

Swearingin's state controller campaign finishes 2014 in the red

By John
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Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin

Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin last year raised more than \$1.35 million in her unsuccessful state controller campaign.

But she spent \$65,656 more than she raised, according to recently filed campaign finance reports that cover all of 2014.

Both Swearingin and her consultant, Tim Clark, said it was a manageable amount, in part because of anticipation she'll run for office again soon.

“We’ve already paid down another \$20,000, give or take,” Swearingin said. “We know we’ve got another \$10,000 or \$15,000 in commitments that will help. We have to keep raising more money and make sure all our bills are paid.”

Clark echoed that, saying the total debt now is down to around \$30,000. He and Swearingin also noted that the debt was only around 5% of the total campaign budget.

Swearingin, a Republican, lost to Democrat Betty Yee, and some candidates who lose and have campaign debt find it hard to raise money. But Clark said Swearingin’s strong showing — Yee won 54% of the vote to Swearingin’s 46%, the second best showing by a Republican in a statewide race — coupled with “a high anticipation that she’ll run in 2018” should mean donors will help retire the debt.

“The donors are excited about her,” Clark said of Swearingin. “I’m not worried about it. It’s on me to get things back in gear.”

It also will help him. On the campaign-finance report, Clark is owed more than \$40,000. Another \$10,000 is owed to Sacramento fundraiser Wendy Warfield. Those two make up the bulk of Swearingin’s campaign debt.

Both Swearingin and Clark said it was tough to keep track of finances in the closing days of the hard-fought campaign. Independent groups, including some labor organizations, came out both for Yee and against Swearingin. Spending decisions to counter those independent expenditures were being made quickly, and campaign checks were coming in just as fast.

Yee hasn’t yet filed her final report for 2014.

“You never like to have debt,” Swearingin said, “but I’m reasonably confident we’ll be able to pay off those obligations.”

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