

Governor Newsom Defeats Recall

by Stephanie Goldman and Evan Hawkins

“Economic justice, social justice, racial justice, environmental justice, our values where California has made so much progress, all of those things were on the ballot this evening.”
– Governor Gavin Newsom, September 14, 2021

Governor Newsom made history on September 14, 2021, when he survived efforts to recall him from office. The polls closed at 8 p.m., and by 9 p.m. CNN had called the election for Governor Newsom with Republican candidate Larry Elder conceding shortly thereafter. FACCC opposed the recall and supported Governor Newsom continuing in his term.

Newsom is only the fourth United States governor to face a recall election since 1900 and is one of two governors to defeat a recall attempt during that time. A majority of states do not allow recall elections; however, these elections are permitted in 19 states.

Educators and union members showed up in force and had a significant impact on the outcome of this election. FACCC joined the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), the Community College Association (CCA/CTA), and the California Community College Independents (CCCI) in opposing the recall and turning out voters. FACCC engaged its membership in the anti-recall campaign and joined CFT and the Califor-

nia Labor Federation in phone banking to urge voters across the state to vote “no” on the recall.

Ultimately, the recall question failed with approximately 62% of the vote siding with Governor Newsom. Voter turnout was above 50%, a significantly higher rate than seen in most special elections.

Notably, more voters decided to leave the replacement question blank than to vote for any candidate to take Newsom’s place. The governor’s anti-recall campaign focused a message of voting “no” on the first question and leaving the second question blank. At the time of publication, leading candidate Republican Larry Elder had 3,215,404 votes while 4,079,938 voters left that question blank. This was a strategic decision with lessons learned from the 2003 California recall. While this strategy was questioned by many political observers it ultimately proved to be effective. Overall, the outcome of the recall was a landslide victory for the governor and boosted his political capital ahead of the 2022 general election.



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