

CVF's Close Count Transparency Project

Report #4:

Seven Undecided California House Contests One Week after Election Day

November 12, 2024



Project overview

Since Election Night on Tuesday, November 5th, the California Voter Foundation (CVF) has launched and been updating 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.

What happened Saturday through Tuesday

While a few counties continued counting ballots Saturday through Monday, most were closed for the holiday weekend. Four California county election offices – [Santa Clara](#), [Riverside](#), [Orange](#) and [Los Angeles](#) were also hampered by bomb threats delivered via email on Friday, November 8th.

Los Angeles and Orange counties were among those that continued their count through the weekend despite the threats, and the additional votes changed which candidate was in the lead, from the Republican to the Democrat, in CD 27 and CD 47; their leads widened as more ballots were counted through the weekend and today, leading the Associated Press to call CD 27 today for the Democratic challenger. CD 47 is still considered too close to call. Incumbent Democrats in CD 9 and CD 49 saw their leads widen, and the Associated Press called CD 49 for the incumbent Democrat. Republican incumbents' margins decreased in CD 41 and CD 45 over the holiday weekend. While no new votes were added in CD 45 today, the Republican incumbent has a lead of 2.5 percent. In CD 41, the Republican incumbent's lead declined to 0.8 percent. In CD 13, the Republican incumbent's lead dropped slightly to 2.1 percent. In CD 21, the Democratic incumbent's lead grew to 3.6 percent. In CD 22, the Republican incumbent's lead dipped slightly but remained high at 6.8 percent and the Associated Press called this race today for Valadao.

The seven undecided California House seats are among the final contests to be decided nationwide that will determine which party controls the House. [According to the Associated Press](#), as of Tuesday night, Republicans are two seats away from the 218 needed to hold on to their majority, while Democrats are eleven seats away from capturing the majority. While one news outlet has called the House for the Republicans, AP and others have held off to await more confirmation before making this determination.

This morning the Secretary of State released an updated Unprocessed Ballot Report showing that statewide an estimated 2.6 million ballots remain to be counted; some of these ballots were counted and reported today in updated vote totals. Approximately 161,000 ballots are challenged and could still

be counted if voters with challenged signatures supply a valid signature to “cure” their ballot. In addition, today was the last day ballots postmarked by Election Day can be received and counted by election offices.

Close Contests (in order of narrowest margins):

- **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, and has declined continuously since then, now standing at 0.8 percent as of Tuesday night with a 2,272-vote lead. While both Los Angeles and Orange counties have processed a significant number of their ballots already, an estimated 268,000 remain to be processed in the two counties that are home to this district.

- **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 changed to favor the Republican with a close margin of 1.2 percent. On Thursday, Baugh was still in the lead, but the margin shrunk to just 0.2 percent. On Friday, after Orange County counted more ballots, the race flipped with Min back in the lead and a very narrow 0.03 percent lead that grew to 0.9 percent by Saturday and inched up to 1 percent by Monday and grew to 1.8 percent on Tuesday, with a 5,912 vote difference and an estimated 126,553 ballots remaining to process.

- **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 percent, and decreased further on Tuesday to 2.1 percent. The five counties that are home to this district have a combined estimated total of about 222,000 ballots remaining to process as of Tuesday.

- **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 percent margin, but the results changed overnight with the Republican incumbent taking the lead on Wednesday by a 1 percent margin, which widened to 3 percent Thursday, then declined slightly on Saturday to 2.8 percent. With a few more ballots counted, his lead declined again to 2.5 percent. An estimated 165,000 ballots remain to be counted in Riverside County as of Tuesday.

- **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 percent on Friday. On Saturday, the Democratic challenger took the lead by a 0.8 percent margin. After more ballots were counted on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, Whitesides’ lead grew again and now stands at 2.6 percent, with an

estimated 141,900 ballots remaining to count in Los Angeles County. The Associated Press called this race for Whitesides today.

- **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 November 6th 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 percent after more ballots were processed. The vote count did not change from Saturday to Monday, but on Tuesday more ballots were processed and Costa's margin grew to 3.6 percent with approximately 81,000 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 percent, and on Tuesday increased to 3.7 percent with additional ballots counted. An estimated 208,000 ballots in the three counties that are home to this district remaining to be processed.

- **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. It has been growing steadily since then, to 2.2 percent on Thursday, 3.4 percent by Friday, rose to 4.1 percent on Monday, remained at 4.1 percent on Tuesday, wide enough that the Associated Press called this race for Levin on Tuesday even with an estimated 256,000 ballot remaining to be counted 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 Tuesday, Valadao's lead declined to 6.8 percent but was still strong enough for the Associated Press to call this race for Valadao on Tuesday, with an estimated 88,000 ballot remaining to process.

Legislative Races

Senate District 5's margin favoring the Democratic candidate grew from 0.3 percent on Wednesday to 3.5 percent on Saturday and again to 5.5 percent 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 percent on Election Night to 0.2 percent on Saturday, and now stands at 0.5 percent with approximately 364,000 unprocessed ballots. Other close legislative races include AD 58 (also at a 0.5 percent margin) and Senate District 35 (currently a 1.1 percent margin down from 2.5 percent). In Senate District 37, Democratic incumbent State Senator Josh Newman remains behind his Republican challenger Steve Choi, whose lead declined slightly from 3.4 percent Thursday to 2.8 percent Saturday and to 2.2 percent on Tuesday.

About Close Contests

The winner of close contests cannot be called when margins are still very narrow and a significant number of ballots remain to be counted. See the Secretary of State's [County Reporting Status](#) and [Unprocessed Ballots Status](#) reports for the latest status on California's vote count.

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