

MARCH 3, 2026

# Open Letter to the Democratic Candidates for Governor

## Open Letter to the Democratic Candidates for Governor:

California Democrats have no shortage of strong candidates to consider in the race for Governor – current and former Congressmembers, statewide elected officials, State Legislators, Mayors and leaders of Democratic causes. Each of you brings a unique story, history of service and deep experience to the role. All of you hold a steadfast commitment to ensuring the Golden State continues to be a beacon of hope for all Californians and the rest of the Nation.

However, California Democrats chose not to endorse a candidate for Governor at our recent State Convention and concerns around the impact of a crowded candidate field persist.

Despite the ongoing chatter, the likelihood of two Republicans effectively “locking out” California Democrats from the contest for Governor in the General Election is relatively low. However, while it is implausible, it is not impossible and I know we are collectively committed to taking the steps required to avoid that possibility.

**Therefore, with the filing deadline approaching this Friday, March 6th, and the Primary Election quickly following, it is imperative that every candidate honestly assess the viability of their candidacy and campaign.**

I know all too well the sacrifices you have made in stepping forward to serve and have seen how much you have poured into your respective campaigns. Through your hard work and dedication, you have earned the support of volunteers, donors, endorsers and they have lent their reputations and resources to propel your campaign forward. As a result, I recognize my suggestions are hard for many to contemplate and may be even viewed as overly harsh by some. But I do so for the following reasons:

First, so much is at stake in our Nation and so many are counting on the leadership of California Democrats to stand up and speak out at this historic moment. California’s leadership on the world stage is significantly harder if a Democrat is not elected as our next Governor.

But the impact goes far beyond the race for the next Governor.

In 2025, we all helped pass Proposition 50 to create the opportunity to win at least 48 congressional seats and a chance to retake the House of Representatives in 2026. If in the unlikely event a Democrat failed to proceed to the General Election for Governor, there could be the potential for depressed Democratic turnout in California in November. The result would present a real risk to winning the congressional seats required and imperil Democrats’ chances to retake the House, cut Donald Trump’s term in half, and spare our Nation from the pain many have endured since January 2025. We simply can’t let that happen.

I know you all agree.

For these reasons and following an honest assessment of your candidacy and campaign, I ask the following:

- ***If you do not have a viable path to make it to the General Election, do not file to place your name on the ballot for the Primary Election.***
- ***If you decide to file, be prepared to suspend your campaign and endorse another candidate on or before April 15th if your campaign cannot show meaningful progress towards winning the Primary Election in the coming weeks.***

The scenarios I have described are unlikely, but they are, in fact, possible. Therefore, we all have a duty to act in a responsible manner with the opportunities and support we have earned. I believe it starts with a candid assessment of the political landscape around you, an honest reflection on your viability to win the race, and the courage to make a tough choice. I know you are committed to doing what’s required in this historic moment. I certainly know I am and California Democrats are too.

Rusty Hicks  
California Democratic Party Chair




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