

Vidak's Senate seat may be among few competitive Valley races

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It's now official: Fresno Unified trustee Luis Chavez is challenging state Sen. Andy Vidak in the 14th state Senate District -- and Kings County Supervisor Richard Valle isn't.

Valle had said earlier that he was withdrawing to focus on his supervisory duties, a decision that became official as the filing period ended Friday.

It sets up a one-on-one showdown between Vidak, the Hanford Republican who won a special election last year to fill the seat, and Chavez, a Fresno Democrat.

The race is just one of many at the congressional and state Senate and Assembly levels that will be decided this year, with a June primary and November general election contests.

But it is expected to be one of the few that could be truly competitive.

Another that could be competitive is the 26th Assembly District race to replace Tulare Republican Connie Conway, who is termed out.

There are at least seven people vying for the seat. It is considered to be a safe Republican district, and four of the candidates are Republicans. Conway has endorsed Woodlake Republican Rudy Mendoza as her replacement.

Other Republicans in the race include insurance broker Esther Barajas, home-care independent contractor Teresita "Tess" Andres and Devon Mathis, whose ballot designation is veteran. Mathis did all the paperwork for his candidacy on Friday, the final day to file.

Democrats in the race include correctional officer Derek Thomas, publisher Ruben Macareno and Fresno firefighter and Tulare City Council Member Carlton Jones.

As with state and federal races that cross county lines, it is difficult to get definitive candidate listings. The 26th Assembly District, for instance, covers parts of Tulare and Kern counties and all of Inyo County.

The official certified list of candidates will not be published until March 27, Secretary of State spokeswoman Shannan Velayas said.

Here are possible matchups for the coming elections:

CONGRESS

In the 4th District, Republican Tom McClintock is considered in a safely GOP seat. The district runs up the Sierra foothills and high county and includes parts of Fresno, Madera and Mariposa counties.

Another name mentioned is Republican Chris Dace. Art Moore filed a candidate statement with Fresno County, but it is unknown if he completed the paperwork and his party affiliation was not immediately available. Democrat Kris Johnson withdrew last month because of a recent injury, she said on her website.

In the 21st District, incumbent Republican David Valadao of Hanford is in a contest with two Democrats -- Amanda Renteria of Sanger and John Hernandez of Fresno.

In the 16th District, incumbent Democrat Jim Costa of Fresno could be facing as many as four challengers, three Republicans and a Democrat.

They are Republicans Mel Levey, Joanna Botelho and Johnny Tacherra and Democrat Loraine Goodwin.

In the 22nd District, incumbent Tulare Republican Devin Nunes is facing not only a Democrat -- Suzanna Aguilera-Marrero -- but also a Republican, John Catano. Another potential candidate, Alberto Zuniga Santiago, listed as a Republican, appears to have not completed the process.

Bakersfield Republican Kevin McCarthy, whose district stretches into Tulare County, appears to be unopposed for re-election.

STATE SENATE

At the state Senate level, Ceres Republican Anthony Cannella could have two opponents, Democrat Thomas Hanninan and Shawn Bagley, though it is unclear at this point because the 12th state Senate district -- which includes the western third of Fresno County -- also stretches across several other counties.

In the 8th state Senate District, Fresno Democrat Paulina Miranda qualified to challenge incumbent Republican Tom Berryhill of Twain Harte. There could be other candidates, however.

The district, like McClintock's congressional district, covers multiple foothill counties, and it is unknown if other candidates completed the qualification process in those other locations.

ASSEMBLY

In the 32nd Assembly District, incumbent Bakersfield Democrat Rudy Salas has two Republican challengers. One of them is Pedro Rios, the Delano Republican he defeated in 2012. The other is Delano Union School District trustee Romeo Agbalog.

Fresno Republican Jim Patterson in the 23rd Assembly District and Fresno Democrat Henry T. Perea in the 31st District appear to be unchallenged for reelection.

O'Neals Republican Frank Bigelow also appears to be unchallenged, although most Sierra counties in his 5th Assembly District did not list state candidates or races on their elections office websites.

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