

Swearengin for state controller

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When it comes to taking over a troubled government agency with nearly 1,400 employees and a \$190 million budget, few experiences would be more helpful than being mayor of a big city. Such mayors have to balance competing interests and deliver results — at least if they're successful.

That's why we endorse Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin to be the next state controller. She is both a fiscal watchdog and an effective manager — just what the agency needs.

The controller's office is so backward that it processes state employees' paychecks using software from the 1960s. While departing Controller John Chiang did plenty of good work, he was unable to end what has become a \$300 million debacle in trying to upgrade his agency's computers.

Swearengin, a moderate Republican with bipartisan support, has skillfully led Fresno from the brink of bankruptcy to a much healthier place. A key part of the city's rebound came when Swearengin worked with public employee unions to reduce the cost of pensions to taxpayers, an approach that hasn't worked in most cities. Fresno still has problems, but it is back from the abyss.

Her opponent, Board of Equalization member Betty Yee, has an impressive background in state finance. But the San Francisco Democrat doesn't have as much executive experience and has a more partisan history.

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