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CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC

2026 BLACK VOTER'S GUIDE

Your Voice. Your Values. Your Vote.

1 KEY DATES – CALIFORNIA GENERAL ELECTION

- **OCT 5** — Ballots begin mailing & early voting begins
- **OCT 19** — Online registration deadline
- **OCT 20–NOV 3** — Same Day Registration available
- **NOV 3** — **ELECTION DAY** • Polls 7 AM–8 PM

2 MAKE YOUR PLAN

1. Check or update your registration
2. Review your official sample ballot
3. Choose: mail, drop box, or vote center
4. Track your ballot after you vote

3 VOTE THE WHOLE BALLOT

Governor & statewide offices • Congress & Legislature • Judges • County, city & school boards • State and local measures

4 ASK WHAT MATTERS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

- Housing & affordability
- Jobs, wages & small business
- Education & youth opportunity
- Health care & environmental justice
- Public safety, rights & accountability

NONPARTISAN • VERIFY DETAILS WITH OFFICIAL ELECTION SOURCES

vote.ca.gov • Fresno County Registrar of Voters

My voting date: _____ | My voting method: _____

California Black Voter's Guide Overview

November 3, 2026, General Election • Nonpartisan statewide overview

This guide is designed to support informed participation by Black Californians while remaining nonpartisan. It summarizes statewide voting logistics and ballot measures; it does not endorse candidates or tell anyone how to vote. Local contests and measures differ by address, so review your county sample ballot as well.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- **October 5:** Counties must begin mailing vote-by-mail ballots; early voting may begin at county elections offices.
- **October 6:** Secure ballot drop-off locations open statewide.
- **October 19:** Last day to register online or by mail.
- **October 20–November 3:** Conditional ("Same Day") voter registration is available at county elections offices, vote centers, and polling places.
- **October 24:** First vote centers open for early in-person voting in Voter's Choice Act counties.
- **October 31:** In-person early voting locations are open throughout California.
- **November 3, Election Day:** Polls are open 7:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Ballots returned in person must arrive by 8:00 p.m.; mailed ballots must be postmarked on or before this date.

Where and How to Vote

Voting locations are assigned locally and can change. Find your nearest early-voting site, vote center, polling place, or ballot drop box through the California Secretary of State Early Voting locator. You may also contact your county elections office or check the address printed on your county voter guide.

- **Vote by mail:** Every active registered voter will be mailed a ballot. Mail it early; if mailing on Election Day, ask a postal employee for a manual postmark.
- **Drop box:** Return your ballot to any official ballot drop-off location in California by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.
- **In person:** Vote at a polling place or vote center. Services vary by site; many locations offer accessible voting, language assistance, replacement ballots, and Same Day Registration.
- **County elections office:** Request or vote a vote-by-mail ballot in person and get help with registration or ballot issues.

Before You Vote

- Register or update your address at RegisterToVote.ca.gov by October 19 or use Same Day Registration afterward.

- Review your county sample ballot for local candidates, judges, school boards, city offices, and local measures.
- Bring the mailed ballot you want replaced or surrendered if voting in person, when possible.
- Ask election workers for language or disability assistance if needed.
- Sign and date the vote-by-mail return envelope and use the state's ballot-tracking service to confirm receipt.

California's 14 Statewide Propositions

Plain-language overview of certified statewide measures

Proposition	What it would do	Questions to consider
1	Authorizes $11.25 billion in state general-obligation bonds for affordable housing programs, including rental housing, veterans' mortgages, supportive housing, preservation, infrastructure, and down-payment assistance.	Housing supply and access; benefits to renters, veterans, first-time buyers, students, farmworkers, and tribal communities; estimated state repayment cost of $500–$600 million annually for about 25 years.
2	Amends the state Constitution to increase California's Rainy Day Fund so more money is reserved for education, health care, public safety, and other services during downturns.	Greater budget stability versus less flexibility to spend revenue immediately.
3	Amends the state Constitution to extend the existing tax on high incomes and provide ongoing funding for schools and health care.	Long-term school and health funding; reliance on high-income tax revenue; effects on the state budget and taxpayers.
4	Repeals California's prohibition on public funding of election campaigns, allowing future public campaign-financing programs if separately authorized.	Potential to broaden candidate participation and reduce reliance on private donors; program design, cost, and safeguards would matter.
5	Changes the recall-election process for statewide officers through a constitutional amendment.	Continuity of elected leadership, voter choice in a recall, and how vacancies or succession would be handled.
37	Authorizes up to $25 billion in bonds for a loan program offering eligible middle-income buyers fixed-rate financing for up to 17% of a qualified new home's purchase price. Borrowers must meet residency, occupancy, income, and down-payment rules; homeowner payments are intended to repay the bonds.	Homeownership access and new construction; eligibility and regional price limits; repayment and program-administration risks.

38	Authorizes state bonds to fund immunology medical research.	Potential health and research benefits; oversight and grant priorities; long-term bond repayment costs.
39	Amends the state Constitution to require government-issued identification and additional citizenship verification for voting.	Election administration and public confidence; access for voters who lack qualifying identification or underlying documents; implementation costs and safeguards.
40	Imposes a one-time tax on certain individuals and trusts through a constitutional amendment and statute.	Who would pay, what the revenue would fund, possible behavioral or economic effects, and administrative complexity.
41	Requires audits of programs funded by new state special taxes and prohibits new state taxes whose revenue is excluded from the voter-approved state spending limit.	Oversight and spending-limit enforcement; effects on how lawmakers structure and fund dedicated programs.
42	Amends the state Constitution to prohibit new state personal-property taxes and certain retroactive state taxes.	Taxpayer predictability and protections; limits on future revenue options and responses to changing fiscal needs.
43	Amends the state Constitution to limit voters' ability to raise revenue for local government services.	Thresholds and procedures for local taxes; funding for services such as transit, libraries, fire protection, housing, and public health; local voter control.
44	Requires community health clinics to spend 90% of revenue on program services.	Direct patient services and accountability; how the rule treats administration, facilities, reserves, and compliance costs.
45	Changes environmental review requirements for certain projects.	Project speed and cost; environmental and community protections; which projects qualify and how public review is affected.

A Community-Impact Lens

For each measure, consider: Who receives the benefits and who bears the costs? Could implementation widen or reduce disparities in housing, health, education, taxation, environmental exposure, or access to the ballot? What oversight, enforcement, and public reporting are required?

How might affects differ across urban, suburban, rural, and Central Valley communities? Compare the official analysis, arguments for and against, fiscal estimate, and full legal text before deciding.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed for Black California voters while recognizing that Black communities are diverse and do not vote as a bloc. It does not endorse candidates. Instead, it summarizes the offices, candidate backgrounds, and publicly reported priorities, then highlights questions that may help voters evaluate likely effects on voting rights, affordability and wealth, public safety and justice, education, health, housing, environmental conditions, and accountable government.

Scope: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Controller, Treasurer, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the four Board of Equalization districts. This guide excludes U.S. Congress, California Senate and Assembly, judges, local offices, and ballot propositions. Board of Equalization is included because it is a state constitutional office, although each voter sees only the contest for their district.

Source note: Candidate names and ballot designations come from the California Secretary of State's certified list dated August 27, 2026. Candidate summaries rely primarily on the state's official voter information and independent CalMatters reporting. Campaign positions may evolve; verify late changes before voting.

A Black Community Issue Lens

- **Voting power:** Will the candidate expand accessible voting, protect voters from discrimination, secure elections, and make campaign data transparent?
- **Economic security:** How would the candidate affect housing, utility and insurance costs, small businesses, state contracting, taxes, pensions, and pathways to homeownership?
- **Justice and safety:** What is the candidate's record on civil rights, police accountability, violence prevention, incarceration, reentry, consumer protection, and equal enforcement?
- **Health and environment:** Would the candidate reduce gaps in coverage, maternal outcomes, pollution exposure, disaster recovery, and access to affordable insurance?
- **Education and youth:** What would the candidate do about school funding, literacy and math outcomes, discipline disparities, teacher pipelines, student belonging, and college affordability?
- **Accountability:** Are proposals specific, within the office's legal authority, adequately funded, and measurable by public results?

Statewide Candidate Review

Governor

Why it matters: The governor proposes the state budget, signs or vetoes laws, appoints judges and regulators, and leads emergency response. The office has broad influence over housing, health care, education, jobs, climate policy, and criminal justice.

Candidate	Background and reported priorities	Questions through a Black voter lens
Xavier Becerra Democratic Voting Rights Attorney	Former U.S. Health and Human Services secretary, California attorney general, and member of Congress. Emphasizes affordability and public services; reports describe proposals to restrain utility and insurance rates, protect health coverage, use state authority against price gouging, and maintain climate goals while addressing costs.	How would protections translate into measurable reductions in health, housing, utility, and insurance gaps? What commitments would govern appointments, contracting, maternal health, school funding, and justice reform?
Steve Hilton Republican Small Business Owner	Former adviser to U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron and former Fox News host. Campaigns on deregulation, tax and spending cuts, expanded energy supply, more suburban housing, tougher encampment enforcement, and a government-efficiency initiative.	Who benefits most from proposed tax and regulatory changes? What safeguards would prevent reduced public services, environmental burdens, or enforcement disparities in Black communities?

Lieutenant Governor

Why it matters: The lieutenant governor succeeds the governor if needed, may break state Senate ties, and serves on higher-education and land-use boards.

Candidate	Background and reported priorities	Questions through a Black voter lens
Fiona Ma **Democratic** **State Treasurer/CPA**	State treasurer since 2019; previously served on the Board of Equalization, San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and in the Assembly. Her experience centers on public finance, state boards, and higher education.	What specific actions would she take on college affordability, campus equity, state investment access, and inclusive appointments?
Gloria Romero **Republican** **Educator/Businesswoman**	Former state senator and Senate majority leader who changed party registration to Republican in 2024. Highlights school choice and opposition to several Democratic education and COVID-era policies.	How would her education agenda affect funding, student civil rights, discipline disparities, and options for families in under-resourced communities?

Secretary of State

Why it matters: The secretary of state administers statewide elections, certifies ballots, manages business filings and state archives, and publishes campaign-finance and lobbying information.

Candidate	Background and reported priorities	Questions through a Black voter lens
Shirley N. Weber **Democratic** **California Secretary of State**	Incumbent and California's first Black secretary of state; former Assemblymember. Oversaw universal vote-by-mail and says she would expand voting access, improve filing transparency, and strengthen cybersecurity.	What results show progress on turnout gaps, language and disability access, voting-rights enforcement, misinformation, and timely ballot counting?
Donald P. (Don) Wagner **Republican** **Orange County Supervisor**	Orange County supervisor, former Irvine mayor, and former Assemblymember. Campaigns on election integrity, voter identification, access to voter records, and faster counting.	What evidence supports proposed changes, and how would he prevent new rules from burdening eligible voters or weakening privacy?

Controller

Why it matters: The controller is California's chief accountant, audits public spending, issues state payments, and sits on financial boards.

Candidate	Background and reported priorities	Questions through a Black voter lens
Malia M. Cohen Democratic State Controller/Mother	Incumbent since 2023 and former Board of Equalization member. Campaigns on transparency, efficiency, fairness, and fiscal caution.	Will audits measure equity in state contracts, tax administration, benefit delivery, and spending outcomes—not only compliance?
Herb W. Morgan Republican Chief Investment Officer	Investment executive and founder of a San Diego investment firm. Emphasizes exposing fraud and strengthening oversight.	What audit priorities, public dashboards, and protections for essential services would accompany a fraud-focused approach?

Treasurer

Why it matters: The treasurer manages state investments, borrowing, and debt, and can influence financing for housing, schools, infrastructure, and small-business programs.

Candidate	Background and reported priorities	Questions through a Black voter lens
Eleni Kounalakis Democratic Lieutenant Governor of California	Two-term lieutenant governor, former U.S. ambassador to Hungary, and member of state higher-education boards; has voted against proposed tuition increases.	How would she direct financing toward affordable housing, historically undercapitalized businesses, infrastructure, and lower college costs?
Jennifer Hawks Republican Retired Business Executive	Former business executive and school administrator with no elected-office experience. Presents private-sector experience and political independence as checks on state government.	What concrete investment, bond, and oversight policies would she pursue, and how would she assess equitable access to capital?

Attorney General

Why it matters: The attorney general is California's chief law officer, overseeing civil-rights, consumer-protection, environmental, criminal-justice, and state litigation work.

Candidate	Background and reported priorities	Questions through a Black voter lens
Rob Bonta Democratic California Attorney General	Incumbent since 2021 and former Assemblymember. Has emphasized housing-law enforcement, consumer and civil-rights protections, criminal-justice laws, and litigation challenging federal actions.	What measurable outcomes has the office achieved on police accountability, hate crimes, housing discrimination, reentry, environmental justice, and corporate practices?
Michael E. Gates Republican Deputy United States Attorney	Former longtime Huntington Beach city attorney and former federal Justice Department official. Has challenged state criminal-justice and housing mandates he viewed as too lenient or intrusive.	How would his enforcement agenda address racial disparities, misconduct, housing access, and civil-rights protections while pursuing public safety?

Insurance Commissioner

Why it matters: The commissioner regulates homeowners, renters, auto, health-related, and other insurance markets, reviews rates, enforces consumer protections, and shapes disaster-market policy.

Candidate	Background and reported priorities	Questions through a Black voter lens
Ben Allen Democratic California State Senator	State senator with an environmental-policy record. After major fires affected his district, he advanced proposals for stronger department enforcement and wildfire-resilience financing; he also wants more staff for consumer complaints.	How would he keep coverage available and affordable in urban and fire-risk communities, enforce fair claims practices, and prevent discrimination by algorithms or geography?
Jane Kim Democratic Attorney/Consumer Advocate	Former San Francisco supervisor with a record on free community college, minimum wage, and tenant protections. Proposes a state-run natural-disaster insurance authority and expansion of low-cost auto insurance.	How would the public plan be financed, governed, and protected from unequal access, and how quickly could it help renters, homeowners, and small businesses?

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Why it matters: This nonpartisan office is a statewide advocate for public education. Beginning in 2027, a new governor-appointed education commissioner is expected to assume many department-management duties, leaving the elected superintendent with a smaller formal role but a large public platform.

Candidate	Background and reported priorities	Questions through a Black voter lens
Richard Barrera **Nonpartisan** **State Superintendent** **Advisor**	San Diego Unified school board president and labor-relations leader. Focuses on higher school funding, early childhood education, and making it easier to enter teaching; supports state protections for LGBTQ+ students.	What measurable plan addresses literacy, math, discipline gaps, teacher diversity, culturally responsive curriculum, and funding for high-need schools?
Sonja Shaw **Nonpartisan** **School District** **President**	Chino Valley school board president. Emphasizes academic basics, parental authority, moving money into classrooms, and opposition to several state policies protecting transgender students.	How would her agenda affect civil rights, school climate, discipline disparities, accurate history instruction, and support for every student?

Board of Equalization

Why it matters: The board standardizes county property-tax assessment practices, values property owned by utilities and railroads, advises county assessors, and hears certain tax appeals. You vote only in your district. For Black homeowners, renters, entrepreneurs, and heirs, useful questions include assessment fairness, transparent appeals, inherited-property rules, and taxpayer assistance.

District	Candidates	Review focus
District 1	**Nelson Esparza** — Democratic; Teacher/Economist/Councilmember **Shannon Grove** — Republican; State Senator/Businesswoman	Compare their plans for assessor guidance, taxpayer outreach, appeals, and property-tax predictability. Esparza brings local government and economics experience; Grove brings legislative and business experience.
District 2	**Sally J. Lieber** — Democratic; Incumbent **John Pimentel** — Democratic; Community College Trustee	Ask Lieber for measurable results from her term and Pimentel what he would change. Compare accessibility of appeals, oversight of utility property valuations, and taxpayer education.

District 3	**Mike Gipson** — Democratic; State Assemblymember/Father **Samuel P. Sukaton** — Democratic; Labor Union Organizer	Compare legislative versus labor-organizing experience and seek specifics on homeowner protections, small-business appeals, transparent assessments, and outreach to underserved taxpayers.
District 4	**Tom Umberg** — Democratic; Small Businessman/Senator **Denis Bilodeau** — Republican; Councilmember/Civil Engineer	Compare state legislative and local-government experience. Ask how each would improve consistency among county assessors and ensure fair, timely appeals.

Make a Voting Plan

- **Election Day:** Tuesday, November 3, 2026. Polls are open 7:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m.
- **Ballots mailed:** Counties must begin mailing ballots by October 5.
- **Registration deadline:** October 19 for regular online or mail registration. Conditional "same day" registration remains available through Election Day at specified locations.
- **Return options:** Mail, official drop box, county elections office, vote center, or polling place. Mailed ballots must be postmarked by November 3; the state recommends mailing at least seven days early.
- **Check before voting:** Confirm registration, address, district, polling location, and ballot status using the official state tools.

Five Questions for Every Candidate

1. What specific result will you deliver for Black Californians in your first two years?
2. What evidence shows your proposal works, and how will you pay for it?
3. Which decisions are actually within this office's legal authority?
4. How will you publish results by race, geography, income, disability, and other relevant factors while protecting privacy?
5. Who funds your campaign, and how will you handle conflicts of interest?

Official Sources

Prepared using the California Secretary of State's Official Voter Information Guide, qualified statewide measure list, and key dates and deadlines, accessed September 16, 2026. Ballot titles here are shortened for readability. For controlling language, fiscal analysis, arguments, rebuttals, and the full text, consult the official guide. This independent educational resource is not affiliated with or endorsed by the California Secretary of State.

Sources and Verification

- California Secretary of State: certified candidate list announcement
- Official certified list of candidates
- Official Voter Information Guide
- Official November 3, 2026 election information
- Official key dates and deadlines
- CalMatters 2026 Voter Guide
- CalMatters governor comparison
- CalMatters lieutenant governor comparison
- CalMatters secretary of state comparison
- CalMatters controller comparison
- CalMatters treasurer comparison
- CalMatters attorney general comparison
- CalMatters insurance commissioner comparison
- CalMatters superintendent comparison
- CalMatters Board of Equalization comparison

Prepared September 16, 2026. This educational guide is not affiliated with a campaign or political party. Review your official ballot and current candidate materials before voting.

