

Candidates report early fundraising totals

BY JAMES BURGER Californian staff writer jburger@bakersfield.com

Wednesday, Mar 26 2014 02:15 PM

<http://www.bakersfieldcalifornian.com/politics/local/x2027870617/Candidates-report-early-fundraising-totals>

Campaign finance reports released by candidates for state and local office show a lopsided cash contest in all but a couple of races.

Thanks to a \$200,000 cash dump from the California State Democratic Central Committee, Democrat Luis Chavez is running a tight money race against state Sen. Andy Vidak, R-Hanford for the 14th Senate District spot.

After \$60,895 in debt is subtracted from Chavez's total cash, he is reporting \$179,819 in the bank as of March 17.

Vidak is reporting \$200,839 in the bank after his \$5,969 in debt is subtracted.

Vidak has raised \$84,011 since Jan. 1, mostly from businesses, other Republican candidates and groups and farming interests.

Chavez raised \$241,875 in the same time period from unions and the Democratic Party.

Expect those totals to change a lot in the coming weeks and months as the two candidates prepare for a June 3 showdown in their head-to-head race.

Vidak won the seat in a special election against Kern County Supervisor Leticia Perez last year and each of the two campaigns raised and spent more than \$2 million -- leaning heavily on the statewide Democratic and Republican parties and piles of independent expenditure cash.

Vidak has been touted as a shining example of Republican success in deeply Democratic California. Lots of people will be watching the 14th District race.

32ND ASSEMBLY

By contrast, the 32nd Assembly District race's money picture is wildly unbalanced.

Assemblyman Rudy Salas, D-Bakersfield, has amassed a commanding \$442,857 pot of political cash to defend his seat from Republican attack.

He will face former opponent Pedro Rios and political staffer and school board member Romeo Agbalog -- both Republicans -- in the June primary.

Agbalog has reported \$4,000 in contributions.

Rios has gotten \$4,100 from Assemblywoman Shannon Grove, R- Bakersfield.

34TH ASSEMBLY

Speaking of Grove, she's not flush with cash.

According to reports filed with the California Secretary of State's office, she raised \$11,200 between Jan. 1 and March 17 and spent \$13,820.

She had \$33,843 at the end of the reporting period.

But that shouldn't be a problem for Grove since her only opponent is Mari Goodman, the Democrat she trounced soundly when she ran last time in 2012.

Goodman didn't raise any money to support her run in 2012. And she has not filed any campaign finance reports so far this time around.

16TH SENATE DISTRICT

State Sen. Jean Fuller, R-Bakersfield, has a ton of money muscle behind her bid for re-election. Her campaign account had \$265,877 at the end of the reporting period.

What Fuller doesn't have, however, is a challenger. She is running unopposed for her heavily Republican seat -- a virtual guarantee that she will serve another four-year term.

KERN COUNTY ASSESSOR

But the financial fun shaping up for this year's races doesn't end at the state-office level.

It's true that six of the seven county offices have one-candidate races. But a battle is shaping up in the race for the Kern County Assessor-Recorder's office.

Bakersfield City Councilman Russell Johnson has thrown his hat into the ring for that contest and will face off against political unknowns Jon Lifquist and Lupe Esquivias -- both current employees of the office.

Johnson has connections and, in just days, he's pulled in \$17,750 and had \$15,899 in the bank as of March 17.

But Lifquist, a chief assessor under current Assessor Jim Fitch, had twice the money Johnson did at the end of the reporting period.

That's because he gave his campaign a \$34,000 personal loan on March 14.

Esquivias has no money and has not filed to create a campaign committee.