

## Election 2014 update: Soria takes Fresno City Council lead; narrow Tacherra lead holds; Gamoian extends advantage

By John Ellis, George Hostetter and Pablo Lopez



Mai Vue, center, feeds vote by mail ballots which had been dropped off at polling places into the machinery at the Fresno County Elections warehouse, Nov. 5, 2014 in Fresno, Calif.

ERIC PAUL ZAMORA — THE FRESNO BEE | [Buy Photo](#)

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Esmeralda Soria has taken the lead over Cary Catalano for Fresno City Council's District 1 seat, and Johnny Tacherra added five votes to his narrow 16th Congressional District lead over Jim Costa after a wild day of ups and downs as county elections offices updated their vote counts.

In the hotly contested battle for Fresno County Superior Court judge, Fresno prosecutor Lisa Gamoian maintained her lead over Fresno attorney Rachel Hill.

An updated count released at 3 p.m. Friday by Fresno County elections officials showed Soria now with 51.5% of the vote to Catalano's 48.2%. Put another way, Soria now leads Catalano by 305 votes. The initial vote totals — posted early Wednesday morning after Tuesday's election —



showed Catalano ahead by 20 votes.

The update shows that Soria got 60% of the newly counted votes, 964 to 639 for Catalano. The vote count now stands at 4,747 for Soria, 4,442 for Catalano.

County Clerk Brandi Orth said 10,300 absentees and 10,100 provisionals from throughout the county remain to be counted. The next update will be at 3 p.m. Wednesday.

Soria and Catalano are battling to replace Blong Xiong, who is termed out in January. Soria on Friday was among a small group at the downtown elections office awaiting the latest report. She got a copy of the 17-page report, sifted through the numbers to the District 1 race and quickly did the math.

“305,” she said.

Several reporters rushed to Soria’s side.

“I am so overwhelmed with joy,” she said.

Plenty of uncounted ballots are still out there, but Soria said she’s confident. Nothing unusual there. She was supremely confident Tuesday evening when Catalano jumped to a small lead shortly after the polls closed. Soria has said all along that her team’s last-minute effort to reach voters would result in a decisive swing of momentum as the final ballots are tallied.

Catalano admitted that news of Soria’s surge made him pause.

“We’ll see where we land on Wednesday,” he said.

Roller-coaster ride in the 16th

The 16th Congressional District felt like a roller coaster as Madera County updated around 2 p.m., followed by Fresno at 3 and Merced a little after 5. The 16th District makes up all of Merced and parts of Madera and Fresno counties.

Madera’s update pushed Republican Tacherra’s lead — 736 on election night — to 1,775. But then Fresno, which is the heart of Democrat Costa’s power, updated its count and suddenly Tacherra’s lead had shrunk to just 78 votes. After Merced made its update, Tacherra’s lead was 741. So, at day’s end, Tacherra had picked up five votes.

“We’re still in the up column,” said Tacherra, a dairy farmer from Burrell in southern Fresno County. “We’ll have to see what happens here, but we’ve been hanging in so far.”

The key is what happens from this point forward.

Madera has 722 provisional ballots left to count, and Merced has 1,505 provisional ballots left. As before, Fresno County remains the question mark. Officials do not know how many of the 20,400 ballots to count are from the 16th district. Whatever the amount, they are sure to benefit Costa, who won close to two-thirds of the votes counted since Election Day in Fresno County. The unknown is if there are enough to erase Tacherra’s lead.

Costa, who has been a state and federal elected official for 34 years and is seeking his sixth congressional term, said he expected the race to tighten after Fresno County updated its vote count. It is a trend he expects to continue.

“We look forward to counting all the votes next week and we expect that we will be going back to Washington,” Costa said.

Gamoian increases lead over Hill

After Friday’s ballot count was released, Gamoian had added 733 votes to her lead over Hill since the final vote

Tuesday night. Gamoian's advantage now stands at 3,602.

Gamoian and Hill were battling to replace Judge Robert Oliver, who is retiring from the Superior Court bench after nearly 20 years of service. The term is for six years. The position pays about \$178,000 a year.

They turned Fresno County's lone judicial race into one of the costliest, nastiest and most hard-fought ever. The total war chests spent by Hill and Gamoian will likely top \$1 million, observers say.

The Fresno County elections office has plowed through more than 22,000 absentee and provisional ballots that remained to be counted after Tuesday night.

The new numbers released Friday show Gamoian has 51.2% of the votes to Hill's 48.4%. Hill would need to win nearly 60% of the remaining uncounted ballots to overtake Gamoian.

Election records shows Hill has never risen above 50% of the vote. The highest she has achieved was 49.6% of the vote when the first tally of counted ballots was released right after the polls.

Telephone calls to Hill and her campaign were not returned Friday. Gamoian's campaign consultant, Tim Orman, said: "We're highly optimistic that Lisa Gamoian will be the next elected Superior Court judge in Fresno County."

## **State propositions results**

### **Prop 1: Funding Water Quality, Supply, Treatment, Storage**

Yes 3,582,028 66.8%

No 1,779,418 33.2%

### **Prop 2: State Budget Stabilization Account**

Yes 3,631,371 68.8%

No 1,645,145 31.2%

### **Prop 45: Healthcare Insurance Rate Changes**

Yes 2,155,258 40.2%

No 3,202,720 59.8%

### **Prop: 46: Doctor Drug Testing, Medical Negligence**

Yes 1,770,030 32.8%

No 3,620,308 67.2%

### **Prop 47: Criminal Sentences, Misdemeanor Penalties**

Yes 3,133,116 58.5%

No 2,223,511 41.5%

### **Prop 48: Indian Gaming Compacts Referendum**

Yes 2,040,839 39.0%

No 3,189,190 61.0%

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