

Who Should Govern California?

[nytimes.com/interactive/2026/05/19/opinion/california-governor-primary-election.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/05/19/opinion/california-governor-primary-election.html)



The Choice California Primary for Governor

After eight years of Gavin Newsom governing California, there's no clear successor. The field for candidates is crowded, especially for Democrats.

Xavier Becerra

A longtime representative and former Biden official who has surged in polling

Katie Porter

An Elizabeth Warren protégée who wants to take on corporate power

Tom Steyer

A Democratic billionaire climate activist running a populist, progressive campaign

Times Opinion brought together a panel of state leaders and local experts to help make sense of the race.

Opinion

The Choice

California is the site of a series of interlocking problems: It's just too expensive for many people. There aren't enough homes, or at least enough affordable ones. The insurance market is a challenge. Homelessness is difficult. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is splitting up families. Federal cuts to universities and health care are rampant. Gasoline and electricity are expensive. Water rights are complicated. Fires and floods and the effects of climate change are already savage. The state is also home to the biggest economic story of our age, artificial intelligence, and remains one of the most beautiful places in the country, where millions want to live.

Whom should voters choose to deal with all of this? The California governor's race has been chaotic and confusing. Democratic candidates are offering up their party's full range of choices, from technocratic moderates to progressive populists.

Times Opinion assembled [a panel of experts](#) with a range of viewpoints for a new installment of The Choice, aimed at guiding voters — and in California, especially Democratic voters — through the complex issues in this election.

The Choice was prepared by Times Opinion editors, based in part on a round-table conversation with the panelists held on April 24 and a survey from which Times Opinion averaged the panelists' responses.

Our Panel's Ratings

We asked panelists to rate the leading candidates on how they would approach governing. Each chart reflects an average of their individual ratings.

What do you think about the overall slate of candidates and the situation for Democrats right now?

Angie Wei California consultant

It's been the most interesting thing that I've watched in my time in California politics. The field being so wide and so big makes it hard. There's a lot of noise in the campaign — makes it hard for voters to focus on issues. So we're really not making decisions on policies.

Dan Morain California politics journalist

We haven't had a campaign like this in really a long time in California. This one is still so fluid. The issues seem to matter a lot less. But the issues are so huge. What's the next governor going to do with high-speed rail? What's the next governor going to do about the mental health care system?

Addisu Demissie Former campaign manager for Gavin Newsom

We have fine candidates, even good candidates. But I've talked with people who've worked on these campaigns this year, and just from my own experience in California politics, nobody started the campaign with a statewide profile, especially anything approaching the last three governors: Newsom, Jerry Brown, Arnold Schwarzenegger. One of the reasons the election has largely not been about policy differences is that everyone is just struggling to have people know who they are. Sometimes in campaigns in California, that's a function of money. But Steyer hasn't pulled away, despite spending [more than \\$130 million](#) as of this recording. I think we're going to have a pretty fluid race right up until the end.

Tracy Hernandez Civic leader from Los Angeles

I actually find it quite exciting. As someone who wants to activate voters, the fact that the outcome is not preset and predetermined, unlike many statewide California races, I find that to be quite stimulating.

Dan Schnur Political communications professor in Los Angeles

I think voters are beginning to get some clarity: If the state wants to move farther left, then Steyer and Porter are providing that option. If the state wants to move to the center, that's where Mahan and Villaraigosa come in. If the state wants to move far right, then

Hilton or Bianco are the answer. And for people who want to stay exactly where we are, Becerra has emerged as the safest and most comforting alternative.

A lot of these candidates — Porter, Steyer, Mahan, the Republicans, Eric Swalwell before he dropped out — don't have much experience in Sacramento. They haven't served statewide. Is that a problem or a worry? Could it be an advantage? California has a lot of challenges.

Marcel Garza Opinion journalist in Los Angeles

It's notable that up until a few weeks ago, until Swalwell's sexual misconduct scandal, after which he exited the race, that he on the Democratic side and Steve Hilton on the Republican side were the leading candidates for their parties. These are people who, if you rank all the candidates in terms of experience, they come down near the bottom. But what they had that other people didn't have is a certain celebrity. They were regular talking heads on Fox News and MS NOW. It's not like Hollywood celebrity, but it's political celebrity. And that's, I think, why they were at the top. If experience mattered to voters, then you would have had the people who ran state agencies — Betty Yee, Tony Thurmond — at the top from the beginning.

Tracy Hernandez Civic leader from Los Angeles

I do think that if you're a member of Congress or a member of the Legislature, you're one of a zillion. That's a different kind of experience than actual, literal power brokering or responsibility, like when you've been a C.E.O., you've been a mayor. The buck stops with you, which is way different.

Dan Morain California politics journalist

Well, a candidate who has significant experience is Villaraigosa. He was speaker, was mayor of L.A. It's a big job. He's struggling at low single digits. I mean, maybe 5 percent.

Angie Wei California consultant

Being an executive is such a different job than being even in the Legislature or a talking head. California's a big state. We've got big challenges. We as voters should demand more. I thought, for example, we should run scenarios and make these candidates react to one of the crises that's very real in California: A wildfire starts and is spreading. What are the first five things that you're going to do? A global pandemic is beginning. What are the first five things that you're going to do? Test these candidates. We need to push for that, because I can't tell you how any of them are going to react in a global crisis that's very likely to hit us in the next four or eight years.

Democrats talk about how central Newsom is. People have often praised Brown's directness with people about problems. Are there any of these candidates that you've seen who could have either of those qualities?

Dan Morain California politics journalist

I do think that Villaraigosa could be a forceful governor. I also think Steyer could be. And certainly, Porter would be forceful. So they would be a presence, without a doubt, as would Hilton.

Sara Sadhwani Politics professor in Los Angeles

I think Steyer and Villaraigosa are not in the likeness of Brown, but they are willing to be a little bit more straightforward about what the issues are and how they would tackle them. With many of the others, there's a return to their basic talking points, their stump speech; that doesn't get voters very far once they start to try to pull back those layers. My sense is that part of the appeal of Steyer is that straight-talk nature he has, or at least a sense of his being willing to take on issues and not being fettered by the Democratic Party or by the interests that perhaps hold other candidates back.

Voting is underway. Can you offer a quick description of a strength and a weakness for a few of the candidates? Let's start with Becerra.

Dan Morain California politics journalist

Becerra's strength is he knows the state. His weakness is he is overly cautious.

Angie Wei California consultant

Becerra has some experience and some relationships in government — that's a strength. So far, he's not answering some questions clearly or consistently. That will create real problems; hopefully, that will even out with more exposure under the bright lights.

Mariel Garza Opinion journalist in Los Angeles

He's not one to take political risks, which is why he often answers difficult questions with some version of "I'll look at that." His strength is that he understands and respects the structure and function of government.

How about Steyer?

Angie Wei California consultant

His strength is he's less beholden to interests and can be bold. But he doesn't have any public sector experience — no experience in governing, in negotiating with the

Legislature and stakeholders, in landing a balanced budget, in responding to unexpected crises.

Dan Morain California politics journalist

He'd be a disrupter. That's a strength. His weakness is he has made too many promises to too many interest groups.

Dan Schnur Political communications professor in Los Angeles

Either Steyer or Hilton would disrupt Sacramento in a way that hasn't happened since the invention of the internet. Hilton might pull state government farther to the right than Steyer would to the left, but just barely.

Yes, let's talk a little about Hilton, too. He's likely to make the runoff. What would be a strength and a weakness of his?

Mariel Garza Opinion journalist in Los Angeles

Hilton's strength is his accent — that's only partly a joke. But that, and his infectious optimism about California, definitely reminds me of another accented immigrant Republican who ran for governor in a crowded, chaotic race and who got people excited about government. He appears to have the same weakness that plagued Governor Schwarzenegger during his first term: the misguided belief he could accomplish big things without the Democratic Legislature.

Dan Morain California politics journalist

His strength is he'd get along with Trump. His weakness is he'd get along with Trump.

What about a strength and a weakness for a candidate we haven't talked about?

Angie Wei California consultant

Porter's strength is that she's the most policy-specific and realistic on what can actually get done. She could be a serious executive. A weakness is that she seems to make some bad choices. She might have problems in terms of how she negotiates and builds relationships.

Mariel Garza Opinion journalist in Los Angeles

Villaraigosa's strength is that he has run a government just as complicated and financially volatile as the State of California's — and did it pretty well, by most accounts. His weakness is that he's been away from government service for a long time and doesn't have the alliances he used to have or hold the same political capital.

Newsom and the Legislature have done a lot to change the politics around housing, and they've made a lot of changes on policy, especially regulatory and environmental reform. Many of the candidates are [talking](#) about continuing some of those policies, like pushing cities to build more, as Newsom has done, and pursuing modular housing.

Would any of these candidates be notably effective at building more housing?

Kara Murray Badal Housing expert from Oakland

I don't think we get to know how capable the candidates are until they're actually in the seat. But we do understand what the need is in California, right? Building [more than 70,000 affordable units](#) annually in order to keep up with the demand that exists in the state.

This is a problem that if we don't address it, the state will continue to crumble. We understand that a governor is probably not going to understand all of the nuances of every portion of housing, but a readiness to be innovative in the space, to lean on expertise and to iterate when we find things out. We've passed more than 100 pieces of housing legislation at this point, and we're still figuring out what is working and what's not working. Being willing to uptake the new information as it comes and iterate is the essential part for me.

Tracy Hernandez Civic leader from Los Angeles

What is really different is people are up for a reality check. We've been very aspirational for the last couple of decades, and things are just not working. People are saying: I can't rent a home. I have no hope to buy a home. None of our kids that graduate from college are staying here. They're going.

Mariel Garza Opinion journalist in Los Angeles

A lot of what the candidates are talking about is getting rid of permitting or streamlining permitting or getting rid of regulations, though it's not clear which ones. But one of the problems is that what a governor can do about housing is really limited, because so much of the housing decisions happen at the local level. We did see a rather significant bill that would change that around transit hubs. And it was fought, tooth and nail, by a lot of cities, including my own, because cities like to decide where housing can happen. But in terms of just getting houses built, that's a tough one.

Kara Murray Badal Housing expert from Oakland

There are things that a governor can work on, like resolving fragmentation in the building code or thinking about financial risk and liability to encourage industry growth.

Specifically, the governor is important to the implementation of the California Housing

and Homelessness Agency, which is this nascent housing agency that will go into effect this year and will need a cabinet official to run it. The creation and implementation of that new agency will be really essential for the next governor.

Addisu Demissie Former campaign manager for Gavin Newsom

Housing was the No. 1 issue in the campaign I ran for Newsom in 2017 and '18. Then the pandemic happened. I don't know the policy around housing as well as some others here, but for a governor, it is mostly an issue of prioritization and courage. The problem has persisted, but it's not necessarily because we lack good policy. We have some great policies. Reforming the California Environmental Quality Act was a third rail in 2017 and '18, and we have since done it. But ultimately, one of the big questions we have to ask is: Is the next governor going to make it their No. 1 priority? And will they take on the interests that want to slow down progress?

Tracy Hernandez Civic leader from Los Angeles

I mean, Mahan's the only one that can prove it. He has the experience of what it takes to build in a city today, not 20 years ago.

Dan Schnur Political communications professor in Los Angeles

As mayors, Mahan and Villaraigosa are the two candidates best qualified to take on the challenge of state and local cooperation.

Kara Murray Badal Housing expert from Oakland

Overall, talking about strengths, housing policy is Porter's bread and butter. She can hold her own with any specialist and embraces expert research on how to solve the housing crisis. Mahan brings the executive clarity of a mayor who focused his term on housing. His record in San Jose leaves no doubt where he stands. I think there's a growing fluency that Steyer and Becerra have, which underscores how fluency in housing policy is now the price of entry in California. Their housing policies are an extension of their larger ideologies, and the real test on execution would be the teams they build.

On homelessness, likewise, Newsom has instituted a number of new programs or policies, such as CARE Court, the program that was initially intended to allow families to compel people into treatment. They have been [slow to start](#).

Should the next governor keep with the direction that Newsom has taken? Should he or she change course?

Angie Wei California consultant

Every new governor wants to come in and hit their own home run, when in fact, government is a slow-moving beast. It takes time for programs to get implemented and for success and evaluation to happen.

Dan Morain California politics journalist

Newsom has done something that no other governor has done, which is to focus on this issue and direct billions of dollars toward it, in ways that are seen and not seen. But it's going to take more than one term or two terms of any governor to turn it around. It is a decades-long problem, and it's not going to get fixed overnight.

California is going to be facing a really tough budget in 2027. The next governor is going to have to confront all these Medicaid cuts. We spend more on health care than many states spend on their entire budgets. The next governor really is going to have a tough time handling health care, which I don't know that any candidate is particularly addressing. But if you start pulling federal money out of the system, what we see on the streets now and in prisons now won't get better.

Tracy Hernandez Civic leader from Los Angeles

Newsom made some real headway, and the voters supported it. But the big issue is: Where's the funding, the backup, the follow-through? Everything in California is about execution, about audit, transparency and follow-through. We never have a shortage of brilliant ideas. It's execution.

Kara Murray Badal Housing expert from Oakland

Homelessness is also a housing issue. It's a supply issue, because there's not enough housing, because rents are going up. I have heard some of the candidates talking about that fact — that retaining people in housing is equally important.

California has set really ambitious climate goals. The state also struggles with high gas and electricity prices, for a variety of reasons. Some of the candidates — like Villaraigosa and Mahan — have talked about easing refinery regulation or dialing back the gas tax.

Who in the field is likely to continue with California's climate goals, and who is likely to perhaps dial them back?

Addisu Demissie Former campaign manager for Gavin Newsom

Gas prices are the top concern of folks, over and above anything else, because of the Iran war. The cost of living has been the top issue for years. To the extent that climate is perceived to increase the bottom line for voters who are struggling day to day, it will be

deprioritized. I also think that's a false choice, often. And certainly, the majority of the electorate is conscious of the environment.

Kara Murray Badal Housing expert from Oakland

The best thing that we can do is densify in places that already have infrastructure, right? That brings down the cost of transportation and transportation pollution, which is one of the primary drivers of climate issues. It also hopefully puts people closer to transit, puts people closer to their jobs, puts people onto infrastructure that's already built, hopefully building in places that are established and safe. So in that way, there is true alignment and possibility with the climate goals.

Tracy Hernandez Civic leader from Los Angeles

We're proud of having the toughest, cleanest goals on climate and water cleanliness and use and being the best we can be. But what's different right now is the appetite and demand for all the above. Now people are saying: We want the goals, but let's maybe put them on a timeline that keeps up with technology, the transition that doesn't blow up costs.

Steyer is an ardent climate activist, but he wants to build more homes. He says he can bring environmentalists along with him in this. Does that seem achievable?

Mariel Garza Opinion journalist in Los Angeles

If you build housing in cities around transit corridors, that's exactly what environmentalists are seeking. From my perspective, it's probably the smartest way to build.

But I was reflecting on Hilton, who is the leading candidate in polling across the board. Obviously, there's a lot of weird dynamics going on there. But he's the only one who's saying: I'm going to get rid of all the environmental regulations. We're going to build single-family homes everywhere, as opposed to densification. Today we're going to start oil production. We're going to fire up our peaker plants that burn coal and forget the clean energy, basically.

And it'll be really interesting to see how he does. I suspect he's going to get more than just a small group of Republicans supporting him, because there are people who are like: You know what? We've done all these environmental things. The air looks fine to me. Let's do something for me now.

Sara Sadhwani Politics professor in Los Angeles

There's a dimension here that we're missing. For young people, this is not a choice. They have grown up with extreme heat. They've grown up with wildfires. Hilton and Bianco have said: We're going back to drilling. We're going to bring more oil into California. We're going to extract oil in California.

But that is not, I think, what younger voters are looking for, and I don't even think it's much of a choice, on the left or right, for younger voters.

Dan Schnur Political communications professor in Los Angeles

My students look at the Iran war as a climate change issue. They understand that with the Strait of Hormuz closing, China's emergence and this country's lack of preparation to provide alternative energy infrastructure are a fundamental threat. While many voters have deprioritized climate and environmental policy as part of the broader affordability debate, young people, who know that they will not own a home for decades, if ever, are now even more fervent in their focus on climate. The great irony is that Donald Trump may be the American politician who retriggers climate change as a top-tier issue for Gen Z.

The state of California's finances

If California's budget challenges continue, based on how the candidates have campaigned, who would be more likely to cut spending or raise taxes, or fall somewhere in between?

Let's talk about the wealth tax, the proposed one-time 5 percent tax on people with more than \$1 billion in assets. It will probably be on the ballot this fall. Primarily, the proceeds would offset the Medicaid reductions that Congress put into place. Almost the entire field opposes it. If it makes the ballot, do you think it will pass, and should it?

Angie Wei California consultant

Addressing income inequality and the wealth gap is absolutely what we should be doing. But I think people recognize that a one-time tax increase is not a solution to our structural challenges in California. It may actually cause more problems than it solves. What does one-time money do for us? The other piece of this is it's pretty clear that this is going to be litigated. So can we actually hang our hopes and dreams of keeping people covered under Medi-Cal and other health care programs on something that the courts are going to tie up?

Addisu Demissie Former campaign manager for Gavin Newsom

I mean, the answer is no; it's bad policy. And no, it probably isn't going to pass. But I understand why it is popular, especially in a primary moment, because billionaires are

very unpopular. If Steyer doesn't win, one of the reasons might be that, despite being a populist billionaire, the billionaire part of that might outweigh the populist part of that.

Artificial intelligence is the biggest story in the economy. People are worried about A.I. taking jobs and pushing back against data centers. At the same time, Big Tech's success is part of the California story and helps power the state budget.

Who would be more likely to leave the A.I. industry alone and who would be more like to try to regulate A.I.?

Should California be more worried about an A.I. bubble that pops and causes real problems for the budget? Or should California be more worried about A.I. taking a lot of jobs away?

Dan Morain California politics journalist

Yes to both.

Addisu Demissie Former campaign manager for Gavin Newsom

I agree. Wherever they are on the political spectrum, voters are pretty uniformly in the same place here, which is: I understand the promise, but I'm terrified that it's going to take away my job, my industry. I want government to do something about it.

Now, is that the state government of California or the federal government? It's likely a federal issue. But we are the home of the industry, and I think that's the fundamental reason it's probably not being debated in the governor's race as much as it perhaps should be. By the time we get to the general election, it might be a bigger issue, and certainly by the time we get to 2028. We're in a hockey stick situation on this issue. As we all know in our own industries and in our own lives, it has gone from "Oh, this is a cute thing" to something we all use daily. But it's coming. And certainly, the next governor is going to have to deal with it.

Angie Wei California consultant

The impact of A.I. on jobs is going to be a bigger impact on our state budget over time than anything else, much more so than an A.I. bubble. I am so glad that I'm at the end of my career and not at the beginning, because we should be worried about the jobs and the job quality in the years to come.

Navigating the relationship with Trump and ICE

Navigating the relationship with Trump is a major issue of governance now. Newsom has been quite combative, of course, during Trump's second term. On the other end of the

spectrum you have somebody like Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, who's negotiated a bit, and then Republicans, who have mostly just cooperated.

Who in this field would be more likely to always oppose Trump? Who would be more likely to negotiate with him or even work with him?

Sara Sadhwani Politics professor in Los Angeles

It is a complicated topic, because the State of California — any state, quite frankly — has so many issues that it interfaces with the federal government on. So if we take it from the immigration standpoint, California will most likely take a confrontational approach to the Trump administration, because we are home to so many immigrants and the ICE raids have hit us in such drastic ways. That said, we've just spent the last hour or so talking about the real dire economic straits of the State of California. In that regard, the governor of California cannot take such a confrontational approach. There has to be a level of pragmatism in order to make sure that we're able to pull down as many dollars from the federal government as possible.

Tom K. Wong Political science professor in San Diego

California has led, since Trump won, when it comes to pushing back against Trump-style immigration policies, from defending DACA to defending our sanctuary state law to now trying to unmask ICE. So we are among the most prominent plaintiffs across immigration-related cases. Even though immigration is not one of the front-burner issues for voters, it very well could be if L.A. is targeted again, if there is a Minneapolis-style enforcement that happens in California. Because of our large foreign-born population, because [one in five](#) of our children in California lives in mixed-status families, immigration can catapult at any moment to a front-burner issue, which is why the expectation is that our leadership, especially a Democratic governor, would be aggressive and fight back.

Kara Murray Badal Housing expert from Oakland

This is more from my organizer perspective: I certainly don't want our unifying cries to be on the backs of our neighbors, but the ability to rally people around an issue is really important. I think it's less of "Do I want my governor to fight back?" but it's like, "I want my governor to help me feel safe inside of my state." If that can be used to catalyze that kind of energy, it could be really powerful for the candidate or for the next governor.

Immigration is a core conflict with the administration. Are there things that the next governor should be doing differently on immigration? The Legislature has tried different things, like [mask bans for ICE](#).

Tom K. Wong Political science professor in San Diego

California and blue states and cities across the country are trying to figure out ways to limit immigration enforcement to the extent that we have seen in Chicago, Minneapolis and elsewhere.

Among litigation and other legislative approaches, one thing that is unique to California worth mentioning is that we have budget lines for immigrant inclusion and defense of immigrants in detention and in deportation proceedings. I know that in this conversation we've talked about the budget being an issue. We have more than [\\$100 million](#) that we spend in California on legal defense, as well as to support nonprofits that work to include and incorporate undocumented immigrants and other immigrants in their communities. Out of our budget, that is a fraction of a percent. The next governor, those on the left of the spectrum — the Porters, the Steyers, the Becerras, if they get the seat — will be pushed to expand that support, given it is such a small fraction of the budget.

About our panel The nine panelists assessed the candidates independently, not on behalf of their organizations.

Addisu Demissie is a political consultant who has led campaigns for national, state and local candidates. He managed Gov. Gavin Newsom's campaign for governor in 2018 and Senator Cory Booker's 2020 presidential run. He also worked on Katie Porter's 2024 primary campaign for Senate.

Mariel Garza is a founder and the executive editor of Golden State, an independent commentary and news analysis publication that focuses on California. She was editorials editor for The Los Angeles Times. She lives in Los Angeles.

Tracy Hernandez is a founder and the chief executive of the New California Coalition, a nonpartisan civic group focused on economic growth. She founded and led BizFed, a business advocacy alliance, and was the publisher of The Los Angeles Daily News.

Dan Morain is a former editorial page editor of The Sacramento Bee and was a reporter for The Los Angeles Times for 27 years, focused on public policy and politics. His book about the mental health care system is forthcoming.

Kara Murray Badal directs the Housing Venture Lab at Turner Labs, an independent nonprofit founded by experts at U.C. Berkeley's Turner Center for Housing Innovation. She has consulted city governments on policy. She ran in a special election for Oakland City Council in 2025 and is an Oakland native.

Sara Sadhwani teaches California politics and American government at Pomona College, where she conducts research on Asian American and Latino voting behavior and public opinion. She serves on the California Citizens Redistricting Commission and the Governance Reform Task Force of Los Angeles County.

Dan Schnur teaches political communications at the University of California, Berkeley, Pepperdine University and the University of Southern California. He has worked on four Republican presidential campaigns and three campaigns for governor. He is now a registered independent.

Angie Wei was the chief lobbyist and then the chief of staff at the California Labor Federation from 2000 to 2018 and later served as Gov. Gavin Newsom's legislative secretary. She consults for organizations and companies, focusing on government relations, state politics and working-class issues.

Tom K. Wong teaches politics at the University of California, San Diego, where he founded the school's U.S. Immigration Policy Center. He served on the California Complete Count Committee under Gov. Jerry Brown. He was a candidate for the U.S. House in 2020.

About our panel

The nine panelists assessed the candidates independently, not on behalf of their organizations.

Kara Murray Badal directs the Housing Venture Lab at Turner Labs, an independent nonprofit founded by experts at U.C. Berkeley's Turner Center for Housing Innovation. She has consulted city governments on policy. She ran in a special election for Oakland City Council in 2025 and is an Oakland native.

Addisu Demissie is a political consultant who has led campaigns for national, state and local candidates. He managed Gov. Gavin Newsom's campaign for governor in 2018 and Senator Cory Booker's 2020 presidential run. He also worked on Katie Porter's 2024 primary campaign for Senate.

Mariel Garza is a founder and the executive editor of Golden State, an independent commentary and news analysis publication that focuses on California. She was editorials editor for The Los Angeles Times. She lives in Los Angeles.

Tracy Hernandez is a founder and the chief executive of the New California Coalition, a nonpartisan civic group focused on economic growth. She founded and led BizFed, a business advocacy alliance, and was the publisher of The Los Angeles Daily News.

Dan Morain is a former editorial page editor of The Sacramento Bee and was a reporter for The Los Angeles Times for 27 years, focused on public policy and politics. His book about the mental health care system is forthcoming.

Sara Sadhwani teaches California politics and American government at Pomona College, where she conducts research on Asian American and Latino voting behavior and public opinion. She serves on the California Citizens Redistricting Commission and the Governance Reform Task Force of Los Angeles County.

Dan Schnur teaches political communications at the University of California, Berkeley, Pepperdine University and the University of Southern California. He has worked on four Republican presidential campaigns and three campaigns for governor. He is now a registered independent.

Angie Wei was the chief lobbyist and then the chief of staff at the California Labor Federation from 2000 to 2018 and later served as Gov. Gavin Newsom's legislative secretary. She consults for organizations and companies, focusing on government relations, state politics and working-class issues.

Tom K. Wong teaches politics at the University of California, San Diego, where he founded the school's U.S. Immigration Policy Center. He served on the California Complete Count Committee under Gov. Jerry Brown. He was a candidate for the U.S. House in 2020.