



CALIFORNIA PREPARES FOR HISTORIC RECALL ELECTION

October 6, 2003

California voters go to the polls on Tuesday to decide the fate of Democratic Gov. Gray Davis, in the first statewide special election to recall a governor in California's history.

The vote consists of two questions. First, Californians must decide yes or no on whether to remove Governor Davis from office. Second, they must decide who should replace him. Top contenders for the position include Republican actor-turned-politician Arnold Schwarzenegger and the current lieutenant governor, Cruz Bustamante (D). There are 135 possible replacement candidates on the ballot.

Voters first elected Davis in 1998 and re-elected him last November for a second four-year term. He has faced harsh criticism for his failure to manage the state's budget, which is facing a massive \$38 billion deficit this year.

Latest poll results

The latest public poll conducted by the Mercury News/NBC11/Knight Ridder found that a majority of Californian likely voters favor the recall of the governor 54 percent to 41 percent. But the percentage who said that they would definitely vote "yes" to recall the governor fell significantly in the last few days from 54 percent to 42 percent.

"There is a significant number of people who look like they are having second thoughts," said Stuart Elway of Elway/McGuire Research, which conducted the poll.

What is uncertain is whether Davis has enough time to sway the more than 50 percent of voters needed to save his job.

On the second question of who should replace Davis, Schwarzenegger is in the lead with 37 percent of likely voters over Bustamante's 29 percent. State Sen. Tom McClintock, who is a more conservative Republican than Schwarzenegger, trails in third place with 15 percent and Green Party candidate Peter Camejo has just 3 percent.

Schwarzenegger spent the weekend fighting allegations that he mistreated women on movie sets during the past 20 years. The Los Angeles Times began publishing accusations from six women in a series of stories last Thursday. The actor has apologized for any behavior he thought was "playful," which may have been interpreted as offensive.

He has also faced allegations that he once said he admired Nazi leader Adolf Hitler's speaking ability. Schwarzenegger has called the accusations typical of Davis' campaign style.

"I think they're part of trying to derail my campaign," Schwarzenegger said of the newspaper. "I mean, part of the puke campaign that Davis launched," he added.

Results may not be immediately known

After the polls close at 8 p.m. Pacific Time, the results of the election may not be immediately known. Each of California's counties will have 28 days to certify the results of the election. In addition, the California secretary of state has 11 days to certify the counties' results. This means that a possible replacement of the governor could not be declared for almost seven weeks.

"People should not be surprised if they wake up on [October] 8th and they don't know who the new governor is, or even whether the old one has been recalled," Loyola University law professor Richard Hasen, who specializes in election law, told the Los Angeles Times. "It all depends on how close it is."

Some politicians are worried that the wait will affect the state operations. According to the state constitution, the governor -- whoever that might be -- has to submit a budget to the legislature by Jan. 10.

"If you look at all the major corporations in this country, there's not a one of them that would fire the CEO and then tell the CEO, 'Why don't you just stay around here for six weeks and you could spend all the money you want, you could do anything you want for six weeks,'" Ted Costa, who wrote the petition to recall Davis, told KQED radio.

By Annie Schleicher, NewsHour Extra

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