

# Hispanic voters could swing California's recall election

Hispanic votes may make Bustamante California's first Hispanic governor

By Andrew Maykuth  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

SAN JOSE, Calif. — As a Latino, Jose Mendoza grew accustomed to being ignored by politicians. But in recent years, he has heard more and more candidates tailor their messages toward Latinos, and he has decided that he likes being taken seriously.

"It has been happening lately, we're the center of attention," Mendoza, owner of the San Jose Men's Wear store in the Californian city's predominantly Mexican-American east side, said. "Things are changing. People are recognizing that we're part of this country, too."

Last week, Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante visited the run-down Tropicana shopping center where Mendoza's store is located. Mendoza ordered a mariachi band to welcome the Democrat, who could become California's first Hispanic governor if he pulls off a last-minute miracle in Tuesday's gubernatorial recall election.

"We were waiting for this," Mendoza said. "We know that sooner or later, a Latino will be elected governor in California. We didn't think it would happen this soon."

But first thing's first. Mendoza said he is a loyal Democrat and he plans to vote "no" in Tuesday's special election on the recall of Gov. Gray Davis, the unpopular Democratic governor whose ouster would trigger a second ballot question — who should replace the governor if he is recalled?

Bustamante is a long shot. The lieutenant governor lags behind Re-

publican Arnold Schwarzenegger in most polls, and his position has been stagnant in recent weeks. But as allegations of the actor's mistreatment of women have circulated in the campaign's final days, the gap could close substantially.

And as the gap closes, the importance of the Latino vote could be growing.

"Latino voters are a growing percentage of voters in several states, but they can only swing the vote in a few states, particularly California," Luis R. Fraga, an associate professor of political science at Stanford University, said.

Latinos, mostly Mexican-Americans, make up close to 30 percent of California's population — as much as half the population in the Los Angeles area alone. They constitute between 12 and 18 percent of registered California voters and a slightly smaller percentage of the average turnout.

Fraga said that about 60 percent of California Latinos typically vote for Democratic candidates, and the polls show that there will be little deviation in the upcoming vote. He said there is no evidence that more Latino voters will vote for Bustamante — or vote to oust Davis — because of a groundswell of ethnic pride.

But Harry Pachon, head of the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute at the University of Southern California, said that Latino voters may participate in greater numbers because they perceive that history might be made with a Bustamante election.

Pachon discounted a Field Poll released on Friday that showed Bustamante with a narrowing lead among Hispanic voters. The poll said that Bustamante received 40 percent of the Latino support, and Schwarzenegger was close behind with 34 percent.

Pachon said the Multilingual Survey of California Voters conducted several weeks ago — and co-sponsored by his institute — indicated that Schwarzenegger only had about 15 percent of the Hispanic vote. The survey polled about 600 Hispanic voters, compared to about 50 in the Field Poll.

Contrary to early reports that young Latino voters would support Schwarzenegger because they like his movies, Pachon said that the actor's primary support is from Latinos who are Republicans.

Though Schwarzenegger has tried to create an affinity with Latinos by emphasizing his immigrant background and expressing his fondness for Mexico after shooting several movies south of the border, he is hampered by his campaign's close association with former Governor Pete Wilson.

Wilson, co-chair of the actor's campaign, is despised for supporting a divisive 1994 voter initiative that sought to ban public services for undocumented immigrants. The measure passed, but was overturned in court.

"People don't realize the anger and hostility with Wilson is still there 10 years later," Pachon said.

But Gary Mendoza, the co-chairman of Schwarzenegger's campaign, said his candidate has strong appeal with Hispanics, who identify with his immigrant background.

"From the polls we're seeing, we're going to be very close to Bustamante in the Latino vote," Mendoza said.

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- Mon. LA VENEXIANA: Petrarch and the Madrigal**  
10/13 Early music vocal ensemble from Italy. FREE Admission 8 p.m., Beall Hall
- Thu. MUSIC FACULTY SHOWCASE**  
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- Fri. CLASSICAL MUSIC OF NORTH INDIA**  
10/17 World Music Series 8 p.m., Beall Hall  
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- Sat. FESTIVAL OF BANDS**  
10/18 Marching Band Competition All Day, Autzen Stadium  
\$12 General Admission, \$8 students & seniors
- Fri. HOMECOMING CONCERT**  
10/24 Featuring four UO Ensembles 7:30 p.m., Beall Hall  
FREE Admission
- Sun. UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY**  
10/26 UO Ensemble 3 p.m., Beall Hall  
\$5 General Admission, \$3 students & senior citizens
- Wed. JAZZ ARRANGERS CONCERT:**  
10/29 John Hollenbeck & the Claudio Quintet  
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Art exhibit, 7:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m., EMU Aperture Gallery. The exhibit showcases photographs by Jon Muyskens, a biology graduate student who took photos while visiting the village of Lambert in Haiti. The art will be available until Nov. 3.

#### Today's crossword solution

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