



BELOVED RESIDENT. This undated photo shows Asian elephant Sujatha at the Santa Barbara Zoo in Santa Barbara, California. The zoo said it had to euthanize Sujatha, one of its most beloved and oldest residents, after experiencing declining health for the past few years. (Santa Barbara Zoo via AP)

California zoo euthanizes beloved 47-year-old elephant

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP) — A California zoo had to euthanize one of its most beloved and oldest residents, a 47-year-old Asian elephant named Sujatha, officials said.

Sujatha was euthanized in her enclosure surrounded by her caretakers at the Santa Barbara Zoo.

CEO Rich Block said in a video posted on Twitter that Sujatha's death "is perhaps the most difficult moment" in his 20 years at the facility.

"And I know for the people that care for the elephants this may be the toughest moment in their entire career," Block said. "There is no way to describe the sadness that is felt."

Sujatha had been in declining health for the past few years but was able to live comfortably with treatment, Block said. Her wellbeing declined precipitously in the past couple weeks and she stopped responding to treatment, he said.

Sujatha and her female companion, Little Mac, arrived at the zoo from India in 1972, when they were just one-and-a-half years old, and they've lived together ever since.

After Sujatha was euthanized, zoo officials said they allowed Little Mac to visit her in hopes of helping the grieving process.

Zoo officials say elephants are known to grieve for their companions and that if Little Mac is too distraught, she could have to be moved to another facility.

Block praised Sujatha and Little Mac for being "ambassadors for Asian elephants in Santa Barbara for 46 years."

"Children who first met them in the 1970s have brought their own children, and some even their grandchildren, to meet these wonderful creatures," Block said in a statement. "We are grateful to Sujatha and Little Mac for how they have enriched all our lives."

More diverse Orange County, California, morphs from GOP past

By Michael R. Blood
The Associated Press

FULLERTON, Calif. — Pushy midday shoppers nose their carts through the Korean market, stocking up on bottled kimchi and seaweed spring rolls. A few doors away, customers grab pho to go at a Vietnamese takeout counter. Across the street, lunchtime diners line up for tacos "al pastor" — spit-roasted pork — at a Mexican-style taqueria.

It's a snapshot of how much Orange County, California, has changed.

For decades, the county southeast of Los Angeles represented an archetype of middle-class America, a place whose name evoked a "Brady Bunch" conformity set amid freeways, megachurches, and Disneyland's spires. The mostly white, conservative homeowners voted with timeclock regularity for Republican candidates like Richard Nixon, whose getaway from Washington, the Western White House, sat on the coast.

The Korean barbecue shops and Mexican bakeries along Orange-thorpe Avenue in Fullerton are a signpost of the shifting demographics and politics that have emboldened Democrats eager to flip four Republican-held U.S. House seats in Orange County. The districts, partly or completely within the county, went to Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election and have become closely watched national battlegrounds as part of Democrats' strategy to retake it in November.

In an election season shaped by divisions over President Donald Trump and the #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct, perhaps the most telling evidence of the changing county is in the 39th Congressional District.

The seat is held by long-serving Republican representative Ed Royce, a pillar of the Washington establishment who, like most of his party's nearly all-male leadership in congress, is older and white.

The contest to succeed the retiring congressman is between two very different candidates: Young Kim, a South Korean immigrant Republican woman, and Gil Cisneros, a Hispanic Democratic man.

The racially mixed ballot has opened questions about the relevance of party labels, race, and the inclination to embrace one's own. It comes as Hispanics and Asians together now make up the majority of Orange County's 3.2 million people. In 1980, about 80 percent of the population was white.

The once-dominant Republican Party also is clinging to a tissue-thin edge over Democrats in voter registration numbers — a dropoff that reflects not just the arrival of new faces but their more liberal politics.

Kim is trying to become the first Korean-American woman elected to congress. She represents the kind of candidate the state GOP has been trying to cultivate for years to reflect a more diverse population.



DIVERSE RACE. Young Kim, a candidate running for a U.S. House seat in the 39th District in California, talks to volunteers working an evening phone bank at her campaign office in Yorba Linda, California. Kim is trying to become the first Korean-American woman elected to congress. A sign of the change is in the 39th District, where the Korean immigrant Republican, Kim, is running against Gil Cisneros, a Hispanic Democrat. (AP Photo/Chris Carlson)

Kim, 55, was born in South Korea and grew up in Guam, then later came to California for college. She became a small-business owner and was elected to the state assembly.

She's running as Royce's preferred successor after working for him for years, but her path is complicated by Trump, who is unpopular in a state where Democrats hold every statewide office and a 39-14 advantage in house seats.

Kim talked up the robust economy at a recent campaign stop, but she's also emphasizing her independence from the White House on issues like trade. She's not in favor of increased tariffs imposed by the administration.

She never mentioned the president in a brief speech.

"I'm a different kind of candidate," she said.

As a Democrat, Cisneros, 47, knows he's the face of change in the long-held GOP district, anchored in northern Orange County and running through slices of neighboring Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. He sees shifting demographics as an asset: the district has grown about equally divided between Republicans, Democrats, and independents, as it is with Asians, Hispanics, and whites.

Cisneros, a Navy veteran and one-time Republican who won a \$266-million lottery jackpot with his wife, describes his candidacy as the next step in a life committed to public service, which started with his time in the military. He has said he left the GOP because it became deeply conservative, adding in a recent interview that voters are eager to see a change in gridlocked Washington.

"This is not the same district that it was 15, or even 10 years ago," he said.

Orange County might seem like an unlikely battleground in the fight to control congress. In popular culture, it is a place often reduced to initials, "the O.C.," and a stereotype: a wealthy enclave of buff residents living in conspicuous excess on hill-sides overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Overlooked is the county's political pedigree: Its Republican-rich suburbs are seen as a foundation

block in the modern conservative movement and the rise of the Reagan revolution.

Fullerton, like Orange County, was once known for groves of Valencia oranges that blanketed its landscape and oil fields that lay beneath it. That changed with the development of California's freeway system, which created the transportation arteries that gave rise to a vast Sunbelt suburbia.

After World War II, jobs in defense and manufacturing were plentiful. The population boomed, and many of the new arrivals were from the Midwest, and conservative in their outlook.

Those voters, alienated by the rise of national liberalism, "ended up building the Ronald Reagan movement," said Raphael Sonenshein, executive director of the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles.

Several trends have been making the county more favorable for Democrats over time, said Paul Mitchell of Political Data Inc., a nonpartisan research firm. Among them: more Latinos and Asians are registering as independents and fewer as Republicans.

Much of that can be attributed to the preferences of younger Californians, who have been eschewing major-party labels.

Another big change is with the voting habits of Asians. A surge in immigration from Southeast Asia in the post-Vietnam War years brought in a wave of strongly anti-communist voters. But younger Asians grew up in a different era.

Millennial Asians "are some of the most liberal voters in the state," Mitchell said.

On a recent afternoon outside a library in Yorba Linda — the city where Nixon was born and where his presidential library was built — 76-year-old retired computer programmer Don Jacques of Brea said he welcomes the diversity on the ballot. The registered Democrat and Cisneros supporter has lived in the county since childhood.

"It's about time for this kind of change," Jacques said.

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