

Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin to run for state controller

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/03/05/3804892/fresno-mayor-ashley-swearengin.html>

By John Ellis

The Fresno Bee

March 5, 2014

Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin is running for state controller.

Swearengin -- who has three years left in her second and final mayoral term -- filed paperwork and paid her fees Tuesday afternoon at the Fresno County Elections Office, said Tim Clark, her campaign consultant.

"I am very serious about getting into this race," Swearengin said. "I love the role of public service, and frankly I'm ready for the next challenge."

Swearengin, 41, was first elected mayor in 2008 and easily won re-election in 2012. She was CEO of the Regional Jobs Initiative prior to being elected mayor.

She said running for state controller was the next logical step. It is a position, she said, that has the biggest influence over California's business climate and economic development. Those areas were her focus, she said, both as mayor and at the Regional Jobs Initiative.

Controller, Swearengin said, "is sometimes an overlooked function of state government, but one that has a tremendous impact on the business climate in the state."

There are additional steps Swearengin must take to finalize her candidacy. They must be done by Friday, and she said a campaign won't be set in stone until then.

But Clark, her consultant, said the remaining work is a formality.

"This is official," he said.

Swearengin likely will face Assembly Speaker John A. Perez and Board of Equalization member Betty Yee in the June primary, and possibly others. Under state primary election rules, only the top two will move on to the November general election.

Clark noted Swearengin should be the only prominent Republican on the ballot, which he said should move her through to the November general election. Both Perez and Yee are Democrats.

John Chiang, the current controller, is termed out this year and running for state treasurer.

"It's a great time to be on the ballot in California," said Clark, Swearingin's consultant.

He predicted a heavy Republican turnout this year. GOP voters, he said, have "pent-up angst" over the national regulatory environment and the federal health care law.

As for Swearingin, Clark said she has work to do to get her name known among the state's voters. But, he said, she's already well-known among the state's business leaders and the Republican donor base.

"The excitement for Ashley is off the charts statewide," he said. "Everybody in Fresno knows when you talk to Ashley, you know you have a special individual."

Check with fresnobee.com for updates throughout the day.