

CVF's Close Count Transparency Project

Report #3:

Updated results improve Democratic candidates' vote totals

November 10, 2024



Project overview

Since Election Night on Tuesday, November 5th, the California Voter Foundation (CVF) has launched the [Close Count Transparency Project](#) to monitor close California congressional and legislative contests. The goal of this project is to give the public and media a clear picture of how close margins in undecided contests fluctuate as more ballots are counted, and how many ballots remain to be counted in the counties that are home to these contested districts. CVF has created a [tracking sheet](#) and is updating the unofficial vote counts and margins in these contests continuously until the certification deadline on December 5th. Statewide vote counts and turnout so far is also being tracked daily. A [template that can be used to track other contests](#) is available to the public and media to download as well.

Changes between Friday and Saturday

CVF is tracking 11 congressional races. Between Friday and Saturday, two contests flipped from the Republican to the Democrat taking the lead, in CD 27 and CD 47. As of Saturday, overall, Democratic candidates are leading in five contests, Republican candidates in four, and the remaining two have already been called by AP. In most congressional contests CVF is tracking, Democratic candidates' leads have increased and Republican candidates' leads have decreased as more ballots are counted.

Control of the House of Representatives is still undecided as ballot counting continues in these and a handful of other close contests around the country.

Close Contests (in order of narrowest margins):

- **CD 27:** Incumbent Mike Garcia (R) vs. George Whitesides (D)
Region: Los Angeles County
Status: A narrow, 0.1 percent margin on Election Night favoring Garcia widened Wednesday to 2.4 percent but shrunk to 1.4 percent by Thursday and then to 0.4% on Friday. On Saturday, the Democratic challenger took the lead by a 0.8% margin, amounting to 2,114 votes with an estimated 526,000 ballots remaining to count in LA County.
- **CD 47:** Open Seat - Scott Baugh (R) vs. Dave Min (D)
Region: Orange County
Status: With a narrow Election Night margin of 1.3 percent, the Democratic candidate in this open seat was ahead, but on Wednesday the results flipped to favor the Republican with a close margin of 1.2%. On Thursday, Baugh was still in the lead but the margin shrunk to just 0.2%. On Friday, after Orange County counted more ballots, the race flipped with Min back in the lead, and a very narrow 0.03% lead that grew to 0.9% by Saturday, with a 2,713 vote count difference and 212,152 ballots remaining to process.

- **CD 21:** Incumbent Jim Costa (D) vs. Michael Maher (R)
Region: Central Valley (Fresno and Tulare counties)
Status: Not initially included in the Cook Political Report list of competitive seats, this contest was added to the Secretary of State’s Close Contests list on Nov. 6 and added to CVF’s tracking sheet. The incumbent Democrat has a narrow lead over his Republican challenger, which grew slightly from 0.9 to 1.1 percent between Wednesday and Thursday; on Friday it dipped slightly to 1% as a few more ballots were processed. The vote count did not change on Saturday and over 130,000 ballots remain to be processed in the two counties that are home to this district.
- **CD 9:** Incumbent Josh Harder (D) vs. Kevin Lincoln (R)
Region: Central Valley (Contra Costa, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties)
Status: Harder had a strong lead on Election Night with a 4.2 percent margin that narrowed to 1.4 percent by Wednesday and remained at 1.4 percent with very few votes added to the count Thursday. With more ballots counted on Friday and Saturday, Harder’s lead widened to 2.4%.
- **CD 13:** Incumbent John Duarte (R) vs. Adam Gray (D)
Region: Central Valley (Fresno, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties)
Status: The margin between the candidates in this race was just 1.1 percent on Election Night with Gray ahead, but widened to 2.9 percent to favor Duarte by Wednesday; his lead decreased slightly to 2.8 percent on Thursday after a few thousand additional ballots were counted; more counting on Friday and Saturday further reduced his lead to 2.5%. The five counties that are home to this district have a combined estimated total of about 328,695 ballots remaining to process.
- **CD 45:** Incumbent Michelle Steel (R) vs. Derek Tran (D)
Region: Southern California (Los Angeles and Orange counties)
Status: The Republican incumbent’s initial close margin on Election Night of 1.5 percent widened to 5.1 percent on Wednesday morning then decreased to 3.8 percent on Thursday. The two counties that are home to this district initially had a combined estimated total of 1.3 million ballots left to process. After more ballots were counted Friday, Steel’s lead dropped to 2.6% on Saturday, with over 770,000 ballots remaining to process in the two counties that are home to this district.
- **CD 41:** Incumbent Ken Calvert (R) vs. Will Rollins (D)
Region: Southern California (Riverside County)
Status: Election Night results showed the Democratic challenger ahead in this contest by a 3.8% margin but the results flipped overnight with the Republican incumbent taking the lead on Wednesday by a 1% margin, which widened to 3% Thursday, with 350,000 ballots remaining to count. Riverside County has reduced their uncounted ballots number to 225,000, and as of Saturday Calvert is still in the lead by a slightly decreased 2.8% margin.
- **CD 49:** Incumbent Mike Levin (D) vs. Matt Gunderson (R)
Region: Southern California (Orange and San Diego counties)
Status: Initially showing a 5.4 percent margin favoring the Democratic incumbent on Election Night, the vote count in this contest narrowed Wednesday and reduced that margin to 1.9 percent. Thursday’s results showed Levin’s margin growing to 2.2 percent. After more ballots were counted Friday and Saturday, Levin’s lead widened again to 3.4% with an estimated 462,152 ballots remaining to count in the counties that are home to this district.
- **CD 22:** Incumbent David Valadao (R) vs. Rudy Salas (D)

Region: Central Valley (Kern, Kings, and Tulare)

Status: Valadao's 7.9 percent lead over Salas was high on Election Night and further increased by the next morning, with a 10.1 percent margin favoring the Republican incumbent that held steady at 10.1 percent Thursday after a few thousand more ballots were counted. As of Saturday, Valadao was still in the lead by a 7.1% margin and about 151,000 ballots remaining to count in the counties that are home to this district.

- **CD 40:** Incumbent Young Kim (R) vs. Joe Kerr (D)

Region: Southern California (Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties)

Status: The margin favoring the Republican incumbent widened from 9 percent on Election Night to 13.7 percent by Wednesday morning. Though it dipped to 12.8 percent Thursday, it was considered wide enough for the AP to [call this race](#) for Kim on November 7th.

- **CD 3:** Incumbent Kevin Kiley (R) vs. Jessica Morse (D)

The AP [called this race](#) for the Republican incumbent on November 6th.

Legislative Races

Senate District 5's margin favoring the Democratic candidate grew from 0.3% on Wednesday to 3.5% on Saturday after more ballots were counted. Assembly District 47 remains incredibly close; the Democratic candidate is leading by a margin that has decreased from 0.8% on Election Night to 0.2% on Saturday. Other close legislative races include AD 58 (1.5% margin down from 2.6%) and Senate District 35 (1.7% margin down from 2.5%). In Senate District 37, Democratic incumbent State Senator Josh Newman remains behind his Republican challenger Steve Choi, whose lead declined slightly from 3.4% Thursday to 2.8% Saturday.

About Close Contests

The winner of close contests cannot be called when margins are still very narrow and about a third of the estimated total number of ballots cast statewide have yet to be counted, according to the numbers reported Friday in the [County Reporting Status](#) and [Unprocessed Ballots Status](#) report provided by the Secretary of State.

In addition, more ballots are still arriving to count. Ballots postmarked by Election Day and received by Tuesday, Nov. 12 will be counted. Voters are also allowed to return ballots to any county in the state, and as those ballots are sent by county election offices to their home counties, they will also get verified and counted. Voters with signature issues on their vote-by mail ballots are also being contacted by election offices to provide valid signatures so their ballots can be added to the count.

See CVF's [Close Count Transparency Project homepage](#) and [news release](#) for additional information about this project and California's vote counting process.