

# CA-48 District Primer

In 2024, Republican Darrell Issa won this district by a wide margin—but now he's retiring and the 2026 race is a lot more competitive. With your help, we're going to **FLIP** this key seat and secure a Democratic House majority in 2026.

## Key dates

**Filing Deadline:** March 6

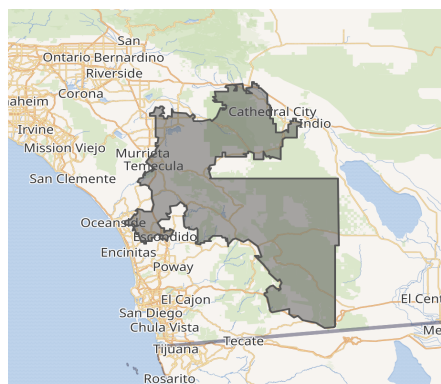
**Primary:** June 2

**Midterms:** November 3

## Recent election results

| 2024 Presidential Election                           | 2024 House Election                                                               | 2022 House Election                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Trump: 209,800 (56%)</b><br>Harris: 152,884 (41%) | <b>Darrell Issa (R): 213,625 (59.3%)</b><br>Stephen Houlihan (D): 146,665 (40.7%) | <b>Darrell Issa (R): 155,171 (60.4%)</b><br>Stephen Houlihan (D): 101,900 (39.6%) |

## District Facts & Stats



### Largest Cities

- Escondido, pop. 149K
- Menifee, 117K
- Temecula, 112K
- Vista, 99K

### Geography

Located in Southern California north and east of San Diego, this district encompasses large portions of San Diego County and eastern Riverside County. The district's boundaries have recently been extended north to include the cities of Menifee, Hemet, and Palm Springs in the Coachella Valley, making the district more Democratic.

### Citizenry

The district is 51% white, 32% Hispanic, and 8% Asian. Escondido and Vista are majority Hispanic. Escondido is home to a significant Mexican population. Over a quarter of the district's households speak another language besides English at home (mainly Spanish). Just over 12,000 residents rely on federal programs for help with groceries; in some areas, one in four families relies on them. Approximately 10,000 veterans live in Escondido and Vista.

### The Local Vibe

Affordability is an acute concern. On July 1, statewide gasoline tax increases stoked fears of higher prices at the pump. These fears have only escalated since the start of Trump's disastrous war in Iran, as gas prices have shot up, squeezing workers and families.

After the January 2026 killing of Renée Good, an American citizen and legal observer, in Minneapolis by a federal ICE agent, large and peaceful anti-ICE protests of 200-400 attendees were held in Temecula and Escondido. In March 2026, thousands turned out for a No Kings rally in Escondido.

Ignoring protests from local residents, the City Council of Escondido recently extended its contract with the Department of Homeland Security to allow ICE to use its city-owned shooting range for training.

Sign up for another event: [mobilize.us/swingleft](https://mobilize.us/swingleft)

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## Key Issues

- **Housing** has become much less affordable in Escondido. In early 2025, a large encampment of unhoused people along the Escondido Creek was cleared by the city, prompting controversy.
  - **Immigration:** ICE is especially active in Escondido. In November 2025, 500 people attended a city council meeting in Vista to pass a resolution supporting immigrants targeted by ICE.
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## About the Candidates

### Marni von Wilpert | Democratic Candidate

A former workers' rights attorney for the Obama administration, San Diego native **Marni von Wilpert** serves on the San Diego City Council representing the conservative fifth district, which she flipped blue. She graduated from UC Berkeley and Fordham University School of Law. She was previously a deputy city attorney and a Peace Corps volunteer, and she also served as counsel on the House Education and Labor Committee. .

While on the City Council, she wrote California's first ban on untraceable ghost guns, co-authored San Diego's Reproductive Freedom Resolution to protect women's rights after Roe was overturned, fought and won a ban on the sale of flavored tobacco products in San Diego, launched a grant program to make housing more affordable for teachers, effectively opposed utility rate hikes, and led efforts to stop price gouging during emergencies.

She has earned the endorsements of the CA AFL-CIO and SEIU, the California Teachers Association, EqualityPAC, Emily's List, the LGBTQ+ Victory Fund, and local and national leaders including former Senator Barbara Boxer, Rep. Julia Brownley (CA-26), and Rep. Mark Takano (CA-39). Her campaign has been included in the DCCC's Red-to-Blue program. As of May 2026, she had raised \$1.2 million for her campaign.

### Jim Desmond | Republican Candidate

Born in Illinois, **Jim Desmond** is a retired aviator and Navy aircraft electrician who served as mayor of San Marcos from 2006-2018 and on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors since 2019, representing the fifth district. From 1986-2020, he worked as a pilot for Delta. He holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from San Diego State. Married with two adult children, he lives in Oceanside.

He believes eliminating regulations and cutting taxes will solve his district's affordability crisis, and that federally-funded involuntary commitment of unhoused people will solve homelessness in the district. He supports integrating vocational training into military service. He believes that immigrants have strained San Diego's resources and that local law enforcement should work with ICE regardless of the threats they pose to the civil liberties of district residents. He supports Trump's effort to end birthright citizenship and his quagmire in Iran, which is raising prices at the pump. Desmond's callous response—"no pain, no gain"—demonstrates how out-of-touch he is with cash-strapped constituents struggling to afford gas.

He has been endorsed by the Deputy Sheriffs Association of San Diego County, the California Latino Voter Alliance, the National Border Patrol Council, and many local GOP politicians; he has also been endorsed by retiring GOP incumbent Darrell Issa, and by Donald Trump. As of June, he had about \$1 million on hand.

**The contrast:** After years of neglect by their outgoing rep, residents are ready to elect someone who will truly be their voice in Washington. On the City Council, Von Wilpert has shown herself to be a fierce advocate for her constituents, attuned to their basic needs and everyday concerns, while her opponent's positions are rooted in policies and attitudes that are wildly out of touch with this diverse and changing district.