

Incumbent State Senator Allen and Challenger Irwin Asked about Ballona Wetlands

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California State Senator Ben Allen, the incumbent, was unopposed on the primary ballot for State District 24. He received 165,421 votes.

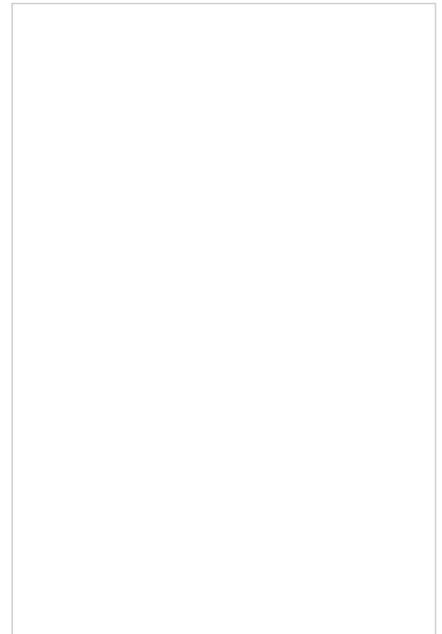
But, in the November election, Allen will run against Kristina Irwin, a Santa Monica native. She received 6,260 write-in votes, placing her on the ballot.

A Palisades resident pointed out that although the race for Irwin is uphill, "There are 686,000 voters in this new district. In the primary, 550,000 of those did not vote for Allen. There are

180,000 registered independents and 130,000 registered Republicans in District.

Irwin, like Allen, is a graduate of Santa Monica High School. She is a realtor, and the mother of three. Her oldest child attends Palisades High School.

If elected, she said she promises to lower taxes for individuals and businesses and to lower regulations. "Entrepreneurship is the heart of our district," she said, noting that she would also work to build water storage infrastructures.



Regarding public safety/quality of life, she said the rights of victims must be a priority and that chronic offenders should not be released without bail.

Irwin said she'd also like to tackle the broken foster care system by working with social workers, nonprofits and the communities to help build pilot programs for foster youth. "Transitional housing, counseling and vocational schools are a must," she said.

Senator Ben Allen is the chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Environmental quality, air quality, water quality, climate change, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), waste management, pesticides and hazardous materials.

CTN sent a query to Allen, "Given that you are the chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Quality, why did the state allow one of the last remaining wetlands in Southern California to become decimated?" (Ballona Freshwater Marsh is owned by State Lands Commission and maintained by nonprofit Ballona Wetlands Conservancy. Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve is owned by CA Fish & Wildlife and maintained by CA Fish & Wildlife.)

This editor asked Allen about reaching out to Bonin, whose district the Ballona is located. "I checked with my team, and we have reached out several times to Bonin's office and they haven't been responsive," Allen told CTN.

He said he would contact Bonin directly and "I'm happy to push Fish and Wildlife to act more proactively on this issue."

Irwin was contacted and asked about Ballona and her environmental platform, she responded, "Yes, I have been to the Ballona Wetlands and have seen the damage. I used to live near there. The environment is an important

issue to us all and when elected State Senator, I will do everything in my power to save the wetlands and wildlife."

She was born in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, now Serbia. When she was three years old, "My parents left their socialist country with two suitcases, a dream, and me. Leaving their home was not easy but making a life here was even harder.

"My father, a physician, and my mother, a pharmacist in their old country had to re-learn and re-earn their medical degrees and master the English language while working odd minimum wage jobs hoping to make just enough to pay rent and have food on the table for me and my little sister.

"After many years, it paid off and the American dream became a reality. They were able to buy their first home, send both their kids to college," said Irwin, who said she believes in the U.S. Constitution, civil liberties, freedom, and that all things are possible with God.

The Santa Monica Daily Press in a July 26 story ("Write-in Candidate to Challenge Allen for CA-24 Seat in November") wrote that "During an April 27 Santa Monica Democratic Club meeting, Allen alluded to Irwin's candidacy, stating there was a write-in candidate who, because of the "top-two system" in statewide elections, would automatically make the No. 2 spot on the November ballot.

"'She seems like a very nice person who watches way too much Fox News, and she's just kind of, like, adopted all the crazy Republican conspiracy theories,' Allen said of his opponent."

Irwin was asked about Allen's comment.

"If safe schools, clean neighborhoods, less crime, less homelessness, less

taxes, helping small businesses, strict on crime and environmental issues... are Republican talking points, then I'm scared to know what the Democratic talking points are! This is not a Republicans/Democrat issue – public safety and quality of life go beyond party lines," Irwin told CTN.