

Fresno County DA faces election challenge

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FRESNO, California (KFSN) -- The race for Fresno County District Attorney pits the current DA against a former employee.

Elizabeth Egan was unopposed in the last two elections, but this time is being challenged by Lisa Sondergaard-Smittcamp, one of her former deputy district attorneys.

Egan says she's running on her record as a crime fighter. "We've done some revolutionary things in this county fighting gangs. I'm working with the Sheriff on so many things that are so positive and I'm just in the middle of all of it and four more years would let me do a lot more."

Her challenger, Lisa Sondergaard-Smittcamp worked under Egan for 12 years, resigning late last year because she says Egan wasn't effective. "I'm tired of the chaos and mismanagement that is plaguing the District Attorney's office."

Sondergaard-Smittcamp says she's got more courtroom experience than Egan. "We have to have someone leading the office who is a prosecutor and not a politician."

Egan counters her job requires more than being in a courtroom. "I've got other duties as District Attorney I've got the entire county and city's crime problems, I've got legislation to fight for victims and it's just the DA has duties that take them out of the court room one on one."

Action News Legal and Political Analyst Tony Capozzi says the challenge to Egan is odd, considering there's no controversy. "There's been no public outcry for removal of the District Attorney. Unless the opponent can show a strong, overbearing reason to change its very difficult for the opponent to knock out an incumbent, office policy is not a major concern to the general public."

Sondergaard-Smittcamp responded, "Well maybe it doesn't register with the average person but it registers with people who have had to have any kind of dealings with the DA's office."

Both Sondergaard-Smittcamp and Egan have endorsements for law enforcement groups, and are busy collecting contributions.

So far Egan has more than \$300,000 in her campaign account, Sondergaard-Smittcamp \$260,000. A lot of that will be spent in the next two months leading up to June election.

Since there are only two candidates the Fresno County DA's race will be decided in June.

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