

EDITORIAL: Egans campaign tactics mislead in Fresno County DAs race

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The Fresno Bee Editorial Board

Elizabeth Egan during the debate with Lisa Sondergaard Smittcamp at Fresno City College on April 30, 2014.

MARK CROSSE — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

Elizabeth Egan is seeking a fourth term as Fresno County district attorney with a campaign built on half-truths, smear tactics and attack ads.

But there's something else troubling about the Egan re-election effort: It's straight out of the overly simplistic tough-on-crime playbook that has contributed to revolving-door early releases from Fresno County jail.

Egan's tired thinking and negative campaigning are why we are reaffirming our earlier recommendation of challenger Lisa Smittcamp Sondergaard to voters.

In her campaign's latest email to voters, Egan says: "I don't believe we should be letting criminals off easy and endangering the public just because some federal judges sitting in San Francisco think the jail is too crowded."

Rare is the local official who doesn't try to score political points at the expense of federal judges. But the truth is, the Fresno jail is operated according to an out-of-court settlement agreed to by county officials in 1993. Under the settlement, inmates can't sleep on mattresses placed on the floor and the sheriff must release inmates when the jail reaches its capacity.



Unlike Egan, challenger Smittcamp operates in the reality zone. She recognizes that the district attorney must be smart *and* tough on crime.

As Smittcamp has said during her campaign, the district attorney must work closely with law enforcement and judicial partners to ensure that the jail's limited space is occupied by the most dangerous offenders. One way to do this is to handle cases more quickly, thus reducing the number of pre-trial inmates. They now take up 69% of beds.

Egan's campaign is running an attack ad that criticizes a 2011 plea bargain by Smittcamp when she worked as a prosecutor. The ad is misleading with its statement that "because of Smittcamp's plea bargain" a man was back on the street, where he was "arrested again, this time for manslaughter in the death of a Fresno mother."

Smittcamp sought prison time in the plea bargain of the assault case, only to have the judge sentence the defendant to time served and felony probation. Besides, as district attorney, Egan had the authority to reject the plea bargain.

Prosecutors and investigators in Egan's office, as well as a large majority of local law enforcement agencies, are supporting Smittcamp because she is both a leader and a team player, and she has a passion for delivering justice for victims.

Vote for Lisa Sondergaard Smittcamp on June 3.

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