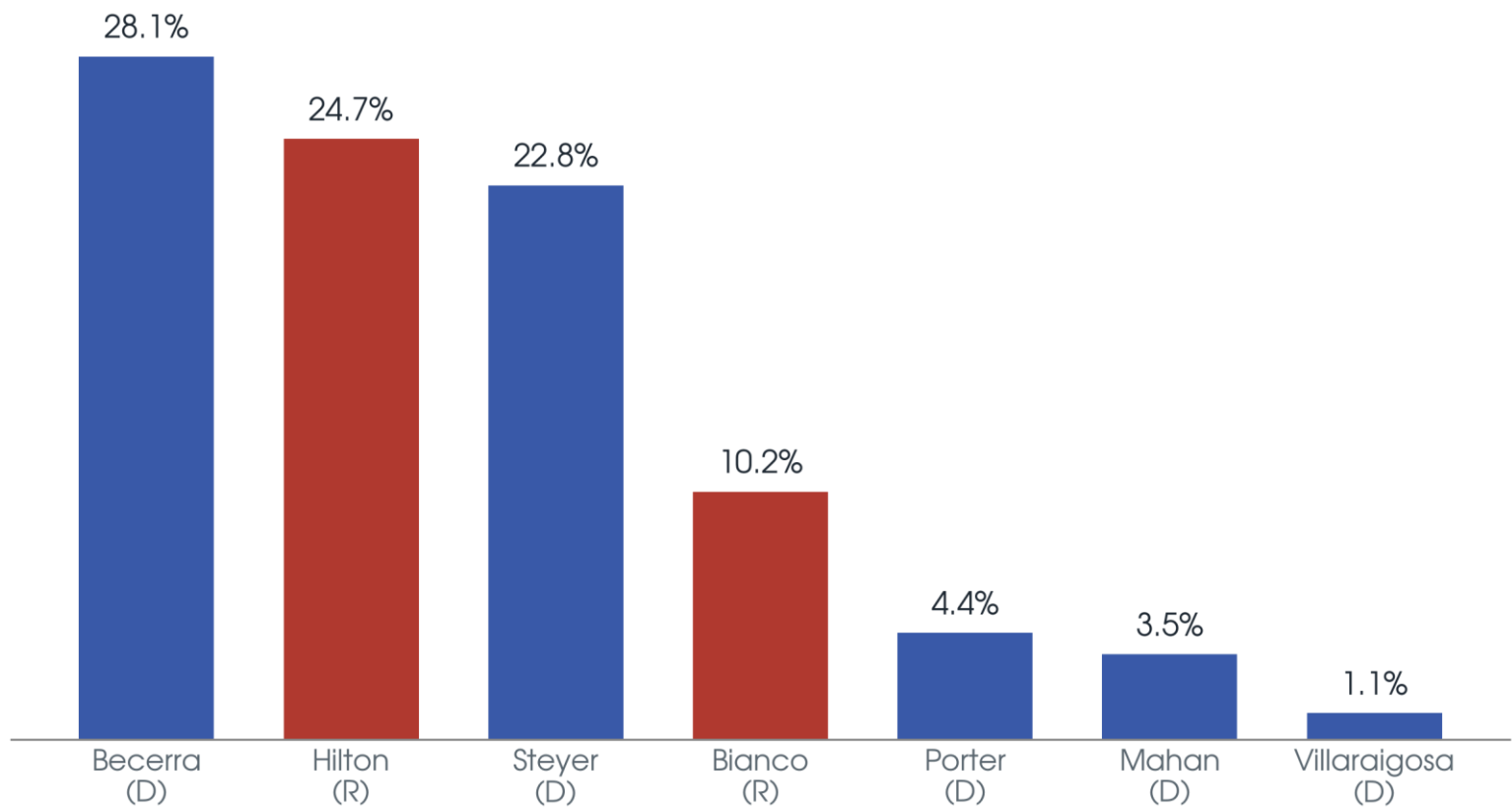
STATEWIDE VOTER REGISTRATION



Lieutenant Governor Fiona Ma Democrat State Treasurer/CPA Gloria Romero Republican Educator/Businesswoman	Attorney General Rob Bonta Democrat Incumbent Michael Gates Republican Deputy U.S. Attorney	Secretary of State Dr. Shirley Weber Democrat California Secretary of State Donald P. Wagner Republican Orange County Supervisor	Controller Malia Cohen Democrat State Controller/Mother Herb Morgan Republican Chief Investment Officer
Treasurer Eleni Kounalakis Democrat Lieutenant Governor of California Jennifer Hawks Republican Retired Businesswoman	Insurance Commissioner Jane Kim Democrat Attorney/Consumer Advocate Ben Allen Democrat California State Senator	Supt. of Public Instruction Sonja Shaw Republican School District President Richard Barrera Democrat State Superintendent Advisor	

Who Advances to November

Top two advance, regardless of party. Becerra and Hilton move on; Steyer fell just short despite the most spending behind him.



ADVANCING TO NOVEMBER

Xavier Becerra
Democrat
28.1% • 2,585,273 votes
Former U.S. Health Secretary & CA Attorney General

Steve Hilton
Republican
24.7% • 2,272,143 votes
Conservative commentator & businessman

Tom Steyer finished third despite self-funding the most expensive gubernatorial campaign in California's history.

The Money Picture

Outside groups (IEs) spent \$91 million on the Governor's primary alone, separate from what candidates raised themselves.

\$91.2M

Total outside (IE) spending

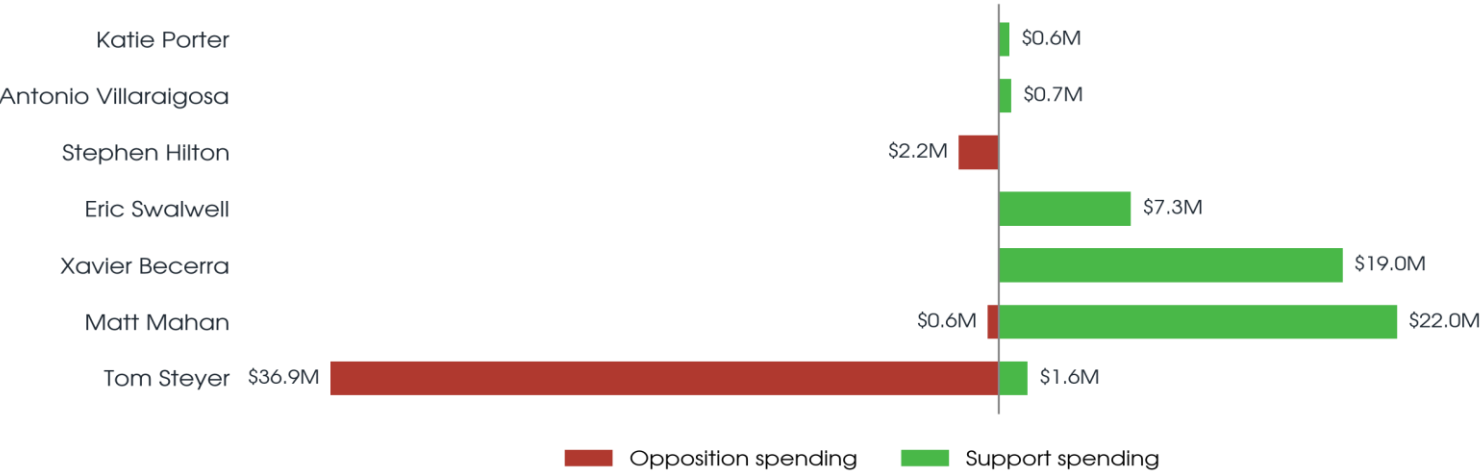
\$58.8M

Spent to SUPPORT candidates

\$39.6M

Spent to OPPOSE candidates

SUPPORT VS. OPPOSITION SPENDING, BY CANDIDATE



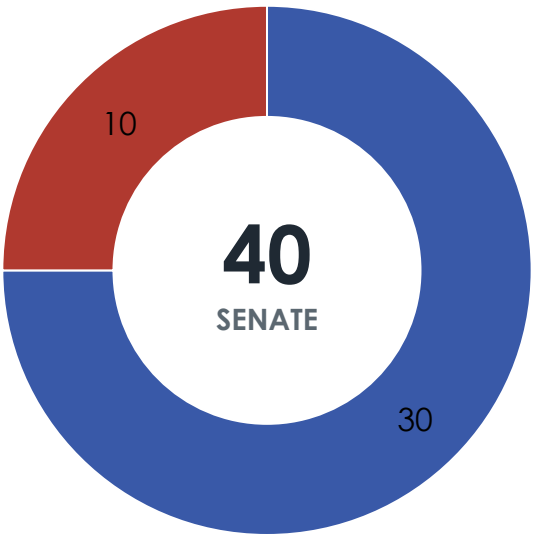
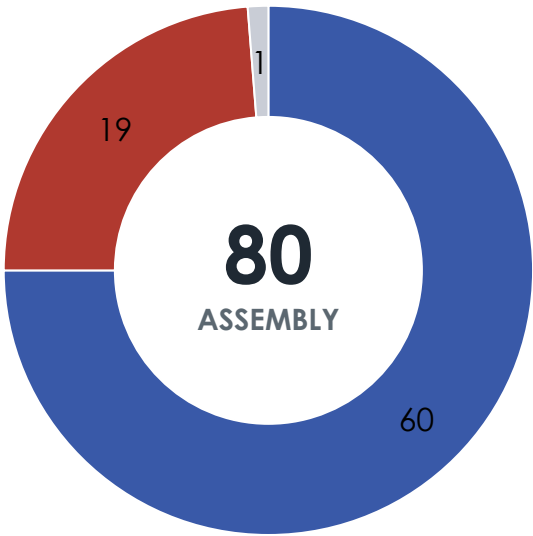
The Mahan Paradox

Matt Mahan drew the **most support spending in the field, +\$21.4M net.**

He still finished with just **3.5% of the vote.** Money buys airtime, not outcomes. A reminder that spending and votes are not the same thing.

Who Holds Power Now

Democrats hold a supermajority in both chambers — more than two-thirds of every seat.



ASSEMBLY — 60 D / 19 R / 1 vacant
SENATE — 30 D / 10 R

Why a supermajority matters

With two-thirds of seats, the majority party can **raise taxes, pass urgency measures, and override a veto** without a single vote from the other side.

Threshold for a two-thirds supermajority: 54 of 80 in the Assembly, 27 of 40 in the Senate. Both are currently exceeded.

How We Play the Game

We focus our efforts on three key strategies

1



Get the Best Blues

In safe Democratic seats, the question is not which party wins. It is which Democrat. We back the most pragmatic, business-friendly candidate.

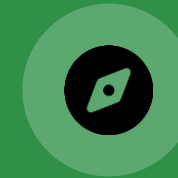
2



Save Reds

Republican-held must be protected. We help durable incumbents and nominees hold the line.

3



Navigate Toss-Ups

A small handful of seats are genuinely up for grabs. These decide the margin, so we engage carefully and pick our spots.

1. Get the Best Blues

2. Save Reds

3. Navigate Toss-Ups

AD 31 — Fresno

Open seat (Arambula) • Safe Democratic

ADVANCING TO NOVEMBER



Annalisa Perea

City Councilmember

44.6%

26,550 votes



Jim Polsgrove

Retired Engineering Tech

34.4%

20,483 votes



Why this one matters

A safe-blue Central Valley seat in the heart of farm country. November is a formality, so the relationship to build is with Perea, now.

VOTER REGISTRATION

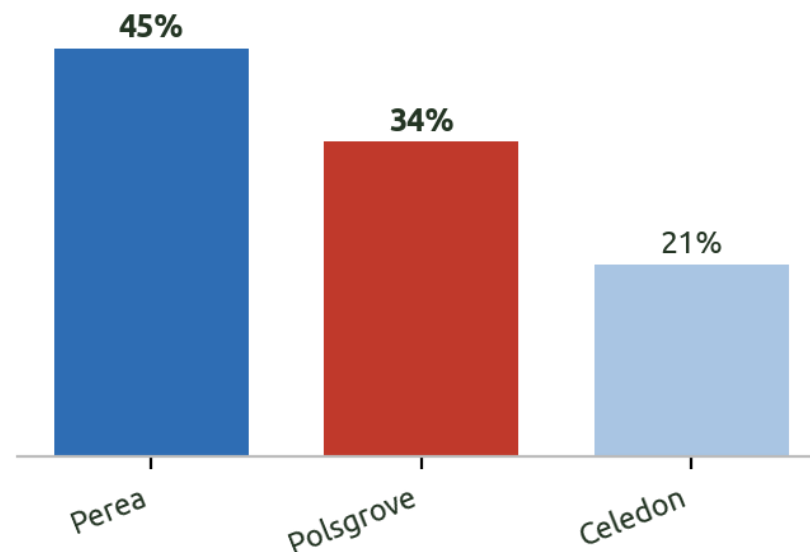


DEM 43.9%

REP 24.0%

NPP 23.3%

PRIMARY RESULTS



1. Get the Best Blues

2. Save Reds

3. Navigate Toss-Ups

AD 65 — Carson

Open seat (Gipson) • Safe Democratic

ADVANCING TO NOVEMBER



Ayanna Davis

Educator / School
Boardmember

46.3%

33,483 votes



Lydia Gutiérrez

Public School Teacher

19.2%

13,932 votes



Why this one matters

Deep-blue Los Angeles County. Was running against the progressive caucus chair. Davis is the incoming member worth knowing early.

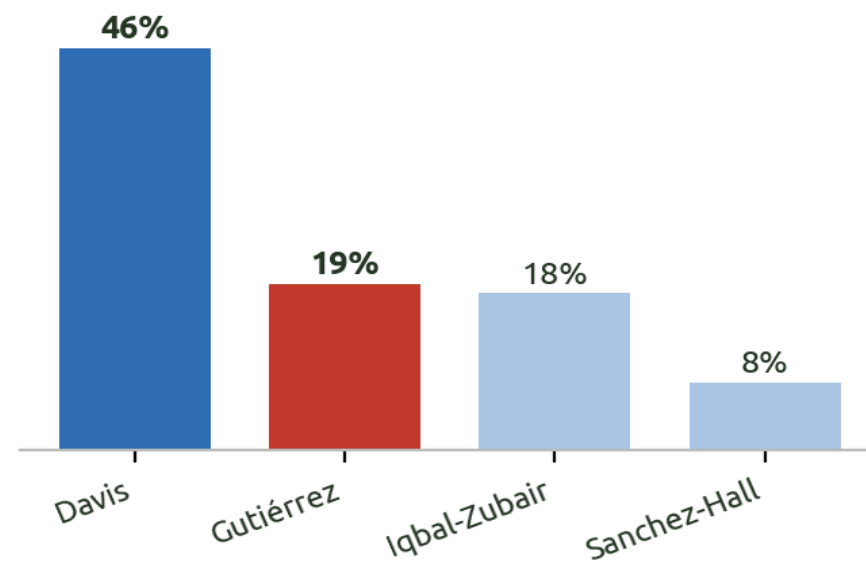
VOTER REGISTRATION



DEM 57.2%

REP 12.8% NPP 22.3%

PRIMARY RESULTS



Republican Seats to Protect

These are the seats we are helping to hold.

District	Advancing Republican	Primary %	Top Opponent	Outlook
AD 7 — Folsom	Josh Hoover (R)	50.9%	Amy Slavensky (D)	Protect / Lean R
AD 9 — Stanislaus	Heath Flora (R)	30.6%	Matthew Adams (D)	Safe R
AD 36 — Indio	Jeff Gonzalez (R)	44.6%	Ida Obeso-Martinez (D)	Protect / Lean D
AD 47 — Bermuda Dunes	Greg Wallis (R)	48.1%	Leila Namvar (D)	Protect / Lean D
AD 74 — Laguna Niguel	Laurie Davies (R)	52.3%	Sergio Farias (D)	Protect / Lean R
SD 36 — Huntington Beach	Tony Strickland (R)	53.4%	Chris Duncan (D)	Protect / Lean R



Several of these are genuine November contests. Holding onto Republicans when possible, is critical.

1. Get the Best Blues

2. Save Reds

3. Navigate Toss-Ups

AD 27 — Merced

Open seat (Soria) • Lean Republican

ADVANCING TO NOVEMBER



Mike Murphy

Small Business Owner

43.4%

31,730 votes



Brian Pacheco

County Supervisor / Farmer

40.3%

29,485 votes

VOTER REGISTRATION



DEM 40.2%

REP 29.2%

NPP 22.9%

PRIMARY RESULTS

