

# Endless fundraising benefits Valley candidates in many ways

BY JOHN ELLIS

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Read more here: <http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/02/22/3786767/endless-fundraising-benefits-candidates.html#storylink=cpy>

Fresno Democrat Henry T. Perea raised more than a half-million dollars last year and had almost \$835,000 in his campaign account as of Dec. 31. But it's unlikely he'll have much competition as he seeks a third Assembly term this year.

What's a politician to do?

There's plenty of options. He could use it for a future political run — should he make one — after he is termed out of the Assembly in 2016. Or he could donate it to charitable causes.

Another option is doling it out to his fellow Democrats. That's a move that wins friends and buys loyalty for whatever Perea might decide to do in the future.

Whatever the case, it is a prime example of the never-ending fundraising cycle in Sacramento. Republican or Democrat, Assembly or Senate, safe seat or competitive one, it's the same fundraising story.

"All these guys do it," said Tony Quinn, a longtime political analyst and former Republican legislative aide. "It's all over the state. They are constantly having fundraisers — even in safe seats. It's just a fetish with raising all this money."

For some central San Joaquin Valley legislators, having a hefty bank account is, by all accounts, necessary. There's every reason to believe Republican state Sens. Andy Vidak of Hanford and Anthony Cannella of Ceres may spend every cent they raise just to get re-elected.

Both represent districts where there are more registered Democrats than Republicans, and when the pundits look at competitive seats in the state, their names are always mentioned.

Other Valley legislators, however, are in what are often called "safe" seats. These legislators likely won't have to drain their campaign accounts to win re-election — though don't tell them that.

"I've never personally known a race where I didn't have a challenger," said Assembly Member Frank Bigelow, an O'Neals Republican. "I run as though I'm running behind. If it works out where I'm re-elected, that's great. That's the way I'm treating this one."

Still, Bigelow isn't expected to face a serious challenger this year as he seeks a second term.

Last year, Bigelow raised a little more than \$400,000, and had around \$235,000 cash on hand at the end of last year.

Though he still has around \$50,000 to pay off a loan to himself from his 2012 campaign, he's expected to have some discretionary money this year.

It likely will go to help his fellow Republicans, he said.

"At the end of the day, I just see my place helping other Republicans get elected," Bigelow said. "Part of my position is to show the leadership of the position I'm elected to."

Already, he has chipped in more than \$15,000 to the Tulare County Republican Party.

He also contributed \$35,000 to the Republican Central Committee of San Luis Obispo County and \$2,000 to former Assembly Member Bonnie Garcia's 2014 state Senate campaign.

But with the state's new top-two primary — in which the top two vote-getters advance to the November general election, regardless of political party — Quinn said some legislators have grown more nervous.

Even if one party dominates a district in voter registration, the new primary election rules mean an incumbent could end up challenged by a candidate from within the party.

It's just another reason for raising more money, Quinn said. And it helps explain why so few incumbents are defeated. They develop a fundraising infrastructure as part of their job, which is something a challenger almost always lacks, unless the challenger is independently wealthy.

And for those in safe seats, the extra cash given to other legislators might help down the road, should a politician seek a leadership position or committee chairmanship.

Asked about the possibility, Bigelow said: "If I present myself as a viable leader, then maybe this caucus will look at me in that light and have me as a leader. But my job now is to support (Assembly Republican Leader Connie Conway) and the current regime in getting the necessary things done. I'm letting my actions speak for who I am."

Another thing money can buy is endorsements down the road, should a legislator seek another office.

Quinn singled out state Sen. Mark DeSaulnier, a Concord Democrat who is seeking the congressional seat being vacated by Rep. George Miller.

DeSaulnier said he'd seek the seat just hours after Miller announced his retirement, and Quinn said DeSaulnier likely cut off competition from within his party by winning support from party leaders in the eastern Bay Area. Money helped win that support, Quinn said.

Last year as DeSaulnier entered his final four-year state Senate term, he contributed to the Senate campaigns of seven fellow Democrats. All won.

He also used his campaign account to give to a college trustee candidate and candidates for city council and mayor, as well as Democratic Party organizations and the Democratic State Central Committee of California.

"That's a good example of how the fundraising apparatus can be used to choke off any opposition," Quinn said.

Besides Perea and Bigelow, Republican Assembly Member Jim Patterson of Fresno and Republican state Sens. Jean Fuller and Tom Berryhill are also considered to be in safe seats.

Conway, R-Tulare, is termed out, and Assembly Member Rudy Salas, D-Bakersfield, represents a district that may or may not be competitive. It has been in the past.

Last year, Patterson gave the maximum contribution to Vidak — \$8,200, including \$4,100 for the primary and another \$4,100 for the general election. Patterson also donated \$2,000 to the Lincoln Club of Fresno County and \$10,000 to the California Republican Leadership Fund.

As for Perea, even as the Fresno Assembly member amassed his \$800,000-plus campaign bank account, he — like his colleagues from both parties — also managed to spread the wealth.

He contributed to Bakersfield Democrat Leticia Perez's unsuccessful state Senate run last year, which was won by Vidak. He gave to state Sen. Alex Padilla's Secretary of State campaign and fellow Assembly Member Bonnie Lowenthal's Long Beach mayoral campaign.

Perea also donated to Michael Eggman's congressional challenge of Turlock Republican Jeff Denham, and to Eric Garcetti's successful Los Angeles mayoral campaign. Closer to home, Perea gave \$500 to Daniel Parra, a candidate for the District 4 Fresno County supervisor's seat. He even made some civic donations — \$7,000 to San Joaquin Memorial High School, for instance.

The biggest contribution was \$34,000 and it went to the California Democratic Party.

It all could come back to help Perea should he seek another office after he's termed out of the Assembly in 2016.

"That's how it works," said Quinn, the political analyst.

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## **POLITICAL BANKROLLS**

2013 campaign fundraising by central San Joaquin Valley state legislators. (Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2013)

### **STATE ASSEMBLY**

**Henry T. Perea**, D-Fresno: \$557,382.73 raised; \$834,926.14 cash on hand; \$237.77 debt

**Jim Patterson**, R-Fresno: \$204,601.01 raised; \$51,390.64 cash on hand; \$23,230.17 debt

**Rudy Salas**, D-Bakersfield: \$416,833.64 raised; \$331,613.27 cash on hand; 0 debt

**Connie Conway**, R-Tulare: \$743,865.43 raised; \$435,957.24 cash on hand; \$3,063.37 debt.  
(Conway's campaign account is for a 2018 state Senate run.)

**Frank Bigelow**, R-O'Neals: 2014 Assembly account: \$400,993.50 raised; \$237,169.89 cash on hand; \$3,053.33 debt. 2012 Assembly account: \$76,900 raised; \$8,987.68 cash on hand; \$50,036.13 debt. (Bigelow's 2012 Assembly campaign account is still active and collected money in 2013. Almost all of the 2012 account's debt is a loan Bigelow made to his own campaign.)

### **STATE SENATE**

**Anthony Cannella**, R-Ceres: \$515,295.87 raised; \$829,788.25 cash on hand; \$7,780 debt

**Tom Berryhill**, R-Twain Harte: \$247,208.46 raised; \$165,178.43 cash on hand; \$42,459.80 debt

**Andy Vidak**, R-Hanford: \$209,305 raised; \$183,838.94 cash on hand; \$11,527.04 debt. (Vidak's 2013 campaign is still active, but has not received any contributions since July, when he won a special election for the state Senate.)

**Jean Fuller**, R-Bakersfield: \$157,450 raised; \$300,365.13 cash on hand; \$1,504 debt

### **KEY DATES**

**Dec. 27:** Candidates began gathering signatures for in-lieu petitions to avoid paying filing fees. Judicial candidates had until Feb. 5; everyone else had until Feb. 20.

**Feb. 10:** Candidate filing began; runs through March 7 (extended to March 12 for races where the incumbent isn't running for re-election)

**May 5:** First day to vote by mail (also the day most sample ballots are mailed)

**May 19:** Last day to register to vote

**May 27:** Last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot by mail

**June 3:** Primary Election Day

**Nov. 4:** General Election Day

## **ELECTION OFFICES**

**Fresno County:** 2221 Kern St., Fresno; details: [fblink.com/fcvote](http://fblink.com/fcvote) or (559) 600-VOTE (8683)

**Tulare County:** 5951 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia; details: [fblink.com/tcvote](http://fblink.com/tcvote) or (559) 624-7300

**Kings County:** 1400 W. Lacey Blvd., Hanford; details: [fblink.com/kcvote](http://fblink.com/kcvote) or (559) 582-3211, ext. 4401

**Madera County:** 200 W. Fourth St., Madera; details: [fblink.com/madvote](http://fblink.com/madvote) or (559) 675-7720

**Merced County:** 2222 M St., Merced; details: [fblink.com/mervote](http://fblink.com/mervote) or (209) 385-7541

**Mariposa County:** 4982 10th St., Mariposa; details: [fblink.com/marvote](http://fblink.com/marvote) or (209) 966-2007

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