Penny's Picks

November 2026 General Election

San Diego County – Update 10.17.26

"Penny's Picks" are posted online at robynnordell.com/san-diego. *Please check for the most recent version before voting*. If you would like to subscribe, please send an email with your first and last name to pennyspicks@cox.net.

There are many important factors to consider when reviewing candidates, but for those with a conservative biblical worldview our priorities are essential core values such as the sanctity of life, biblical marriage, sexuality and gender, parental rights, religious liberty, proper role of (and generally smaller) government, and lower taxes so that families and businesses can thrive. Other considerations include electability, character (to the extent that this can be known) and experience. Above all, we seek elected officials who will govern in line with God's truth.

Remember, there are no "perfect" candidates and sometimes none of the candidates in a race hold a biblical worldview. Rather than in terms of voting for the lesser of evils, consider voting for candidates who would do the greater good in office (or the least damage). Some of these choices are not "conservatives," but the *more* conservative candidates.

Above all, do not forsake the polls! Too many Christians fail to vote. We must participate in the process, even if there's not a race or issue that excites us. There are good people on every ballot who deserve our support. You may leave some races blank. That's okay! Please vote wisely and pray that candidates who hold to biblical values and who will lead with integrity are successful. And please be careful with your ballot. While you may vote by mail, a secure indoor drop box is preferable. The *most* secure way is **in person** at a Vote Center (locations are in your voter information pamphlet and here). You may complete the ballot you were mailed and take it with you. You will go through the check-in process, then the poll worker will place your ballot in a secrecy sleeve and then in the ballot box. You may also check in and surrender your ballot. You'll then use the ballot marking device that merely prints your ballot with your choices. You will then place it in a secrecy sleeve and give it to the poll worker to place in the ballot box. More on the procedures here. **Be sure to track your ballot regardless of how you decide to cast it.** Sign up for BallotTrax at california.ballottrax.net/voter/.

The following are my *personal* recommendations and not those of any organization(s) with which I am involved. In making these choices I use nonpartisan and candidate websites, organizational endorsements, voter guides, print and online media sources, interviews with various trusted sources, forums, and, sometimes, personal vetting or surveys with the candidate or campaign. (Please see "Valuable Voter Resources" below to help you do your *own* research.)

NOTE:

1) An asterisk (*) denotes an incumbent.
2) Not all candidates listed share a biblical worldview on core principles, but many do. The names I list are those I consider to be the *best of the available choices*. I may make this notation or others as well.
3) If I have no recommendation for an office, I may note information that could aid your decision.
4) I do not generally list candidates running unopposed.
5) Again, do your own research. You may know more about races in your local area than I am able to determine. I have endeavored to link to candidate websites as available.

Statewide Offices

Governor - Steve Hilton (Solidly conservative on most issues. Becerra is far left on every issue. We need this change!)
Lt Governor - Gloria Romero (Not a prolife conservative, but strong on parental rights and education reform.)
Secretary of State - Don Wagner (Endorsed by multiple conservative organizations.)
Controller – Herb Morgan (Solid conservative and endorsed by Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assn.)
Treasurer – Jennifer Hawks (Another solid conservative.)
Attorney General – Michael Gates (Strong Christian and will be an excellent AG. Critically important race!)
Insurance Commissioner – While both candidates are Democrats with very liberal endorsements and records, Ben Allen may be the better choice to run this important department that controls how much we are charged for home, auto, rental and other insurance. Read more here.
State Board of Equalization, Dist. 4 – Denis Bilodeau (Solid conservative, endorsed by Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assn.)

Federal Offices

U.S. Representative:

48th District – Jim Desmond (Strongly support this conservative who will be a real asset in Congress.)
49th District – Armen Kurdian (Strong conservative. Excellent candidate with military and security background.)
50th District – Steve Cohen (GOP-endorsed and much better than Scott Peters)
51st District – Ricardo Cabrera (GOP-endorsed conservative.)
52nd District – Jeff Belle (Good conservative, much better option than his opponent.)

State Offices

State Senator

18th Dist. – Art Hodges (Strong conservative and a pastor.)
32nd Dist. – Kelly Seyarto* (Excellent conservative voting record in the Assembly.)
38th Dist. – Laura Bassett (You can't do any better. Excellent candidate.)
40th Dist. – Kristie Bruce-Lane (Solid conservative endorsed by the GOP and Howard Jarvis).

State Assembly

74th Dist. – Laurie Davies* (Good voting record, endorsed by many conservative organizations.)
75th Dist. – Carl DeMaio* (Endorsed by the GOP, preferable to opponent.)
76th Dist. – Carrie Espinoza Villanueva (More conservative alternative to the incumbent Democrat.)
77th Dist. – Trinity Hannaway (More conservative alternative to the incumbent Democrat.)
78th Dist. – Payton Galvez (More conservative alternative to the incumbent Democrat.)
79th Dist. – Andrew Lawson (Conservative endorsed by the Howard Jarvis, GOP and CRA.)
80th Dist. – Alejandro Galicia (More conservative alternative to the incumbent Democrat.)

Justices – Vote to Retain (Yes/No)*

Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court
Associate Justice Joshua Groban – NO
Associate Justice Kelli M. Evans – NO
Associate Justice Court of Appeal – Fourth Appellate District, Division One
Associate Justice Julia Kelety – YES
Associate Justice Jose S. Castillo – YES
Associate Justice Truc T. Do – NO
Associate Justice William Dato – YES
Associate Justice Eran M. Bermudez – YES
San Diego County Superior Court Judge Lisa Rodriguez – YES
Associate Justice David M. Rubin – YES
Associate Justice, Court of Appeal, Fourth District, Division Two
Associate Justice Corey G. Lee – YES
Associate Justice Michael J. Raphael – YES
Associate Justice, Court of Appeal, Fourth District, Division Three
Associate Justice Joanne Motoike – NO
Associate Justice Thomas A. Delaney – YES
Associate Justice Nathan Scott – YES
Associate Justice Deborah C. Servino – YES
Associate Justice Martha K. Gooding – YES
Associate Justice Juliet O. MacCaulay – NO

*These recommendations are from the California Judicial Voter Guide here.

Educational Offices (other County offices listed below)

State Superintendent of Public Instruction – Sonja Shaw (Excellent on parental rights and the only conservative running.)

County Board of Education
Dist. 3 – Cory Brown (GOP-endorsed and signed the Families First Pledge.)
Dist. 5 – Bianca Ragonesi-Lasche (Likely a more conservative alternative to the incumbent Democrat.)

College Districts
Grossmont-Cuyamaca Comm College, Area 5 – Rosangela Cribbs (GOP-endorsed.)
Palomar Comm College, Trustee Area 1 – Frank Xu (Strong Christian conservative. Please vote for Frank.)
Palomar Comm College, Trustee Area 5 – Michelle Moore (GOP-endorsed.)
San Diego Comm College - Dist A – Insufficient information (Maria Senour* has Democrat and Union endorsements.)
San Diego Comm College - Dist C – Samantha Ely (Craig Milgrim* has Democrat and Union endorsements.)
Southwestern Comm College, Area 1 – Both candidates are Democrats. Robert Moreno* may be more moderate.
Southwestern Comm College, Area 4 – No recommendation

School Districts
Alpine Union School – Glenn Dickie*, Angela May, Eric Wray* (Al Guerra* is also a strong conservative)
Bonsall Unified School Trustee Area B – Michael Gaddis* (Preferable to Democrat opponent)
Cajon Valley Union School Trustee Area 1 - Anthony Carnevale*
Cajon Valley Union School Trustee Area 2 – Dana Covell
Cajon Valley Union School Trustee Area 3 – "Lily" Emily Schworm*

Carlsbad Unified School Trustee Area 1 – Amber Martinez
Carlsbad Unified School Trustee Area 4 – Gretchen Vurbeff*
Carlsbad Unified School Trustee Area 5 – Joel Gutierrez
Chula Vista Elementary School Seat 1 – Jorge Balvaneda
Chula Vista Elementary School Seat 3 – Norma Lozoya Toothman
Chula Vista Elementary School Seat 5 – Delia Dominguez Cervantes*
Coronado Unified School – Kaye Schneider, Peggy Duncan (Better option than Democrat opponents.)
Del Mar Union School – Stephen Cochrane (All other candidates are Democrats.)
Encinitas Union School – Marika Dixon, Jorge Sanchez
Escondido Union High Trustee Area 1 – Bob Weller*
Escondido Union High Trustee Area 2 – Joe Hinrichs
Escondido Union High Trustee Area 5 – David Vincent*
Escondido Union School Trustee Area 2 – Chris Ranglas
Escondido Union School Trustee Area 4 – Zesty Harper*
Escondido Union School Trustee Area 5 – Frank Huston*
Fallbrook Union High School Trustee, Area 1 – Stacey Max Nijst
Fallbrook Union High School Trustee, Area 3 – Tracy Daniel
Fallbrook Union Elementary School Trustee, Area 4 – Maria G. Moran*
Grossmont Union High Trustee, Area 3 – Gary Woods*
Grossmont Union High Trustee, Area 4 – Chrissy McCullough
Grossmont Union High Trustee, Area 5 – Jim Kelly*
La Mesa-Spring Valley School, Area 1 – Sarah Reed* (Best option)
La Mesa-Spring Valley School, Area 1 – Myriam S. Moody
La Mesa-Spring Valley School, Area 1 – Sarah Feeley (Best Option)
National School, Area B – No recommendation
National School, Area C – No recommendation
National School, Area E – No recommendation
Oceanside Unified School Trustee, Area 1 – No recommendation (Jerry Garcia Avila would be the better option.)
Oceanside Unified School Trustee, Area 3 – Nicole Watson
Oceanside Unified School Trustee, Area 4 – Jason Bethurum (Best option)
Poway Unified School Trustee, Area B – Brett Davis
Poway Unified School Trustee, Area C – Jason Bennett
Poway Unified School Trustee, Area D – Daniela Darling
Ramona Unified School Trustee, Area 1 – Maya Phillips*
Ramona Unified School Trustee, Area 2 – Dan Summers*
Ramona Unified School Trustee, Area 5 – Rodger Dohm*
Rancho Santa Fe School – Jee Manghani* and Paul K Seitz*
San Dieguito Union High School Dist., Area 1 – No recommendation
San Dieguito Union High School Dist., Area 3 – Summer Boger
San Dieguito Union High School Dist., Area 5 – Ginny Merrifield
San Marcos Unified School Trustee, Area E – Derrick Davis
San Ysidro School – Mike Ochoa, Roxane Palestino, Brandon Plascencia
Santee School, Seat No. 1 – Cindy Petretta
Santee School, Seat No. 1 – Steven L Dobesh
Santee School, Seat No. 1 – Rob McNelis*
South Bay Union School Trustee, Area 1 – Erika Lowery
Sweetwater Union High School Trustee, Area 1 – No recommendation (Both are Democrats.)
Vallecitos School, Area 4 – No recommendation, insufficient information
Valley Ctr-Pauma Unified School, Area 4 – No recommendation. Lisa Nordstrom is a Democrat. Reform CA has endorsed Michael Caputto*.
Vista Unified School Dist., Area 3 – Jon Moffat (Excellent candidate. Strong on accountability.)

County Offices
County Board of Supervisors
Dist. 4 – Kristine C. Alessio (GOP-endorsed.)
Dist. 5 – Rebecca Jones (Strongly recommend.)

Assessor-Recorder-Clerk – Jordan Z. Marks
Treasurer-Tax Collector – Shirley Nakawatase (Excellent GOP candidate.)

City Offices
Carlsbad Mayor – Keith Blackburn*

Carlsbad City Council, Dist. 1 – Melanie Burkholder*
Carlsbad City Council, Dist. 3 – Wayland Lim (Preferable to incumbent who is far left.)
Carlsbad Treasurer – Thomas E Krouse
Chula Vista City Council, Dist. 1 – Greg Martinez
Chula Vista City Council, Dist. 2 – Angelica S. Martinez
Chula Vista Mayor – John McCann*
Coronado City Council – Ricky Hoyt
Del Mar City Council – Jeff Sturgis (Preferable to opponents)
El Cajon Mayor – Bill Wells*
El Cajon City Council, Dist. 1 – Chuck Kaye
Encinitas City Council, Dist. 3 – Ed Sprague
Encinitas City Council, Dist. 4 – Marco San Antonio*
Encinitas Mayor – Bruce Ehlers*
Escondido Mayor – Dane M. White*
Escondido City Council, Dist. 1 – Tanner Horsley
Escondido City Council, Dist. 2 – Joe Garcia*
Imperial Beach Mayor – Mitchell "Mitch" McKay*
Imperial Beach City Council, Dist. 1 – Steve Berry
Imperial Beach City Council, Dist. 3 – Mariko Nakawatase
La Mesa City Council – No recommendation (both are Democrat and union endorsed)
La Mesa Mayor – Laura Lothian
La Mesa Treasurer – Bill Exeter*
Lemon Grove City Council – No recommendation
Lemon Grove City Council, short term – No recommendation
National City Mayor – No recommendation
National City - City Council, Dist. 1– No recommendation
National City - City Council, Dist. 3 – No recommendation
Oceanside City Council, Dist. 1 – Michael Cline
Oceanside City Council, Dist. 2 – Richard Robinson*
Poway Mayor – Steve Vaus*
Poway City Council, Dist. 1 – Chris Pikus*
Poway City Council, Dist. 4 – Peter De Hoff*
San Diego City Council, Dist. 2 – Richard Bailey
San Diego City Council, Dist. 4 – No recommendation
San Diego City Council, Dist. 6 – Mark Powell
San Diego City Council, Dist. 8 – No recommendation (Both Democrats, but Gerardo Ramirez is endorsed by the Lincoln Club and may be preferable.)
San Marcos Mayor – Mike Sannella
San Marcos City Council, Dist. 1 – Thomas Gabriele
San Marcos City Council, Dist. 2 – Lindsey Smith
Santee City Council Dist. 1 – Rob McNelis*
Santee City Council Dist. 4 – Ronn Hall* (Eddie Vandiver is also conservative but supports the sales tax increase.)

Vista Mayor – Joe Green (Moderate, but the clear choice. His opponent is endorsed by the Democratic Socialists.)
Vista City Council, Dist. 1 – Frank Nunez (Outstanding candidate.)
Vista City Council, Dist. 4 – No recommendation

Special Districts
Canebrake Co. Water – Insufficient information
Deer Springs Fire Protection – James E. Gordon*
Fallbrook Public Utility, Div 2 – Kenneth W. Endter*
Grossmont Healthcare Zone 2 – Randy Lenac*
Grossmont Healthcare Zone 2 – Maggie T. Watkins*
Helix Water, Division 2 – Lawrence Powers
Helix Water, Division 4 – Kathleen Hedberg*
Lakeside Community Planning Group – Richard Abraham*, Kimberly Brown, Ashley Carnevale, Sandra Deakins, Mark Geisel, Oleksandra Reva*, and Steve Robak*
North County Fire Protection Division 1 – Cole Marting
North County Fire Protection Division 3 – Kenneth E. Munson*
Otay Water, Division 3 – Gary D Croucher* and Hector Gastelum are both conservative (Croucher is GOP-endorsed.)
Padre Dam Municipal Water, Division 1 – Brian Fordyce*

Palomar Health, Division 3 – Laurie Edwards-Tate* (Good conservative.)
Palomar Health, Division 5 – John Clark* (GOP-endorsed)
Palomar Health, Division 7 – Ian Butler
Rainbow Municipal Water, Division 3 – Greg Irvine
Ramona Community Planning Group – Robin Joy Maxson*, Dawn Perfect*, Lauren Elyse Welty
Ramona Muni Water, Div 2 – Jim Hickle*
Rincon Del Diablo Muni Water, Div 3 – Kenneth Hoving*
San Miguel Cons Fire Prot, Div 7 – No recommendation (Both Democrats)
Sweetwater Community Planning Group – Craig S Allen, Daniel A Burow, Luis De La Rosa, Carri Jo Fernandez, Susan M Heavilin, Donna Hodge, and Lori Noe
Tri-City Healthcare, Zone 2 – Jerome M. Kern
Valley Center Community Planning Group – Vlad Anthony Ciupitu, James Garritson*, Matt Matthews, Lavonne Norwood*
Vista Irrigation Dist., Division 2 (short term) – Roland Allen

Statewide Propositions
Be sure to carefully examine the ballot propositions and measures. They can have far-reaching effects on our futures. ***I agree with Frank Kacer's positions (first line)***. Please read his excellent analysis at Kacer's Call on the statewide props **here**. Another site that offers some very readable insights into the props from a conservative perspective is California Current (californiacurrent.org/archive).

NP = No position	Statewide									
Ballot Proposition Positions	1	2	3	4	5	37	38	39	40	41
Christian Citizenship Council (Kacer's Call)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Howard Jarvis Taxpayer's Assn.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Democratic Party	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Republican Party	NP	No	No	No	No	NP	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

NP = No position	Statewide			
Ballot Proposition Positions	42	43	44	45
Christian Citizenship Council (Kacer's Call)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Howard Jarvis Taxpayer's Assn.	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Democratic Party	No	No	No	No
Republican Party	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

City and County Measures
***I agree with Frank Kacer's positions (first line)*.** Please read Frank Kacer's excellent analysis at Kacer's Call on the City and County measures here.

NP = No position	City and County Measures									
Measure Positions	A	B	C	D	E	G	H	J	K	L
Christian Citizenship Council (Kacer's Call)	Yes	No	No	NP	No	No	No	No	No	No
Democratic Party	Yes	Yes	NP	Yes	Yes	Yes	NP	NP	Yes	NP
Republican Party – San Diego	--	No	No	--	--	No	No	No	No	NP

NP = No position	City and County Measures									
Measure Positions	M	N	P	Q	R	S	T	Y	AA	BB
Christian Citizenship Council (Kacer's Call)	No	No	Yes	NP	No	No	NP	No	No	No
Democratic Party	Yes	Yes	NP	NP	Yes	Yes	Yes	NP	Yes	NP
Republican Party – San Diego	No	No	Yes	No	--	No	No	No	No	No

Most of these local measures are bonds or sales tax increases, *both of which I generally oppose*. Please research your local measures carefully, reviewing the text, as well as the support and opposition arguments. While I don't necessarily agree with their positions**, San Diego County Taxpayers Association** has posted their voter guide on statewide propositions here and local measures here. You will find their policy reports explaining their positions at sdcta.org/policyreports. Reviewing their rationale may be particularly helpful in doing research for your local measure(s).

Valuable Voter Resources

Remember, these are recommendations. *Do your own homework!* You may have personal knowledge or other data that lead you to different conclusions. The point is: take the time to study your choices. To that end, below are links to online sources that you may find helpful in your research. You will find that even the recommendations of like-minded conservatives on the links I have provided do not always agree. Do not let that discourage you – and please give grace to others with whom you may disagree (including me!).

FamilyVoterInfo – familyvoterinfo.org This San Diego area resource provides organizational endorsements for candidates. Guide includes endorsements by the major parties as well.

Robyn Nordell's Conservative California Election Website – robynnordell.com. Find recommendations here from around the state – and my "Picks" are posted there, of course.

iVoterGuide – ivoterguide.com Candidates are rated on a scale of liberal to conservative, with links to scorecards, endorsements, contributions and more. The guide covers federal offices and some school boards.

California Family Council Voting Records for CA Legislators – watchdog.californiafamily.org/public/legislators/ Review how current assembly members or state senators are voting on biblical values bills.

San Diego Conservative Voters Guide – voteconservativesandiego.com

San Diego Republican Party Endorsements – sandiegorepublicans.org/endorsements

San Diego Democratic Party Endorsements – When researching non-partisan races, it is sometimes helpful to see who the local Democratic Party has endorsed, as they will generally endorse candidates who align with their beliefs. Click here to view: sddemocrats.org/candidates.html

What's the Difference?

Official Democratic Platform – democrats.org/where-we-stand/party-platform

Official Republican Platform – 2024gopplatform.com Sadly, the pro-life and pro-marriage planks were stripped from the GOP platform this year. The policies are much better than the Democrat's overall, but this was a terrible blow for voters who seek a reliably conservative party to which they can belong.

Platform comparison – biblicalvoter.com/major-party-platform-comparisons

Who is Penny? *Penny Harrington served as California's director of legislation for a national public policy organization for 13 years and continues to serve as a policy analyst for a pro-life and pro-family coalition in the state. She is passionate about making a difference in support of biblical values and equipping others to do the same.*

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