

## Calif. controller candidate Betty Yee stumps at Fresno Labor Day breakfast

By Hannah  
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State controller candidate Betty Yee serves breakfast alongside Fresno City Council candidate Esmeralda Soria and Fresno Unified Trustee Christopher De La Cerda at Fresno's annual Labor Day celebration at the Fresno Fairgrounds on Monday, Sept. 1, 2014. HANNAH FURFARO — The Fresno Bee

Dressed casually in neon orange sneakers and a white apron, State Controller candidate Betty Yee fit right in amid the line of other candidate servers serving up scrambled eggs and flapjacks to hundreds of central San Joaquin Valley union workers Monday morning.

Yee might have been on Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin's turf, but the state Board of Equalization member was among friends at the annual Labor Day breakfast for local unions held at the Fresno Fairgrounds. The day marked the second visit by Yee, a Democrat, to Fresno in the past two months.

"We are extremely thrilled Betty chose to come to our Labor Day event in Fresno," said Randy Ghan, secretary-treasurer of the Central Labor Council and the emcee at Monday's breakfast. "She understands the politics of Sacramento, she understands the politics of standing with working people, and Ashley doesn't."

Yee has already earned the endorsement of the California Labor Federation, so she used her time in Fresno for friendly conversation with folks as they made their way through the breakfast line and mingled with friends, like former Fresno Mayor Karen Humphrey.

"Fresno's former mayor supports Betty," said Humphrey before she headed onto the main stage, where she introduced Yee during a program where Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, incoming District Attorney Lisa Sondergaard Smittcamp and other elected officials gave speeches.

In many ways, the event was a time for political candidates to huddle up behind their labor partners and try to lock down endorsements for the upcoming [November election](#).

But the meaning of the day wasn't all lost among all the pancake eating and campaign stumping.

"We see a lot of hard-working families from all different kinds of industries who are essentially just here to enjoy a day with their family. But tomorrow, they're back at work and it's a struggle for many of them," said Yee, who added that she's used to meeting with labor groups around the state on the September holiday. Later Monday she planned to head up to other events in Merced and Sacramento, she said.

"My feeling is, if we don't really focus on some of these areas that have been underserved and somewhat neglected, the state overall is not going to be in a very good position economically."

It's clear Yee was in Swearingin's stomping grounds -- many didn't recognize her at first, including a second grade teacher who said she assumed Yee was "one of the other candidate's friends" when she passed through the breakfast line.

Nevertheless, Fresno teacher Carol Kurnosoff said she was pleased to find out Yee was attending, "because I think Fresno has a lot of people who are swing votes." Kurnosoff said she'll vote for Yee in November.

It came as no surprise to Swearingin, a Republican who is considered an underdog in the mostly Blue state, that Yee got the backing of union leaders.

"I certainly expect Betty's support to come from those who are in charge in Sacramento," she said during a phone interview Monday afternoon. "While the leaders of the traditional labor unions will likely be in support of Betty, I don't count out the fact that (union) members find my background to be extremely on point."

The mayor was nowhere to be seen at Monday's event. She spent her holiday with family at home -- a catch-up day after a long span of campaign travel to Sacramento, the Bay Area, San Diego and Los Angeles.

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