

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP FUND



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Dan Conston, CLF President
DATE: May 13, 2020
RE: Victory in California's 25th Congressional District

WHAT THIS VICTORY MEANS

Despite Democrats nominating their preferred candidate and outspending the GOP every step of the way, Republicans flipped a California Congressional District red for the first time in 22 years. Most importantly, Republican Mike Garcia landed an upset win in a district Hillary Clinton won by nearly 7 points – showing that if Republicans can win here, we can win all across the country this fall.

While special elections are always unique, there are key takeaways from this race that foreshadow a tough night for Democrats in November.

GOP CONTINUES TO WIN IN THE SUBURBS – In the two contested special House elections this cycle, Republicans are 2-0. With wins in the suburbs of Charlotte and Los Angeles, Republicans have proven we can win in key suburban districts with the right candidate, message, campaign and funding. This historic victory in California mirrors consistent polling showing Republican voters are more enthusiastic than Democrats and the overall political environment is significantly better for the GOP than 2018 was.

WINNING IN CLINTON DISTRICTS – Garcia showed that good candidates and good campaigns can succeed in difficult districts. Clinton won this district by nearly 7 points in 2016 but Garcia's compelling biography and laser-focused campaign were able to capitalize on opportunities and win. This should worry House Democrats as they will face the strongest GOP recruiting class in recent history, putting swing districts in play all across the country.

FIRST TIME FLIPPING CALIFORNIA RED IN 22 YEARS – Garcia's victory marked the first time the GOP has flipped a California district red in 22 years. With several other key pickup opportunities in Nancy Pelosi's backyard, GOP candidates can learn from Garcia's success and replicate it across the Golden State. Additionally, winning in California bodes extremely well for the GOP's ability to win anywhere else in the country.

THE GOP MESSAGE BROKE THROUGH – In CLF's internal polling 16 days out, the #1 thing voters could recall about Christy Smith was that she had cut teacher pay and fired teachers. That was CLF and GOP allies' message. In that same survey, the #1 thing voters could recall about Mike Garcia was that he was a pilot in the military – his campaign's core message. (American Viewpoint, April 26-27, LC MOE +/- 4.9%). Just like in the special election for North Carolina's Ninth Congressional District last year, Republican independent expenditure messaging was remarkably consistent. In both elections, that consistency clearly contributed to victory.

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DEMOCRATS TRASH THEIR NOMINEE FOR THE FALL – Democrats spent the final days leading up to their loss trashing Christy Smith in the press as an underwhelming nominee prone to gaffes. However, Smith is slated to be the Democratic nominee for the rematch in November, ensuring the efforts to spin this special election loss only damage Smith and make it more likely voters reject her again in November.

BOTTOM LINE

With a surgical \$700,000 investment, Congressional Leadership Fund was able to play a key role in securing victory for Mike Garcia. CLF ran a heavily targeted digital and mail advertising effort focused on turning out low-propensity GOP voters and persuading swing voters. These efforts generated an incredible return on investment by flipping a seat now and giving Garcia an advantage in November.

Like Garcia in California, Republicans have put forward our strongest and most diverse recruiting class in recent memory, ensuring the GOP enters campaign season with the widest possible path to retaking the majority.

Back-to-back wins in the suburbs, including in a Clinton district, shows Democrats should be worried about their dimming odds in districts all across the country.