

Capitol Alert - [Key House races for GOP take shape as California convention closes](#)

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BURLINGAME - Major California Republican congressional challengers steered clear of the state party convention, but the weekend of activism helped bring early definition to some of the state's most contested House races.



Republicans **Doug Ose** of Sacramento, **Brian Nestande** of [Palm Desert](#), **Jeff Gorell** of Camarillo and **Carl DeMaio** of [San Diego](#) stuck to the campaign trail rather than rubbing elbows with the hundreds of delegates gathering here.

Their absence underscored a dynamic taking place through the races: The four contenders each have more conservative challengers running to their right -- in addition to the freshmen Democrats they hope to unseat in November.

Ose, the moderate former congressman, has focused much of his public attention on Rep. **Ami Bera**, D-Elk Grove. Yet the 7th district primary also features a pair of conservative GOP candidates -- **Elizabeth Emken** and **Igor Birman**, who both attended this weekend.

"This is far from the district, but it's important to inspire activists and volunteers to assist in what is shaping up to be one of the most contested races in the state," Birman said after to a liberty forum Saturday.

Ose's spokesman said he chose to remain in the district to attend an event honoring American veterans and to visit with voters. He's familiar with conservative challenges having lost the primary to GOP Rep. **Tom McClintock** in 2008.

In the Palm Springs-area 36th district held by Democratic Rep. **Raul Ruiz**, Nestande is being opposed by former state lawmaker **Ray Haynes**. Haynes is more conservative, and in a recent interview said he wasn't confident in Nestande's ability to raise the kind of money needed to knockout an incumbent.

Gorell's conservative Republican challenger in Democrat **Julia Brownley**'s Ventura County-centered 26th district is **Rafael Dagnesses**, who has tea party backing and reportedly signed a pledge to serve no more than eight years.

And the San Diego-area 52nd district controlled by Democrat **Scott Peters** features a political skirmish between the party's standard-bearer DeMaio and Kirk Jorgensen and Fred Simon.

Jorgensen, a marine veteran, is backed by former Rep. Duncan Hunter and the conservative California Republican Assembly.

Photo: Former U.S. Rep. Doug Ose when he announced his candidacy for the 4th Congressional District seat on Feb. 1, 2008. The Sacramento Bee/Hector Amezcua



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