

# CA-48 District Primer

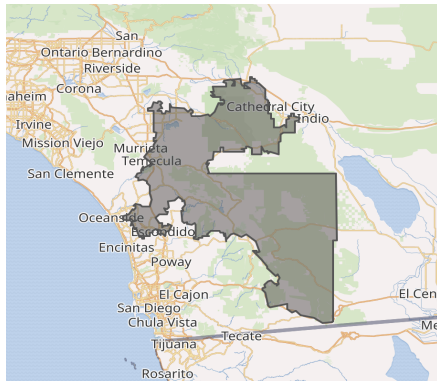
In 2024, Republican Darrell Issa won this district—but the 2026 race is a lot more competitive. With your help, we’re going to **FLIP** this key seat and secure a Democratic House majority in 2026.

Key dates
<b>Filing Deadline:</b> March 6
<b>Primary:</b> June 2
<b>Midterms:</b> November 3

## Recent election results

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

## District Facts & Stats



### Largest Cities

- Escondido: 149K
- Menifee: 117K
- Temecula: 112K

### Geography

Located in Southern California’s Inland Empire, just north and east of San Diego, this district stretches from Murrieta south to the Mexico border. It encompasses large portions of San Diego County and eastern Riverside County. Prop 50 extended the district north to include the more heavily Democratic cities of Menifee, Hemet and Palm Springs in the Coachella Valley, shifting the district’s partisan lean from R+12 to D+4.

### Citizenry

The district is 51% white (non-Hispanic), 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). 36% were born outside the US.

### The Local Vibe

Affordability is a key concern. On July 1, statewide gasoline tax increases stoked fears of higher prices at the pump. One in five district residents rely on Medicaid and/or CalFresh (SNAP). The 2025 federal budget cuts have left them fearful of losing essential support.

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.

The district’s boundaries have changed over the past several elections, and the district has swung between GOP and Democratic control. Harley Rouda won the district for the Democrats in 2018. Michelle Steel (R) ousted Rouda in 2020. After redistricting in 2022, Darrell Issa won the newly-christened CA-48; he won again in 2024.

## Key Issues

- **Housing** has become much less affordable in Escondido, where homelessness has become a significant problem. In early 2025, a large encampment along the Escondido Creek was cleared by the city.
  - **Absentee Rep:** Darrell Issa has not held a town hall since 2018. Residents hold weekly rallies outside his Escondido office, but he still doesn't show up.
  - **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

### Darrell Issa | Republican Incumbent

**Darrell Issa** has served in Congress for 23 of the last 25 years. Between 2001-19 he represented California's then-48th and 49th Districts; from 2021 to the present he represented California's 50th-then-48th District. Between 2018-2020, he "retired," but this proved short-lived. Before entering politics, Issa owned a business in automobile anti-theft devices. He ran unsuccessfully for a state Senate seat in 1998. He is reported to have holdings in 17 LLCs, real estate, and securities; with assets worth nearly \$500 million, he is the wealthiest member of Congress. Issa lives with his wife and son in Vista. He has offices in Escondido and Temecula. He sits on the House Committees on the Judiciary, Foreign Affairs, and Science, Space and Technology.

**Issues:** Issa is markedly uninterested in his constituents. Despite their many requests, he has not held a town hall in more than eight years. Issa has been an ardent Trump supporter since early in his 2016 campaign. He supports Texas SB-8-style abortion bans and praised the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. He voted to cut Medicaid, stripping health care from his constituents along with millions of Americans. He voted against certifying the 2020 election results. He votes with Trump 100% of the time. Issa has been arrested twice on weapons charges and for auto theft; he was the subject of at least one arson investigation. A business associate accused him of intimidation with a gun.

**The contrast:** Even without a challenger, Darrell Issa has proven to be a weak voice for his constituents in DC, uninterested in doing what can be done to ease their economic burdens by making gas, housing and groceries affordable.

### Democratic Challenger(s)

*There are several possible candidates; we'll know more after the primary election on June 2. Until then, we've identified these front runners:*

A lawyer and San Diego native, **Marni von Wilpert** serves on the San Diego City Council representing District 5 (Scripps Ranch, Rancho Bernardo, Black Mountain Ranch, Carmel Mountain Ranch, Miramar Ranch North, Rancho Peñasquitos, Sabre Springs, San Pasqual, and Torrey Highlands). She grew up in District 48 and graduated from UC Berkeley and Fordham University School of Law. She was previously a deputy city attorney and a Peace Corp volunteer and also served as counsel on the House Education and Labor Committee.

From San Diego's East County, **Ammar Campa-Najjar** is the first Latino-Arab American to run for Congress. A U.S. Naval officer serving at NAS North Island who also teaches government at Georgetown University, he has made two previous attempts to unseat Darrell Issa, drawing 46% of the vote in 2020 before redistricting. The SDSU graduate served as a deputy regional field director on Barack Obama's 2012 presidential re-election campaign and has also worked for the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Department of Labor.