

Know Before You Go: CA-48 District Primer

June 2018 • Researched, summarized, and edited by Swing Left's all-volunteer research team!

Clinton won this district and the incumbent's views are out of the mainstream. With your help, we'll take back CA-48 for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Incumbent

Introduction: Republican Dana Rohrabacher has represented various Southern California districts (42, 45, 46) since 1989. He was elected to represent CA-48 in 2013. He won re-election in 2016 by 16 points (48,271 votes), the smallest margin of victory for him in the last 10 years. Rohrabacher votes reliably with the Republican Party, but has recently found himself at odds even within his own party for his controversial pro-Russia views.

Issues: Rohrabacher has a voting record that shows him to be socially conservative; he is anti-civil rights, anti-LGBTQ rights, and anti-choice. He is also robustly anti-immigration and has introduced legislation to restrict services for undocumented immigrants and ease the deportation of minors. He voted to end what he called "amnesty" for DREAMers and said he's against the inclusion of DACA into federal law. He breaks with traditional social conservatives in his outspoken pro-cannabis stance.

Strengths: Rohrabacher, although controversial, maintains the status quo of Republican representation in Orange County (OC). Rohrabacher's anti-immigrant views are reflected in the district; several cities in CA-48, including Fountain Valley and Newport Beach, have passed resolutions in opposition to California's sanctuary laws.

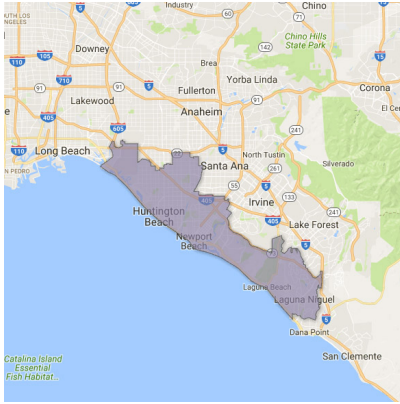
Potential Weaknesses: Rohrabacher voted to "repeal and replace" the ACA in 2017 even though 77,000 of his constituents receive healthcare through Obamacare. While the majority of Californians oppose offshore oil drilling, Rohrabacher supports new oil and gas leasing on the outer continental shelf of the California coast. Notably, Rohrabacher, nicknamed "Putin's favorite Congressman," holds what are considered to be fringe, pro-Russia views and has come up in connection to key figures and events in the current Russia investigation.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Harley Rouda, after a close primary fight, won the nomination to oppose Dana Rohrabacher in CA-48. Rouda is a philanthropist, attorney, and tech entrepreneur from Laguna Beach. A one-time Republican and Independent, he registered as a Democrat after the 2016 election; this is his first run for public office.

Issues: Rouda's platform includes common-sense gun reforms, strengthening the middle class by closing tax loopholes that benefit the wealthy, affordable college, funding for early childhood education, and health care — specifically, he wants to expand and improve the Affordable Care Act and supports Medicare for all. Rouda also believes in reproductive freedom and equal pay for women.

Strengths: As a former Republican, Rouda might sway Independent and moderate conservatives in CA-48 who voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016. Rouda also reflects the views of many in the district by opposing drilling off the California coast and believing in science and climate change. He wants to incentivize economic growth for the middle class by making Southern California a center for "clean tech," like wind and solar energy. Rouda has been endorsed by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, National Nurses United, Indivisible, and the Sierra Club.



CA-48: Facts & Stats

Largest Cities

- Huntington Beach, 200,000
- Costa Mesa, 110,000
- Westminster, 90,000
- Newport Beach 88,000
- Laguna Niguel, 65,000
- Fountain Valley, 55,000

2016 Presidential Election

- Clinton, 48%
- Trump, 46%

2016 House Election

- Rohrabacher, 178,701, 58%
- Savary, 127,715, 42%
- Total registered: 405k
- Registered, didn't vote: 99k (76% turnout)

2014 House Election

- Rohrabacher, 112k, 63%
- Savary, 63k, 36%

CA-48: Better Know the District

Geography

District 48 is long, stretching from Seal Beach at its northern end to Laguna Niguel at its southern end (approximately 35 miles). It runs approximately 12 miles inland from the beaches, towards cities such as southwestern Santa Ana and Westminster. The district is very suburban, with each city running into another and ample residential road or freeway access to other parts of the district. Canvassing/organizing efforts will have to spread out over northern and southern portions of Orange County, but the suburban landscape will greatly facilitate access to voters within District 48.

Citizenry

69% of residents within CA-48 are Caucasian, while approximately 18% are Asian; thus this district is not racially diverse. Additionally, approximately 20% identify as Hispanic in ethnicity (a low percentage for a California district). Though this district is fairly wealthy (54% of residents earn an annual income over \$75,000), 31% of residents earn under \$50,000. CA-48 is becoming more socioeconomically diverse. Wealthier constituents tend to live closer to the beach, while less affluent people live further inland, towards Santa Ana, Westminster, or Costa Mesa. Constituents are also well educated, with about 78% holding an Associate's degree or higher

Elections

CA-48 has been represented in the House by a Republican since 1992, and the Republican typically wins by at least 20 percentage points. However, Hillary Clinton narrowly won this district. Rohrabacher was first elected to this seat in 2012, when he defeated Democrat Ron Varasteh by 22 percentage points. He then defeated Suzanne Savary by 28.2 percentage points in 2014, but defeated Savary by only 16.6 percentage points in 2016. There may be an opening to harness changing voter demographics and key issues to unseat Rohrabacher.

Higher Education

There are several community colleges within CA-48, including Golden West College, Orange Coast College, and Coastline Community College. Soka University of America, the sister university of Soka University of Hachioji (Japan), is a private, four-year, liberal arts university, also located within the district. Also in CA-48: Vanguard University of Southern California, a private, non-profit, four-year, Christian liberal arts and professional studies university. The many higher-education students within CA-48 present a great opportunity for student voter registration drives.

Economy

There is no especially prominent industry in CA-48, and the most common occupations are white-collar jobs such as management, sales and administration. The biggest employers are food, retail, accommodation and healthcare services.

Tourism

Huntington Beach and Newport Beach are known for their wide sandy beaches and world class surfing conditions. Huntington Beach hosts a huge surfing competition each August. Other tourist draws are Laguna Beach and Balboa Island. Side note: Balboa is already subject to floods because of rising sea levels; the entire coast is at risk and should ultimately make climate change a big focus for voters at some point (though it hasn't seemed to yet).