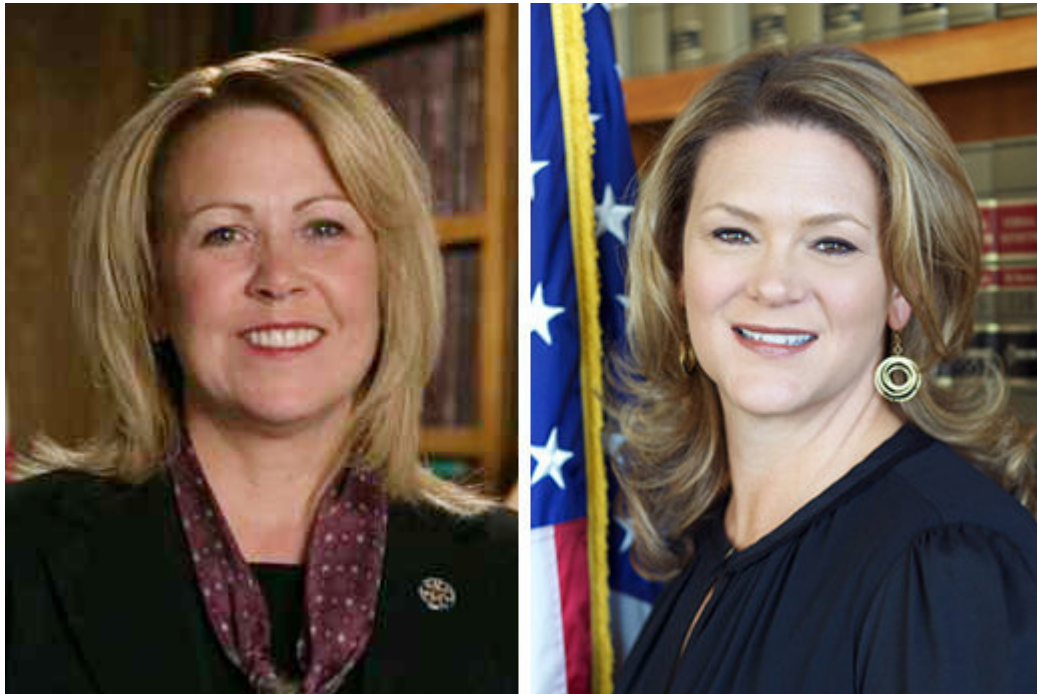


Fresno County DA race: Wanger, others back Smittcamp, Egan counters with Ardaiz

BY JOHN ELLIS

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<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/03/31/3853326/wanger-other-top-attorneys-back.html?sp=/99/406/263/#storylink=cpy>



Fresno County District Attorney incumbent, Elizabeth Egan, left, and candidate Lisa Sondergaard Smittcamp.

The race for Fresno County district attorney has become so intense that it has drawn some of the biggest names in the legal community into the fray, and generated huge contributions from high-profile political donors.

On Monday, incumbent Elizabeth Egan and challenger Lisa Sondergaard Smittcamp fought for the upper hand in the endorsement battle. First Smittcamp rolled out some heavy legal artillery in her battle to oust Egan, and then the DA countered.

Smittcamp snagged the endorsement of former federal Judge Oliver W. Wanger, who is now in private practice. In addition, prominent local attorneys Warren Paboojian, Larry Wayte and Brian Tatarian joined Wanger at a Monday news conference for Smittcamp.

Not to be outdone, Egan released an endorsement of her own following Smittcamp's news conference -- former 5th District Court of Appeal Presiding Justice James A. Ardaiz.

The dueling endorsements were the latest salvos in a bitter battle for the seat, as both sides have been raising money at a brisk clip and seeking high-profile backing ahead of the June 3 primary, when the race will be decided.

Next week, the two will meet face-to-face for the first time at a candidate forum hosted by the Lincoln Club of Fresno County.

Already, Egan has found the area's agriculture sector to be fertile fundraising ground. She's also received \$10,000 from Fresno businessman Richard Spencer, \$4,000 from Donaghy Sales and \$3,500 from homebuilding company DeYoung Properties.

At the same time, Smittcamp has tapped the region's legal community for a significant number of contributions. She's also received \$5,000 from both Gerawan Farming and John Amendola, general manager of Valley Wide Beverage, one of the area's largest beer distributors.

But Smittcamp's biggest donors have come from her family: \$40,000 from father-in-law Bob Smittcamp's Lyons Magnus, the Fresno beverage and frozen- and canned-fruit company he owns; \$10,000 from Bob's father, Earl Smittcamp; and donations from employees of companies owned by the Smittcamps.

As Egan and Smittcamp have sought out campaign contributions, they've also been stockpiling endorsements.

They split the area's two most high-profile local law enforcement unions. The Fresno Deputy Sheriff's Association is backing Egan, and the Fresno Police Officers Association endorsed Smittcamp.

In addition, Egan's law enforcement endorsements include Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims, former sheriffs Richard Pierce and Steve Magarian and the Fresno Sheriff Correctional Sergeants Association.

Smittcamp is backed by the Fresno County District Attorney Investigators Association, the Fresno Sheriff's Sergeants Association and Madera County Sheriff John Anderson.

On Monday, she added the four high-profile attorneys along with Fresno County Supervisor Andreas Borgeas, who is also an attorney.

The most surprising was no doubt Wanger, because he's worked hard to steer clear of politics since leaving the federal bench two and a half years ago.

Wanger didn't speak at the news conference. Instead, he stood behind the others as they spoke. In a short interview, however, he said it was imperative that sitting district attorneys try cases. Egan, he said, hasn't done that.

"My wife worked in that office for nine years," he said. "It's time for a change."

Egan countered with support from Ardaiz, who spent 31 years on benches in Fresno courts, first in the municipal and superior courts, then for 22 years in the appellate court, including nearly 16 as presiding justice.

"Elizabeth Egan hasn't made decisions to prosecute based on politics," he said in a statement. "She has taken on the toughest cases. She has made the decision to prosecute based on the safety of the community first."

KEY DATES

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 [here](#) or (559) 600-VOTE (8683)

Tulare County: 5951 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia; Details [here](#) or (559) 624-7300

Kings County: 1400 W. Lacey Blvd., Hanford; Details [here](#) or (559) 582-3211, ext. 4401

Madera County: 200 W. Fourth St., Madera; Details [here](#) or (559) 675-7720

Merced County: 2222 M St., Merced; Details [here](#) or (209) 385-7541

Mariposa County: 4982 10th St., Mariposa; Details [here](#) or (209) 966-2007

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