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ELECTION 2026

PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS

VOTERS CONVEY EARLY MESSAGE



Gubernatorial candidate Xavier Becerra speaks to backers on Tuesday night as he emerged atop the field of Democrats. DAVID CRANE — SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEWS GROUP



Steve Hilton, a GOP candidate for governor, speaks before entering his election night watch party in Huntington Beach. JEFF GRITCHEN — SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEWS GROUP

Many ballots remain to be counted, but some clear trends emerge from polling places in California and the Bay Area

By Paul Rogers
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It was only the semifinals, but voters in Tuesday's election sent some clear messages, delivering big victories for some candidates and sharp disappointments for others.

Under California's top-two open primary system, the two leading candidates in most races will square off again in November.

WINNERS

1) **Xavier Becerra:** Only two months ago, the low-key former California attorney

general was polling at just 5%, stuck in a distant sixth place in the governor's race and one of the candidates party leaders were hinting should drop out.

Then on April 12, U.S. Rep. Eric Swalwell, who had been the front-runner, suddenly ended his candidacy amid allegations of sexual misconduct. Much of Swalwell's support in the "traditional Democrat who fights Trump" lane shifted to Becerra.

Slowly and steadily, like the tortoise chasing a field of hares, Becerra moved into the top two Tuesday night with Republican Steve Hilton, who benefited from President Donald Trump's endorse-

GOVERNOR'S RACE

Results for the top 5 candidates as of June 3, 2:05 p.m.

Candidate	Votes
Steve Hilton (R)	1,387,459 27.8%
Xavier Becerra (D)	1,267,375 25.4%
Tom Steyer (D)	979,265 19.6%
Chad Bianco (R)	567,033 11.3%
Katie Porter (D)	231,549 4.6%
Matt Mahan (D)	205,590 4.1%

Source: California Secretary of State
BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

ment. If those two remain the finalists after all votes are counted, Becerra will be the

odds-on favorite to become California's next governor in a state where Democrats outnumber Republicans 2-to-1.

2) **Karen Bass:** The Los Angeles mayor has had a rough year. She suffered huge drops in her popularity after being absent in Africa during the devastating Los Angeles area fires of 2025 and overseeing a city that was slow to release records about how the fire department responded.

But Tuesday night, she won the most votes in her re-election bid as her opposition split between factions on the left

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CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S RACE

Steyer's path doable, but slim, experts say

Primary hope hangs on major push with late-counted ballots

By Grace Hase
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As California continues to count mail ballots over the coming days, political analysts predict late-counted ballots from Democratic voters could swing in favor of billionaire philanthropist Tom Steyer, who trailed in third on election night. But whether it will be enough to propel the progressive Democrat into the November runoff by making up a several hundred thousand vote gap remains to be seen.

On Wednesday afternoon, Republican former Fox News host Steve Hilton led with



Democratic gubernatorial candidate Tom Steyer addresses his campaign's supporters during an election party in San Francisco on Tuesday. RAY CHAVEZ — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

1,387,459 votes, or 27.8% of the total vote, followed by Democratic former Health Secretary Xavier Becerra with 1,267,375 votes, or 25.4% of the total vote. Steyer had received 979,265 votes, representing 19.6% of all votes counted.

Before the polls even

closed Steyer's campaign told his supporters to exercise patience. Early voting data indicated that Democrats were clinging to their ballots until the final days as they weighed how to strategically cast their vote for the best positioned candidate,

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ALAMEDA COUNTY SCANDAL

Ex-con's lawsuit seeks \$290M

Freed death row inmate says prosecutor fostered prejudice among juries on capital cases

By Jakob Rodgers
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A former death row prisoner freed after judges found Alameda County prosecutors unconstitutionally excluded Black jurors from his murder trial is now seeking \$290 million from the county in a lawsuit.

Curtis Lee Ervin, 73, claims Alameda County fostered the "widespread" and "deeply rooted unwritten policy" since the early 1980s when seating juries in capital cases, according to a federal lawsuit filed last week. Ervin, who spent more than three decades on death row before his conviction was vacated and he was released, ranks among a growing list of people either made eligible for parole or released from prison in the wake of the scandal, the lawsuit says.

The scandal blew open in spring 2024 when U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria found "strong evidence" that prosecutors had been "engaged in a pattern of serious misconduct automatically excluding Jewish and African American jurors in death penalty cases." The ruling prompted then-district attorney Pamela Price's office to review the convictions of nearly three dozen people still awaiting execution, many of whom received new sentences and a chance at parole.

In Ervin's case, a prosecutor refused to seat nine prospective Black jurors at his death penalty trial — leaving his case to be decided by 11 white

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'IT'S A SHOCK'

District sacks football team at Irvington

Decision to dump sport at school in Fremont angers many parents

By Christian Babcock and Darren Sabedra
STAFF WRITERS

FREMONT — Six months after its previous football coach resigned and one day before the school year ended, Fremont's Irvington High School notified its players and their parents this week that it won't have a team this fall as its efforts to hire a new coach proved unsuccessful.

The decision has stunned and angered the school's football community as Irvington becomes the second Fremont Unified school to drop football after Mission San Jose eliminated its program a decade ago.

"Friday night lights, football games, homecoming, all those things are the fabric of high school," said Ginger Fallorina Macadaeg, a parent of an Irvington junior varsity player. "To do away with that like they did at Mission San Jose, it's like, 'Man, we can't lose that. We just can't.'"

A letter from Irvington's administration sent to players and parents noted that the school has "only 17-20 eligible players combined across both JV and Varsity teams."

It added, "Even if we were able to hire a coach and staff at this time, we do not have enough players

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