

<http://www.scp.org/blogs/politics/2014/04/22/16438/feinstein-backs-padilla-in-tight-secretary-of-stat/>

## **Feinstein backs Padilla in tight Secretary of State race**

State Senator Alex Padilla of the San Fernando Valley received some help Tuesday in his bid to break from the pack of candidates running for California Secretary of State when U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein endorsed him.

Second to Governor Jerry Brown, [Feinstein is the best-known Democrat](#) in the Golden State. The four-term senator also enjoys high approval ratings. “I’ve known Alex since he served as one of my aides nearly 20 years ago,” Feinstein said in a statement. She said he has “the energy, the smarts, and the work ethic to be a terrific Secretary of State.”

This endorsement never would have happened without last month’s indictment of state Senator [Leland Yee on corruption charges](#). Yee and Feinstein are both San Francisco Democrats and he was Padilla’s chief rival for party support. At the state Democratic Convention in early March, neither Padilla nor Yee garnered enough support for an endorsement. But Yee dropped out of the race after his indictment.

In addition to Feinstein, the California Labor Federation has endorsed Padilla. Prior to Yee's scandal, the federation and Feinstein were expected to remain neutral in the June primary, according to Padilla’s campaign consultant Rose Kapolczynski.

But a lot of wild cards remain in the race to become California’s chief elections officer.

[For example, Yee’s name will remain on the ballot.](#) The state election code does not permit a candidate who has filed a declaration of intention and met other requirements for the ballot to withdraw from the primary.

In fact, Yee's name will appear first on the ballot in some parts of the state. The ballot order for statewide races is rotated between the state's 80 Assembly districts. Various studies have determined that candidates whose names appear first on the ballot tend to get votes by sheer virtue of the position. Any votes Yee receives will affect the rest of the race, which now has seven declared candidates.

Among them is one-time Republican operative Dan Schnur, who is on leave from the [USC Unruh Institute of Politics](#). He is running as a non-partisan candidate. (On a related note, Republican Assemblyman Jeff Gorell has proposed a constitutional amendment to make the Secretary of State's office non-partisan.)

“It’s going to be interesting to see what happens with Dan Schnur – he’s a wild card,” Kapolczynski said.

Remember, California has open primaries now. Voters can mark their ballots for anyone from any party. The top two finishers face off in November.

But party affiliation still counts. Pete Peterson came in first in a recent Field Poll, mostly because he is the only known Republican in the race. He garnered 30 percent support, to Padilla’s 17 percent.

Green Party candidate David Curtis received five percent support, Schnur won four percent and former Common Cause executive Derek Cressman grabbed three percent. Two other candidates – Democrat Jeffrey Drobman of Thousand Oaks and Republican Roy Allmond – together drew less than half a percent.

The most important poll number may be 40 – that’s the percentage of likely voters who remain undecided in a race that’s received little coverage.

Kapolczynski concedes even stated support for a candidate at this stage is likely “soft.”

That’s why endorsements are more important in down ticket races. People tend to pay less attention to the candidates – and decide who to support based on who’s backing the candidate.