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Endorsement: Who should replace Nancy Pelosi in Congress? It's not even a choice

The most intriguing thing about the race to fill retiring Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi's House seat is that it has become a race at all.

On paper, the choice between state Sen. Scott Wiener and Supervisor Connie Chan should be one of the easiest decisions San Franciscans have to make in the November general election.

Wiener is arguably the nation's most accomplished state legislator. While he's best known as the driving force behind the effort to increase housing development in California, he has authored everything from California's Proposition 3, which enshrined marriage equality in the state Constitution, to Senate Bill 379, which helped streamline residential solar power and battery permitting.

Wiener has a detailed congressional policy platform for tackling affordability and wealth inequality — including federal infrastructure subsidies to support new municipal housing development and eliminating loopholes on margin loans that allow the 1% to dodge income taxes.

As the editorial board wrote in its June primary endorsement of Wiener, San Franciscans are just a vote away from sending the state's most relentless and effective legislator to Washington to zero in on universal healthcare, humane immigration policies, protections for the LGBTQ community and preserving democracy from President Donald Trump.

Chan, meanwhile, has a policy agenda and legislative track record that's as spotty as it is sparse. Despite her campaign promises to fight for working people, her proposals offer few specifics as to how she would improve their lot in Congress.

The most notable effort in her five-plus-year tenure as supervisor was 2022's Prop E — an affordable housing streamlining measure that wouldn't have streamlined affordable housing; it was mostly redundant with an existing state law authored by Wiener.

Prop E failed with voters but succeeded as a poison pill in sabotaging a genuinely impactful effort to build worker housing from then-Mayor London Breed.

Chan's record on housing is abysmal. She has said outright she doesn't think San Francisco needs any new market-rate housing, even as rents soar — and at the same time suggested she believes communities deserve veto power over affordable housing developments.

"I really do appreciate the balanced approach of allowing our communities to have a say in what comes



into their community," she told the editorial board in 2022.

Chan's positions are a case study in why San Francisco has the nation's worst housing crisis. Just imagine the consequences of amplifying these views at the federal level, particularly as Democrats strain to convince American voters that they can deliver on affordability issues.

Yes, Chan has some strengths. She has done a fine job helping steer the city through its post-COVID budget crisis as chair of the Board of Supervisors Budget and Appropriations Committee. And she has preserved funds for some important social services. But Wiener has navigated those same waters at the state level as Senate Budget Committee chair. And as a San Francisco supervisor in the aftermath of the Great Recession, he served on the budget committee.

Chan is likable in person and cares deeply about her constituents. But so does Wiener: He is one of the most active and publicly available politicians in San Francisco and is regularly spotted riding Muni, which he has repeatedly and successfully fought to save from steep cuts.

Online supporters of Chan draw a dividing line between the candidates for their stances on Gaza. But the most meaningful divergence in their largely similar policy platforms is that Wiener supports the sale of anti-missile defensive systems to Israel while Chan has recently said she does not.

And what to make of Chan campaigning hand-in-hand with Pelosi, an architect of Democratic policy in the Middle East, who in 2024 sowed doubts about demands for a ceasefire in Gaza by calling for the FBI to investigate connections between protesters and

Vladimir Putin?

It's possible Chan will be an independent voice upon arriving in Washington. But Chan has already hired one Pelosi staffer for her campaign. And the supervisor is only remotely competitive in this race because Pelosi has decided to throw her weight into a scorched-earth campaign against Wiener — bringing along powerful allies like Sen. Adam Schiff.

How to account for Pelosi backing a demonstrably weaker candidate?

If we take the speaker emerita at her word, it's because she wants "somebody there who understands the challenges I face being a working mom."

Funny, that logic didn't apply two years ago when Pelosi backed Schiff over two moms vastly more qualified than Chan — former Reps. Katie Porter and Barbara Lee — in the race to replace the late Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Political insiders whisper that Pelosi is not-so-secretly trying to keep the seat warm for an eventual run by her daughter Christine.

We won't speculate. All we'll say is that at a time when President Trump is threatening to demolish American democracy, it's nothing short of embarrassing that Pelosi would go all out for a candidate who so clearly has neither the experience nor the ideas to meet the gravity of the moment.

Labor icon Dolores Huerta put it best in her endorsement of Wiener: "I know the difference between a politician who talks about justice and one who fights for it."