

Swearengin announces she won't run for Senate — but other races may be in her future

By Carmen George



Ashley Swearengin

Following weeks of speculation, Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin officially announced Saturday that she will not run for U.S. Senate.

Of the possibility she might seek the seat being vacated by Democrat Sen. Barbara Boxer in 2016, Swearengin's political consultant Tim Clark said Saturday, "It's not the right seat for her and it's not the right time."

The right time? Likely, 2018. Swearengin's second mayoral term will end in 2016.

Clark said Swearengin is likely better suited for an executive position than the legislature. "She's got a lot of options. If she decided to run in 2018, she needs to figure out what fits best. Executive leadership has always been a strength of

hers.”

When Swearingin conceded her race for state controller in November, she was less than 6 percentage points behind Democrat opponent Betty Yee.

Clark said Swearingin was a “rock star” among delegates at the state Republican Party Convention in Sacramento on Friday. “There was almost a sense of disappointment that she is not running for U.S. Senate. There is definitely an anticipation for what she may run for next, but she will tell you she is busy being mayor of Fresno right now.”

After she finishes her mayoral term, Swearingin could have two free years to campaign for a 2018 race — what Clark called a “tremendous benefit” to her if she decides to run for office.

Fresno City Council Member Lee Brand said Saturday he suspects Swearingin might also land another high-profile position during that time to continue building a name for herself.

Of the possibility of taking a position in Gov. Jerry Brown’s administration, Brand thinks Swearingin is “leaving her options open.” However, Clark said she likely won’t be looking to take such a job.

Brand said Swearingin has done a “terrific job” as mayor and that he thinks the majority of California Republicans would rank her among their top candidates for the state’s most elevated positions.

A [USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times poll](#) that was released Friday also showed that popularity. Among those named in the survey as possible contenders for U.S. Senate, Swearingin came in behind the two front-runners, California Attorney General Kamala Harris and former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, with 9% of the vote. Of Republicans polled, 23% ranked Swearingin their top choice.

Fresno City Council Member Steve Brandau also sang her praises.

“She’s really bright and needs to be serving the people at some level. ... She was at the helm as Fresno pulled through some of the toughest times in its history.”

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