

# Editorial: McCarthy's ascent would be good for California

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By the Editorial Board

Rep. Kevin McCarthy, running to become House majority leader, should not forget lessons he learned in Sacramento – that sometimes finding common ground isn't such a bad thing.

The Bakersfield native has been majority whip since Republicans retook control of the House in 2010. That's third on the leadership ladder after Majority Leader Eric Cantor, who is stepping down because he was defeated in a primary last week, and Speaker John Boehner.

Late Friday, Idaho Republican Raúl Labrador entered the race to replace Cantor. We hope House Republicans choose McCarthy.

Pundits say Cantor lost because he spent too much time playing on a national stage and lost touch with his suburban Virginia district. McCarthy was grounded during his days in the Assembly, and we trust he has not forgotten his roots since winning his congressional seat in 2006.

Although we disagree with McCarthy on many issues, his ascent would be beneficial for the San Joaquin Valley and California.

McCarthy likely would use his position to continue trying to kill high-speed rail, a project he believes will be a boondoggle. That makes little sense given that the train one day will employ people in his district and connect his city to the rest of California.

But McCarthy also should continue seeking common ground on an overhaul to immigration law, so important to his San Joaquin Valley district.

McCarthy is co-sponsor of the ENLIST Act, which would open a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who come to the country as children and later join the military. Rep. Jeff Denham, another San Joaquin Valley Republican, authored the bill.

Although McCarthy hardly is a squishy guy, he had detractors from the right when he was Assembly Republican leader and still has them in the more intensely partisan city of Washington, D.C. Labrador is challenging him from the right. McCarthy generally prevails because he works hard, is likable and has a shrewd political mind.

A consummate political junkie, McCarthy learned from a master, his predecessor, Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Bakersfield.

Thomas, as chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, was adept at delivering pork for his district, as is evident from the William M. Thomas Passenger Terminal at Bakersfield's airport.

McCarthy credits Thomas with giving him words to live by: "You have to know the policy, and you have to be in the room, because they're going to make the decision whether you are in the room or not."

Another lesson he learned at the master's knee: "Every election is won before it starts." As he has throughout his career, McCarthy is running unopposed for his Bakersfield-area seat this year.

In 2010, Roman B. Buhler, who was Thomas' counsel and is a friend of McCarthy's, explained McCarthy's goal as an architect of the Republican campaign apparatus: "The fundamental emphasis is on electing Republicans rather than purifying the Republican Party."

Partisanship is ever more shrill, and calls for ideological purity have become more strident in Washington. But from all indications, McCarthy has not become so much a creature of Washington that he has forgotten the folks back home. If he becomes majority leader, we hope he doesn't forget the need to find middle ground.

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