

This week in 2010 is when Costa-Vidak race exploded; will history repeat itself? | Political Notebook

By John
Ellis

Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford

Exactly four years ago this past Sunday, the seemingly sleepy 20th Congressional District race emerged from dormancy in a spectacular way.

On Oct. 12, 2010, the Center for Individual Freedom made a nearly \$305,000 television advertising buy against Fresno Democrat Jim Costa. Add \$9,000 in ad production costs, and the total buy was around \$314,000.

That was 20 days before the actual election.

By Election Day, interest groups such as Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies and the National Rifle Association had combined with the Center for Individual Freedom to spend more than \$700,000 in attack ads against Costa.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee responded with more than \$560,000 in an 11th-hour barrage of ads attacking Costa's opponent, now-state Sen. Andy Vidak, a Hanford Republican.

In the end, Costa pulled out a nail biter.

This bit of political history is useful because it is about the same time, relatively speaking, as in 2010, and while the prevailing thought is that Hanford Republican David Valadao is fairly safe in his reelection bid against Sanger Democrat Amanda Renteria, there's still some people out there casting a curious eye at the race.

If something is going to happen—for instance, if outside money is going to flow into the race—it will probably be this week, given the 2010 time frame.

For the most part, what was the 20th Congressional District in 2010 is now the 21st Congressional District. Then, like now, Democrats enjoy a hefty voter-registration edge, but that seems to matter little because Democrats don't turn out to vote in the district.

As it was in 2010, everything on the surface looks favorable to the incumbent. Valadao raised more than \$540,000 in the third quarter and has more than \$1.1 million in his campaign account. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has pulled money for ads in the district and redirected it to incumbents in competitive races. The political prognosticators are more and more concluding that Valadao will win.

But is it that cut and dried?

There are little inklings that something may be up, much the way there was in 2010.



Renteria got Vice President Joe Biden to lead a campaign rally for her last week in Bakersfield, and also last week, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce put \$250,000 in to a pro-Valadao ad buy.

But Tony Quinn, a longtime political analyst and former Republican legislative aide, disagrees.

“I think that’s just an insurance policy given that that’s a heavily Democratic district,” he said of the Chamber’s cash infusion. “That would be the smart thing to do.”

With each passing day, the future should become clearer.

Contact John Ellis: jellis@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6320 or [@johnellis24](https://twitter.com/johnellis24) on Twitter.

Copyright

© 2014 www.fresnobee.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.fresnobee.com>