



EMPOWERED VOICES

WOMEN DEMOCRATS OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Issue 15 — Fifteenth Edition

June - July 2026

“Just because a point is well made, doesn’t mean it’s right.”
Padma Lakshmi

Message from the President



Celebrating 73 Years — and Moving to the Next Level Together

Debbie Richardson

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported our annual Ice Cream Social & Silent Auction! Your presence, generosity, and donations help the Women Democrats of Sacramento County support our endorsed candidates through fundraisers, campaign materials, canvassing, voter outreach, and more. Thank you for standing with us and investing in our mission.

This year, we proudly celebrate the 73rd Anniversary of the Women Democrats of Sacramento County, one of California’s oldest Democratic clubs. For more than seven decades, we have built a rich and powerful legacy of defending democracy, advocating for women’s rights and equity, supporting Democratic leaders, and working to create positive change throughout our communities.

The Women Dems have become a pillar in our community because of the strength, courage, tenacity, and vision of those who came before us—and because of the dedicated members who continue this important work today. Our leadership has helped build a respected organization grounded in integrity, compassion, unity, and service. We are especially proud of the relationships we have developed with our members, community partners, Democratic organizations, endorsed candidates, and elected officials.

Now, I want us to move to the next level. I want the Women Democrats of Sacramento County to build upon our incredible 73-year legacy and become even stronger, more visible, more engaged, more influential—and we must continue to be a trailblazing organization that brings people together and creates meaningful change throughout Sacramento County and beyond. We will continue to develop leaders, build meaningful partnerships, strengthen our communities, support our endorsed candidates, engage the next generation, and stand boldly for democracy, equity, and justice.

As we move forward, I also want us to build closer and stronger relationships with our elected officials. These relationships are essential to advancing the issues that matter to our members and communities. We want to create more opportunities for meaningful dialogue, collaboration, advocacy, and engagement with the leaders who represent us. By strengthening these connections, we can ensure that the voices, concerns, and priorities of our members are heard while working together to create meaningful and lasting change. Continued on page 8

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CALIFORNIA PRIMARY ELECTION RESULTS 2026

By Brenda Borge
Political Affairs Director



A hearty congratulations to all of the candidates who ran in the June 2026 primary, and a huge thank you to all of the Women Democrats of Sacramento County members who volunteered to help in the various campaigns.

Your efforts are making a difference. Democrats all around the Sacramento County region performed quite well. We saw four of our endorsed candidates win their races.

- Lisa Kaplan, City Council, District 1
- Caity Maple, City Council, District 3
- Karina Talamantes, City Council, District 3
- Annie Fischer, SCOE Board, Area 3

We also saw four more candidates advance to the November general election.

- Sean Frame, CA State Senate, District 6
- Amy Slavensky, CA State Assembly, District 7
- Mai Vang, U.S. House, District 7
- Flo Cofer, County Supervisor, District 1

Democrats who are also advancing in those races are Women Dems friends, Doris Matsui and Eric Guerra (recommended by our Women Dems endorsement panel but went to the floor vote.)

We wish them all good luck in the November general election, and we sincerely hope that our Women Dems members will recharge and continue to volunteer in these races. Look out for emails with campaign volunteer opportunities, fundraisers, and important information on Women Dems events. Let's all rally for a Democratic sweep in November!

Blue wave.

We also want to thank those candidates our members endorsed but did not advance or win.

- Lauren Babb Tomlinson, U.S. House, District 6
- Scott Lau, City Council, District 7
- Heidi Hall, U.S. House, District 3
- Davon Thomas, SCOE Board, Area 1
- Adrianna Gonzales, Twin Rivers Board, Area 6

Other Democrats who advanced in these races, and are endorsed by the Women Dems, include Dr. Richard Pan and Dr. Ami Bera--who will need your help to win their races in November 2026--coming up more quickly than we can believe.

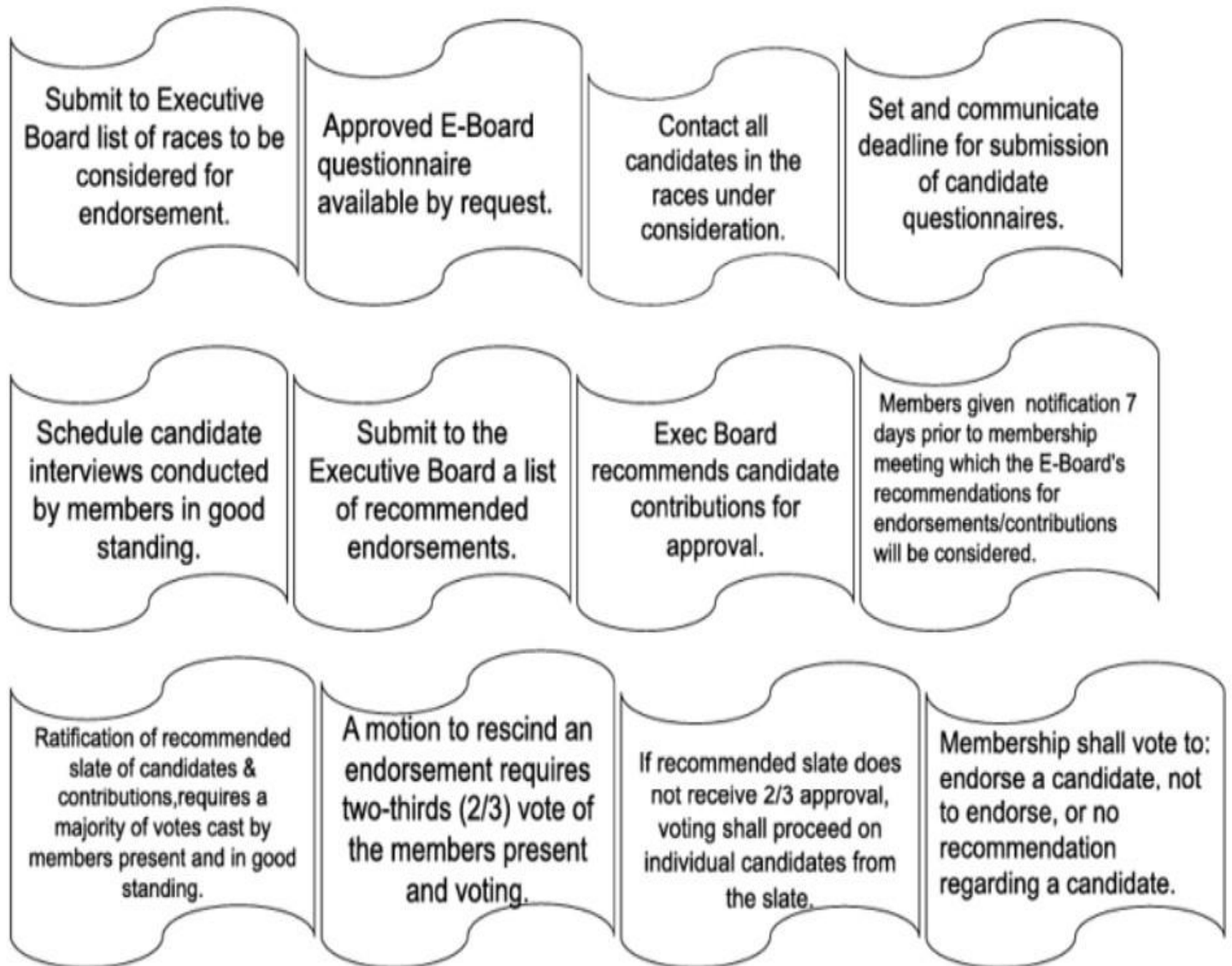


CALIFORNIA GENERAL ELECTIONS

Tuesday, November 3, 2026

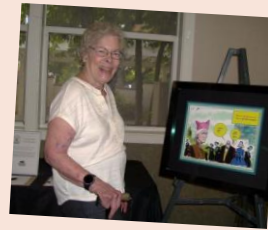
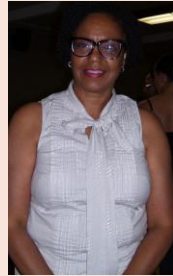
- Secure ballot drop-off locations open on October 6.
- The first vote centers open for early in-person voting in all Voter's Choice Act counties on October 24.
- In-person early voting locations throughout California will be open on Saturday, October 31.

WOMEN DEMS ENDORSEMENT COMMITTEE FLOWCHART



Women Democrats of Sacramento County Bylaws link:
https://www.sacramentowomendems.org/files/ugd/102e6a_ef083f775fee479f918612ee96634407.pdf

Women Dems Ice Cream Social Fundraiser 2026



Thank you for your support!

XAVIER BECERRA FOR GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA!



Xavier Becerra

By Teresa Hernández

Xavier Becerra, Democratic candidate for Governor of California, was the unexpected frontrunner. One may wonder why that was so. When you compare him to the 60-plus candidates, you find that he is, hands down, the most qualified.

Becerra, 58, was born in Sacramento, California, and is the son of working-class Mexican immigrants. Becerra graduated from Stanford University and Stanford Law School. Becerra served as California State Assemblyman, in the U.S. Congress, as California Attorney General, and as Secretary of Health and Human Services under the Biden Administration.

As governor, Becerra vows to improve affordability by starting with a freeze on utility and home insurance rates. He intends to expand the down payment assistance program for first-time homebuyers; double the number of homes built under Newsom; and continue the Medicaid program affected by federal cuts.

(Time.com/article2026/06/02/xavier-becerra-california)

As of shortly after the June primaries, polls show that Becerra has 52% support of California voters vs. 31% for Hilton, and 17% undecided.

If elected, Becerra would be the second Hispanic to hold the office of Governor of California, but the first Hispanic to win in a gubernatorial election. The first was Romualdo Pacheco, who was the Lieutenant Governor at the time and assumed the office of Governor after Governor Newton Booth resigned.

“I’m running for governor to make sure that California keeps rising—that we’re building our economy while working hard to protect your rights and freedoms in the state we love.”

If you’re interested in more of what Xavier Becerra stands for and in volunteering for his campaign, visit him at: <https://www.xavierbecerra2026.com/>



Which Democrats Are Going to Show Up?!

By Eric Wiesenthal, At-Large Member of the Board



If you're like me, you've already re-hashed the cluster-f@#\$ that was our national campaign in 2024.

There was the constant cry, "Save Democracy," a lot of one-way messaging delivered to voters about the rights of transgender and queer folk, and the hot mess of our presidential campaign that began well before President Biden shuffled onto the stage in June for his debate battle with Donald Trump and continued through "Kamala's coronation."

Democratic leaders fear that their party's growing progressive flank will dash its chances in the midterm elections. That is possible. But clearly, many Democratic voters no longer buy this argument. There is less reason for them to worry than there was in previous election years. Many voters' agendas reflect views that a large number of Americans now hold: disentangling politics and corporate interests, raising taxes on the wealthy, ending military aid to Israel, passing Medicare for All. And a new, grassroots group directly helping the Party chart a new course is The Bench, which began organizing at the beginning of this year. Its focus is to recruit and support candidates that "aren't united by ideology, but by a willingness to break from Democratic defaults, speak honestly to their communities, and compete seriously in places the party has too often written off," according to its mission statement.

Like several other new liberal grassroots organizations, The Bench is focusing on House districts where Democrats have rarely, if ever, competed, but are now seen as "winnable." These grassroots groups focus on helping candidates launch and maintain their campaigns with assistance ranging from communications and digital strategy to fundraising and staffing so these men and women - a number of whom have never held public office - can focus on what matters most: talking with voters and winning tough races.

And while there is a stark paucity of leadership right now at the top of the national Democratic Party, it is being countered by the growing number of new candidates for the House and Senate. Here are a few of the candidates you ought to watch as we approach Election Day in November:

- Sam Forstag: A Montana native, a U.S. Forest Service smoke jumper and a union leader, is running for the 1st Congressional District which covers the western part of the state, including Missoula, Great Falls, Butte, and Helena.
- Nancy Lacore: a 3-star admiral who was a Navy helicopter pilot, completed tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, and rose to head the Naval Reserve. She was fired for no reason, like so many other highly trained service members, last year by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth. She is running for the House in the district that includes Charleston, SC.
- Alaska Congresswoman Mary Peltola, the first Native Alaskan to serve in Congress, is running for the U.S. Senate.

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Building Sacramento Together

Lessons in Leadership from the City of Sacramento Planning Academy 2026

By Alaya Amyra Agee, Secretary, Women Democrats of Sacramento County

Over the course of eleven sessions, field tours, hands-on planning exercises, and meaningful engagement with City staff and subject matter experts, the City of Sacramento Planning Academy provided an extraordinary opportunity to better understand the vision, collaboration, and leadership that shape our city and enrich the quality of life across every neighborhood.

When I joined the Planning Academy, I was excited to learn more about planning, housing, and local government. Every session expanded my perspective and deepened my appreciation for the people, partnerships, and shared commitment that continue building Sacramento's future.

One lesson resonated throughout the entire experience: planning is about people. Every neighborhood reflects a story of vision, investment, and community. Every street, park, housing development, business corridor, and public space represents thoughtful decisions that influence families, create opportunities, strengthen neighborhoods, and inspire a greater sense of belonging.

The City of Sacramento Planning Academy also revealed how closely housing, transportation, economic development, environmental stewardship, public safety, and community engagement work together. Housing creates stability, opportunity, and dignity. Transportation connects people with education, employment, healthcare, recreation, and one another. Every thoughtful investment contributes to a stronger, more vibrant Sacramento for generations to come.

Another meaningful takeaway was the value of community engagement. Throughout the program, City staff demonstrated that listening, collaboration, and public participation are essential ingredients of effective planning. Residents, businesses, neighborhood organizations, public agencies, and elected leaders each bring valuable perspectives that strengthen decisions and help shape the future of our city.

One of the highlights of the Planning Academy was the River District Walking Tour, where classroom discussions came to life. Visiting projects such as Mirasol Village illustrated how housing, parks, transportation, public investment, and neighborhood revitalization come together to create lasting community transformation. It was an inspiring reminder that planning touches lives every day and creates opportunities that extend well into the future.

Serving as Secretary of Women Democrats of Sacramento County made this experience especially meaningful because it reflects our shared commitment to informed leadership, civic engagement, and lifelong learning. I am deeply grateful to the City of Sacramento Planning Division, the Planning Academy staff, guest speakers, fellow cohort members, and everyone whose dedication made this remarkable program possible.

The Planning Academy strengthened my understanding of Sacramento, deepened my appreciation for those who serve our community, and renewed my commitment to continue learning, serving, and contributing wherever I can.

The future of Sacramento is something we build together.

Postcarding – The Gateway to Activism

By Linda Reed, WDSC Member-at-Large

Several organizations across America tout that postcarding helps win elections! That is why Women Dems and Friends has been committed to doing postcards for campaigns in and out of California for the past six years. And we plan to keep going. Last month, we wrote 150 postcards for James Talarico, candidate for U.S. Representative in Texas, and we plan to write postcards for California Congressional Districts 22 and 48 over the next couple of months into October.

Many groups across the country who do postcarding feel that handwritten postcards win close elections, boost interest in elections and help voter turnout--especially in non-presidential election years. As an example, “The Progressive Turnout Project” in Virginia sent out more than 29 million handwritten messages since 2019. They say people working together and taking action make them feel powerful. In 2018, they saw a 1.2% increase in turnout, and 3% of respondents to a survey said that they would not have turned out to vote otherwise. That trend continues to rise.

The group feels post-carding is a cost-effective way to increase voter turnout as many people do not answer phone calls and some door-to-door contacts are not feasible, for example, in apartments, retirement communities and rural areas where face- to-face is hard to access. The “Project” has seen rural races where voter turnout increased by 9% because of handwritten contacts.

The Women Dems and Friends work with “Activate America, headquartered in Oakland, CA, founded in 2017, and inspired by the first Women’s March. The group started as “Flip the West” and “Flip the 14” in 2017. They first worked in California and then reached out across the Country. “Activate” does postcarding as part of a program including texting, door-knocking, and phone contacts.

We also work with Progressive Voter turnout, out of Evanston, IL--which focuses their messages on getting out the vote. They provide free postcards to groups who want to write and help get out voters.

Join our Postcarding Session!

Monday – August 17, 5:30pm

SCTA 5300 Elvas Ave, Sacramento

Some key states on which Activate America concentrates on are California, Nevada, Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and New York. Their goal is to empower volunteers to help elect Democrats and defeat MAGA extremists in Congress. They have concentrated on crucial states where they want to maintain a Senate or House seat or feel they can flip seats--especially those in California or New York.

Also, “Activate America” has started a program called “Amplify” that people can sign up for. Believing that the Democrats have not done a strong enough job communicating to the public about the successes over the last four years, they developed talking points about the Democratic successes. The Women Dems and Friends will do more postcarding from August through October. We plan to write postcards at 5:30pm--before our monthly General meetings. Come and join us to get out the vote!

Message from the President

Continued from page 1

But we cannot move to the next level without you. I urge each of you to help us grow. Tell your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers about the Women Democrats and invite them to become members. Join one of our committees—including Membership, Political Affairs, Fundraising, Communications, and others—and bring your unique skills, talents, ideas, and passion to our mission.

For 73 years, the Women Democrats of Sacramento County have demonstrated what is possible when people come together with purpose and determination. Now is our time to honor that remarkable history while boldly building our future and becoming an even greater force for democracy and positive change.

The next chapter of the Women Democrats of Sacramento County begins with all of us. Together, we are stronger—and together, we will move to the next level! ♦♦♦

WOMEN DEMS IN OUR COMMUNITY!



Women Dems Secretary Alaya Agee was honored at a City Council meeting after completing the Planning Commission Academy.

(L-R: WDSC Secretary Alaya Agee, WDSC Immediate Past President Sandra Hazel, Sacramento County Dems Chair Andres Ramos, WDSC President Debbie Richardson)



Women Dems at St. Hope Celebrate Juneteenth
(L-R: Dawn Basciano, Teresa Hernández, Debbie Richardson)



Mayor McCarty's Garden Party
(L-R: Sophia Wilson, Mayor Kevin McCarty, WDSC Member Michelle Collins)



CA State Public Bank Community Gathering
WDSC Vice President, Dawn Basciano, speaking in support of Assembly Bill 2243



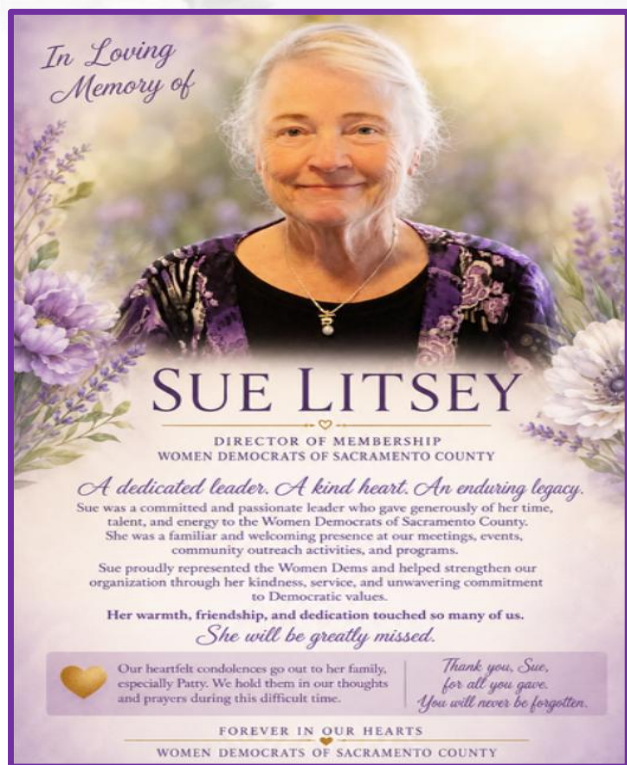
Fundraiser for Hiedi Sanborn
SMUD Board President Dave Tamayo, WDSC Dir. of Fundraising Ariane Lyons, WDSC Member Michelle Collins, SMUD Board Member Heidi Sanborn, WDSC Treasurer Julie Chapman



CA State Fair
WDSC members Dr. Oranit Limmaneeprasert & Sandra Hazel



Celebrate North Sacramento
(L-R: WDSC Secretary Alaya Agee, Councilmember Eric Guerra, WDSC Member-at-Large Eric Wiesenthal, Councilmember Roger Dickinson, WDSC President Debbie Richardson)



The Women Democrats of Sacramento County mourn the loss of our beloved Director of Membership, Sue Litsey, a dedicated leader, cherished friend, and true pillar of strength within our organization.

Sue served the Women Dems with extraordinary commitment, compassion, and a genuine desire to bring people together. As Director of Membership, she built and led a strong nine-member Membership Committee, creating a team dedicated to welcoming, engaging, and connecting our members. Her leadership reflected what Sue valued most—the importance of people, relationships, and working together for a common purpose.

Sue was a familiar presence at Women Dems meetings, events, activities, and community outreach efforts. She proudly represented our organization and was always willing to lend her support wherever it was needed. Whether she was welcoming a new member, participating in an event, or simply offering encouragement, Sue brought with her a warm smile, a gentle presence, and a genuine heart that made people feel valued and appreciated.

She was more than our Director of Membership. Sue was part of the heart of the Women Dems. Her quiet strength, dedication, kindness, and willingness to serve made a lasting impact on our organization and on the many people whose lives she touched.

Sue's legacy will continue through the work she helped build, the members she welcomed, the relationships she nurtured, and the example of service she leaves behind. We will deeply miss her presence and the genuine love and commitment she showed to the Women Dems.

On behalf of the Women Democrats of Sacramento County, we extend our deepest and most heartfelt condolences to Sue's family, especially her daughter, Patty, and her sons. We continue to hold them close in our thoughts and prayers. Thank you, Sue, for your leadership, your friendship, your service, and all that you gave.

Your legacy will remain a part of the Women Democrats of Sacramento County for years to come.

Forever in our hearts. You will be greatly missed. ♥

Women DEMOCRATS
OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Meet Our INTERNS!

THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS.
Stronger, Together.

Our dedicated interns bring passion, purpose, and fresh ideas as we work together to empower women, engage our community, and build a better future for all.

KAREN HERNANDEZ
WDSC INTERN

- M.A. Political Science Candidate, CSU Sacramento (International Relations) Expected Fall 2026
- Passionate about women's rights and combating oppression against minorities.

ZIGGY CLAVERE
WDSC INTERN

- Sophomore, Sacramento State Major: Political Science Minor: Religious Studies
- Curious, Creative, Community Focused.

JOEY BOYER
WDSC INTERN

- Senior, CSU Sacramento B.A. Political Science Graduating Winter 2026
- Driven, Dedicated, Community Focused.

WILLIAM THOMPSON, IV
WDSC INTERN

- Sophomore, CSU Sacramento Major: Political Science
- Passionate, Driven, Community Minded.

VY HUYNH
WDSC INTERN

- 3rd Year, University of the Pacific Political Science (Criminal Justice Concentration) Pre-Law
- Passionate, Driven, Justice Focused.

★ 5 INTERNS. 1 MISSION. A STRONGER FUTURE. ★

BUILDING LEADERSHIP
Developing skills and confidence for tomorrow.

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY
Working together to create positive change.

ENGAGING IN DEMOCRACY
Researching, educating, and advocating for all.

EMPOWERING WOMEN
Uplifting women and allies in politics and beyond.

Together We Lead. **TOGETHER WE EMPOWER.**
ENGAGE ★ EMPOWER ★ EDUCATE ★ ELECT

Meet Our 2026 Women Dems Interns!

The Women Democrats of Sacramento County is proud to welcome five exceptional interns who are joining us this year to learn, lead, and serve. These talented students bring diverse experiences, fresh ideas, and a shared commitment to civic engagement, public service, and strengthening our communities.

Our interns—**Karen Hernandez, Joey Boyer, William Thompson IV, Vy Huynh, and Ziggy Clavere**—represent the next generation of Democratic leaders. Through their studies and hands-on involvement with the Women Dems, they will assist with research, communications, event planning, legislative tracking, community outreach, and other initiatives that advance our mission.

We are honored to support their educational and professional journeys and look forward to the contributions they will make throughout the year. Please join us in giving our interns a warm Women Dems welcome—we're excited to have them on our team and can't wait to see all they accomplish!

Which Democrats Are Going to Show Up?! Continued from page 6

None of these folks carry the usual, establishment résumés. Dozens of men and women who are blue collar, white collar, veterans, rural, suburban, and urban, Latinos, Black folk, whites, and everyone else who represents any family who has emigrated to this country are running. And with rare exception they are highly qualified and without a hint of scandal tainting their backgrounds. And these folks are running hard!

So, if a lot of us get out there and volunteer (knock doors and phone bank) and donate as much as we can, we just might begin to see the Congress we deserve - instead of the one we've been stuck with for the past 20 years!

Views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Women Democrats of Sacramento County.

Congratulations Beruka!



Beruka Willow VanBeekom has proudly cast her first election ballot this past June and graduated from *The Met* Sacramento High School. She currently plans to major in Biochemistry at

the University of California, Sacramento, and transfer to UC Davis in the medical Immunology field. She is on the waitlist at U.C. Davis for next fall.



WDSC Membership Meeting
Sacramento City Teachers Association
5300 Elvas Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95819
August 17, 2026
6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
Postcarding starts at 5:30 p.m.

Nobody's Girl, A Book Review by Teresa Hernández

In *Nobody's Girl*, Virginia Giuffre bravely shares her terrifying memoir about how she was sexually exploited by perpetrators Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. She tells her story as a survivor.

One may question why a young woman would willingly agree to please her procurers by having sexual encounters with strange men, most of whom were many years older. Her story answers that question and many more for anyone who has, luckily, never found themselves in such an unfortunate situation. She shares the reasons behind her decisions, how and what she felt throughout the grooming process, and the emotional pain that never really went away.

I recommend it to adults of any gender. *Nobody's Girl* was #1 on the *New York Times* 2026 *Best Sellers List* for 24 weeks in 2026.

