



TO: Flip the 49th! Neighbors in Action
FROM: FM3 Research
RE: 49th California Congressional District Survey Results
DATE: February 21, 2018

A recently conducted survey among likely voters in California’s 49th Congressional District demonstrates that this seat offers an excellent opportunity for a strong Democratic candidate be elected in November. However, this survey also suggests that the current crowded field of candidates – Democrats and Republicans – presents a significant hurdle to achieving the goal of “flipping the 49th.”

Pickup Opportunity

The mood of CD49 voters is highly negative towards Donald Trump and the Republican brand itself. As Figure 1 shows, nearly six in ten regard Trump unfavorably, and it should be noted that a majority (51%) holds a “very” unfavorable opinion of the president. Another indication of how this coastal Southern California district, which was historically the geographic base of the conservative movement in the state, has changed is that nearly half (47%) regard the California Republican Party unfavorably.

Figure 1: Favorability Ratings

Person/Organization	Total Favorable	Total Unfavorable	Can’t Rate/ Don’t Know
Donald Trump	41%	58%	1%
The California Republican Party	41%	47%	12%

The generic Congressional ballot test shows the Democratic Party and its allies well-positioned for a victory in November. Currently, the Democratic candidate holds a seven-point lead (48%-41%) over a generic Republican candidate (see Figure 2). Further evidence of this advantage is the preference for a Democratic candidate among those voters most interested in the midterm election (“10” on a 1-10 scale), moderates and non-partisan voters.

Figure 2: Generic Congressional Ballot Test

Vote Preference	All Voters	Election Interest Level of 10	Moderates	Non-Partisan
Democratic Candidate	48%	51%	51%	62%
Republican Candidate	41%	40%	34%	20%
Other/Don’t Know	11%	9%	15%	8%

The survey also tested all four leading Democrats (Applegate, Jacobs, Kerr, and Levin) against the three leading Republican candidates (Chavez, Harkey, and Gaspar). Following positive and negative information about each of the candidates, as Figure 3 shows, all four of these Democrats are strong contenders against the field of Republicans in general election head-to-head match-ups: each hold narrow leads, tested within the margin of error of one another, and with no difference in support. (The Republican percentage in Figure 3 are based on an average of each Democratic candidate against each of the three Republicans.)

Figure 3: General Election Vote for Top Four Democrats against Republicans

Democratic Candidate	Democrat Vote Percentage	Republican Vote Percentage	Undecided
Applegate	41%	38%	21%
Levin	41%	37%	22%
Kerr	39%	37%	24%
Jacobs	41%	38%	21%

Primary Mess

Due to California’s open primaries and the current number of candidates who are considering running in CD49, determining the two candidates most likely to advance to the November general election is a difficult but crucial question. The survey first tested summary positive messaging for seven of the potential candidates – four Democrats and three Republicans. The scope of positive information provided about each candidate was calibrated to consider resources, so Applegate received a limited bio and Prejean received none. As Figure 4 shows, after the positive descriptions none of the Democratic candidates place in a position to be considered a clear favorite for the general election. These results raise a real concern that no Democratic candidate may finish first or second in the June primary.

Figure 4: Vote among Likely CD49 Primary Voters After Positive Candidate Information

Candidate (Party)	Percentage
Doug Applegate (D)	19%
Rocky Chavez (R)	17%
Diane Harkey (R)	17%
Mike Levin (D)	16%
Kristin Gaspar (R)	9%
Sara Jacobs (D)	7%
Paul Kerr (D)	3%
Christina Prejean (D)	1%
Other/Don’t Know	10%

The survey also examined the impact of negative information against each of the seven leading candidates. As **Figure 5** shows, the potential for a Democrat to be shut out of the general election increases as Chavez and Harkey move to 18% with Applegate trailing by one-point and Levin five-points behind.

Figure 5: Vote among Likely CD49 Primary Voters After Negative Candidate Information

Candidate (Party)	Percentage
Rocky Chavez (R)	18%
Diane Harkey (R)	18%
Doug Applegate (D)	17%
Mike Levin (D)	13%
Kristin Gaspar (R)	8%
Sara Jacobs (D)	8%
Paul Kerr (D)	2%
Christina Prejean (D)	1%
Other/Don't Know	17%

To assess how voter preferences will likely sort if one or more candidates drop-out, the survey asked voters to identify which of the other candidates was their 2nd choice. **By allocating voters' second choice preferences and removing different candidates from the field, an analysis was conducted to determine how the primary vote would change if one or more candidates dropped-out of the race.** Figure 6 shows the effect of first removing the two Democrats with the least support, Kerr and Prejean, and then those two along with each of the other remaining Democrats one at a time. ***While a Democratic candidate holds marginal leads in each of these hypothetical scenarios, these are statistical ties within the margin of error and none gain enough support to be assured of placing in the top two in the primary.***

Figure 6: Primary Vote with Fewer Democratic Candidates

Candidate (Party)	Vote with No Kerr or Prejean	Vote with No Kerr, Prejean or Jacobs	Vote with No Kerr, Prejean or Levin	Vote with No Kerr, Prejean or Applegate
Doug Applegate (D)	20%	21%	26%	N/A
Rocky Chavez (R)	18%	19%	18%	21%
Diane Harkey (R)	17%	18%	17%	18%
Mike Levin (D)	17%	20%	N/A	22%
Kristin Gaspar (R)	9%	10%	10%	11%
Sara Jacobs (D)	8%	N/A	12%	11%

In a simulated field of three leading Democrats (again the two weakest, Kerr and Prejean, were removed from the race) there is still a significant risk no Democrat finishes in the top two of the June primary. Moreover, this risk intensifies if the weakest Republican, Kristin Gaspar, were to drop-out of the race. Figure 7 shows a similar analysis along with removing the weakest Republican candidate in the field, Kristen Gaspar. Again, no Democrat secures enough support to warrant them being viewed as the most likely to advance to the November general election.

Figure 7: Primary Vote with Fewer Democratic Candidates and Kristin Gaspar Removed

Candidate (Party)	Vote with No Kerr or Prejean	Vote with No Kerr, Prejean or Jacobs	Vote with No Kerr, Prejean or Levin	Vote with No Kerr, Prejean or Applegate
Doug Applegate (D)	20%	21%	26%	N/A
Rocky Chavez (R)	22%	23%	22%	25%
Diane Harkey (R)	21%	22%	21%	21%
Mike Levin (D)	17%	20%	N/A	22%
Sara Jacobs (D)	7%	N/A	12%	12%

The above analysis aims to quantify the concern that many progressives have already raised – the number of Democratic candidates running in CD49 could result in no Democrat placing in the top two.

This survey was not conducted to promote or dissuade any one candidate. Rather, the purpose is to help the Democratic coalition secure victory in November. With that ultimate goal in mind, it is crucial that a Democratic candidate finish in the top two in the June primary, but also be well-positioned to consolidate support among Democrats and nonpartisans to capitalize on voter antipathy towards Donald Trump and the Republican Party.

Summary Conclusions

1. This race is winnable, and a Democrat is well-positioned for the November general election.
2. No Democratic candidate is stronger than the others – they are all viable to win in November.
3. The field of candidates as currently composed could likely prevent a Democrat from advancing to the general election, and this risk of Democrat making the general election intensifies if the field narrows to three Democrats and two Republicans.
4. At this time, Paul Kerr and Christina Prejean are the weakest Democrats; following positive and negative information about the other leading Democrats, Doug Applegate and Mike Levin obtain more support than Sara Jacobs.

Survey Methodology: From February 12-15, 2018 FM3 conducted a survey of 750 randomly-selected voters in California’s 49th Congressional District whose previous participation in statewide elections indicate they are likely to cast a ballot in the November 2018 statewide election. The sample includes 400 voters who are likely to cast a ballot in the June 2018 statewide primary election. The sample is representative of CD49’s demographic and geographic composition. Interviews were conducted via landline and cell/mobile telephone by live interviewers. The full sample margin of error is +/-3.6% at the 95% confidence level; the June primary sample margin of error is sample margin of error is +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence level; and margins of error for population subgroups will be higher. Due to rounding, some percentages may not sum to 100%.