



Elections for the
LAUSD School Board
1950-2000

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Los Angeles School Board Elections

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1950s and 1960s

Prior to the 1961 consolidation of the Los Angeles school district, the taxes for the elementary, secondary, and junior colleges had been separate. However, the superintendent and the school board for all three districts were the same. The board members were elected at-large and there were seven offices. These offices were numbered, with all of the even numbered offices up for election in the same year and all of the odd numbered offices up for election two years later. Primaries were held in the first week of April in odd numbered years along with other municipal offices. A candidate had to receive over 50% of the vote in order to win a seat. If no candidate won the required amount, the two top candidates would face a run-off election in the last week of May. School board members held four-year terms beginning on July 1st after they were elected and it ended on June 30.

In the 1950s, before consolidation, the main issues revolved around fiscal ideas and national politics. Liberals were described as being pro-UNESCO, for more schools, and more school services, which meant higher taxes. Independents (conservatives) were described as being anti-UNESCO, talked about economizing the budget, and would hold the line on expenditures. However, in the 1955 election, The *Times* recommended the re-election of the incumbent conservative group because they were the ones who helped plan the school building program on the ballot. These bond measures were promoted for the exclusive purpose of building and



repairing schoolrooms in an effort to relieve the shortage of schoolrooms that had forced over 21,000 students to attend half-day school sessions. The bonds passed.¹

The major race of 1957 surrounded issues of the role of teachers in school politics. There were three seats up for election, with three incumbents running. One incumbent, Hugh C. Willett was re-elected and another one was defeated. This was seen as a draw in the fight between conservatives and liberals over control of the board. The third race, which had been forced into a run off, would therefore determine which faction would have control of the board.²

The run-off between Edith Stafford and Mary Tinglof was a bitter one. Conservatives accused Tinglof of ties to UNESCO, which would place her loyalties to the United States in question. She was also accused of being a puppet to the local teachers union (ATOLA) by The Los Angeles Times. Her election would therefore place ATOLA in a strong position. Along with her connections to teachers' organizations, Tinglof also was for more progressive ways of teaching and spending more money in the schools. Stafford, on the other hand, supported the conservative plank of holding taxes steady, teaching the three Rs, and the American way. The Times strongly endorsed Stafford and printed several articles outlining the disaster that Tinglof's election would bring. Yet even though conservatives feared control of the board by teachers, they agreed to a 6% average raise the day of the elections. If this was a last ditch effort by Stafford to save her office, it failed miserably. Tinglof won and became a strong liberal voice on the board.³

¹ Editorial, "Appointment in an Election Booth," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1955.

² Williams, "Candidates in Last-Minute Vote Pleas," *LAT*, Apr. 1 1957; Williams, "Richardson Leads Cole for Education Board; Stafford in Runoff," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1957; Williams, "Bitter Vote Battle Due for Next May," *LAT*, Apr. 4 1957.


³ Editorial, "Mrs. Stafford Should Be Re-elected," *LAT*, May 24 1957; Staff, "Rule of Schools By Unions Feared," *LAT*, May 26 1957; Staff, "Interest High in Education Board Race," *LAT*, May 26 1957; Williams, "Campaigns in High Gear on Week End," *LAT*, May 27 1957; Staff, "Board Votes "Pay Increase for Teachers," *LAT*, May 28 1957 & Williams, "Rundberg, Corman Take Council Seats; Vote Turnout at 44%," *LAT*, May 29 1957

The 1959 election was bereft of a conservative slate or a liberal one. The Committee for Better Schools had a slate of 2 Republicans and 2 Democrats. This was Hardy's slate. The other one was supposedly independent and was the party of Smoot and Chambers. The race between the two slates was not very controversial nor did it draw much attention from voters. This election was the first of three that lacked serious contenders to challenge incumbents in board races or any major contention during the races.

The first two elections of the 1960s seem to have been relatively uncontested and there were no major political issues. As a result all seven board members were re-elected in the primaries.⁴ Perhaps this stability resulted from the relative balance that the previous elections had achieved or maybe it was due to the citizens' interest in other more pressing issues. Whatever the case, these were the last easy elections for the school board. While some members might experience relatively unopposed re-elections, the races themselves were never absent of serious issues.

The problems started when Tinglof decided to run for City Council and let her board seat up for election in 1965. This caused great conflict over who would fill the vacancy. While the two incumbents won their races easily the empty seat engendered heated debates over the issues. They seemed to center around money, how much should be spent, on what, and where it should come from. Liberals felt that more money should be spent in urban centers and that the state government should provide a higher percentage of the school district's budget. The conservatives felt that money was being wasted and that stronger discipline was needed in the schools, but no more money from the state. There was also a Socialist slate that complained of a lack of free speech. There were calls for lowering the school age to 3, creating boarding schools for the underprivileged, and returning to traditional teaching methods with an emphasis on phonetics. The underlying and almost unspoken

⁴ Williams, "Council, School Board Incumbents Victors," *LAT*, Apr. 5 1961; Staff; "Complete Returns," *LAT*, Apr. 6 1961; Bergholz, "62 Candidates Making Final Bids for Votes," *LAT*, Apr. 1 1963; Bergholz, "4 Councilmen and All School Board Elected," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1963; & Turpin, "School Board Incumbents in Big Leads," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1963.



issue was desegregation and how a candidate would vote on integration issues.⁵

After the primaries only one seat went to a run off and that was the one Tinglof had vacated. The two candidates were Marion Miller and Rev. James Jones. Miller was a conservative candidate, but got into trouble for her “links” to the ultra-conservative Birch Society (she was a guest speaker at a bookstore opening) and other right-wing organizations (served on the sponsoring committee of Christian Anti-Communism Crusade), which strangely enough *The Times* thought was a strike against her. Jones on the other hand would be the first African-American to serve on the school board since 1943 and was highly regarded due to his work with children through the church. He was also seen as associated with moderate groups and as against extremists (i.e. the ACLU and the NAACP). But perhaps his biggest draw was that he was a minority that opposed busing. Jones’ election to the school board may have been historical, but it did not have a long lasting impact.⁶

The week leading up to the 1967 primaries saw a great confidence in the four incumbents for the school board. Chambers, Smoot, Hardy and Gardner were all up for election and there did not seem to be any real challengers. There was a noted absence of an opposition slate, but there was a religious group, the Citizens Committee for Better Education, which supported Hardy and Gardner for re-election and Robert L. Docter and Julian Nava to defeat Chambers and Smoot respectively. Another group, but one with little political clout, was the far-left Southern Californians for New Politics (SCNP). Hardy was seen as having a broad base of support and she easily defeated her rivals. Gardner’s opponents were like a who’s who of oddities. One was an SCNP candidate, one was a socialist, and another one was a eugenicist. Gardner’s only real opposition came from a local teacher who could not

⁵ Staff. “School Board Candidate Charges Huge Waste in Textbook Purchases,” *LAT*, Mar. 30 1965; Staff. “School Board Accused of Curbing Free Speech,” *LAT*, Mar. 31 1965; & Malnic, “21 Will Compete for School Board,” *LAT*, Apr. 4 1965.

⁶ Malnic, “Pair Re-elected to School Board,” *LAT*, Apr. 7 1965; Editorial, “Board of Education Endorsement,” *LAT*, May 13 1965; Staff, “3 Key Endorsements Given to Rev. Jones,” *LAT*, May 21 1965; & Bergholz, “Edelman, Jones, Lamport Elected,” *LAT*, May 26 1965.


muster substantial support. Chambers faced Docter in his second attempt to be elected to the school board. Fortunately for Chambers, Docter was unable to get the votes required and lost again. Yet, this close call should have been a warning for Chambers and other conservatives.⁷

Smoot's third bid for a school board seat became the contentious arena for the 1967 election. He easily received the endorsement of *The Times* due to his experience and the editors' belief that the board should not be unbalanced at that time; presumably they were considering the growing conflict over integration. His opponent, Julian Nava, was considered his opposite due to their different backgrounds. Smoot was a child of privilege and prestige while Nava had grown up in East Los Angeles and was a scholarship student to Pomona College and Harvard. They were also polarized on the issue of segregation, which Nava openly accused Smoot of promoting through his endorsement of "neighborhood schools." However, Nava's platform was one of financial support for quality education not integration. Both candidates disassociated themselves from the extremists of their political groups.⁸

On Election Day, Smoot trailed from the beginning and Nava won much to everyone's surprise. He attributed his victory to the teachers who campaigned on his behalf and he promised to treat them as professionals, not employees. He also promised to turn the board's attention to the needs of all students, not just the much-touted three Rs. His election meant that only one board member, Chambers, was an avowed conservative. Richardson and Jones were considered to be liberals and Hardy, Gardner, and Willett were supposedly independent or "swing" voters. Hardy and Gardner were generally considered moderate liberals and Willett was considered a moderate conservative. Nava's election

⁷ Bergholz, "11 Incumbents Favored in Municipal Election," *LAT*, Mar. 27, 1967; Bergholz, "Seven Incumbents Win; 3 Others Still in Doubt," *LAT*, Apr. 5 1967; & Bergholz, "2 Runoffs Slated for May 31," *LAT*, Apr. 6 1967.

⁸ Editorial, "For School, Council," *LAT*, May 28 1967 & Bergholz, "City Votes Today on 4 Candidates and Bond Issues," *LAT*, May 31 1967.



therefore gave to liberals a 5-2 majority; they had previously enjoyed a 4-3 majority.⁹

The 1969 election put this influence into peril. The two slates were entitled Save Our School (conservative candidates) and Sound Action for Education or SAFE (liberal candidates). There were only two incumbents in the three-seat race due to Hugh C. Willett's retirement. These were the liberal members Dr. Ralph Richardson and Rev. James Jones who were joined by Robert Docter in his third attempt at winning a board seat. Their challengers were former high school teacher Richard Ferraro, Dr. Donald D. Newman and radio talk show host Laurel Martin, respectively. None of the six candidates received a majority so all three races were forced into May run offs.¹⁰

The biggest concern for this race was control of the board. The liberals had held a majority for 15 years, but they were in position that May to take over completely. The issues that solidified that spring were to set the argument between liberals and conservatives for the next decade or more. Conservatives favored neighborhood schools over integration, supported the three Rs, and opposed further federal or state intrusion. Liberals, on the other hand, "view the educational process in a broader context" and were therefore open to the benefits of integration, integrated services such as health care and social services, progressive teaching and a greater role for state and federal governments in financing these endeavors. These differences were not just mere rhetoric but real ideological contradictions.¹¹

The day of the election was also one of contradictions. The two conservative candidates, Ferraro and Newman, beat the liberal incumbents, Richardson and Jones. However liberal Docter defeated the other conservative, Martin. The two conservative winners claimed that their victory was a sign that people were fed

⁹ Bergholz, "City Votes Today on 4 Candidates and Bond Issues," *LAT*, May 31 1967 & Bergholz, "Wilkinson and Nava Elected; Library, Police Bonds Defeated," *LAT*, June 1 1967.

¹⁰ McCurdy, "Conservatives Running Strong for School Board; Issues Trail," *LAT*, Apr. 2 1969 & Rawitch, "Conservatives in School Board Runoff Vow Fight on Militants," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1969.

¹¹ Rawitch, "Conservatives and Liberals in Battle for School Board," *LAT*, May 25 1969.

up with “violence in our schools,” referring to the walkouts and sit-ins of recent years. They seemed to feel that the tough image they portrayed had resonated with voters.¹²

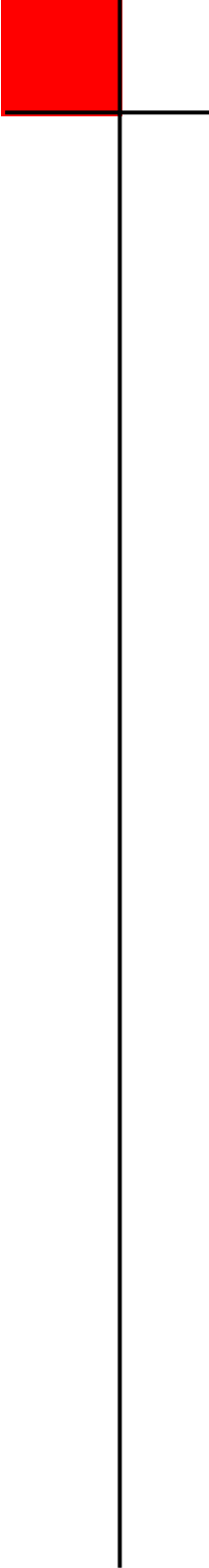
Yet this doesn't correlate with Docter's respectable lead over his conservative opponent and the retention of a liberal majority on the board. The citizens of Los Angeles may have seen Richardson and Jones as ineffective board members, but they were not fed up with liberal control. The other explanation given by reports was that the two incumbents did not receive a great deal of financial support due to the liberal investment into the mayoral race. They were therefore unable to campaign as much as their conservative challengers and therefore had less name recognition than the three candidates who won. Apparently Docter wanted to make sure that the third time would indeed be the charm for him and found the money and support to get his name out there. Whatever the cause, the liberal majority was not lost, but it was on shaky ground considering that two more liberals would be up for election in two years time.¹³

1970s Elections

The 1970s marked the end of an era for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). It began with the Gitelson ruling to desegregate and an impressive strike by teachers and ended with a conservative take-over of the board, the creation of districts for electing board members, the granting of bargaining rights to teachers and their growing influence over board elections. Coupled with waning voter interest, this trend led to the increase of the importance of special interest group politics. These events marked the path that the district took to a system that was more vulnerable to outside influences, yet gradually more unbending in regards to programs and finances. This decade was therefore one of unpredictability and regimentation for the district.

¹² McCurdy, “Conservatives Lead in School Board Election,” *LAT*, May 28 1969 & McCurdy, “Liberals Retain Tenuous School Board Control,” *LAT*, May 29 1969.

¹³ McCurdy, “Conservatives Lead in School Board Election,” *LAT*, May 28 1969 & McCurdy, “Liberals Retain Tenuous School Board Control,” *LAT*, May 29 1969.



The election following the strike did not bring about the anti-teacher backlash that some had feared. Neither was there an anti-busing attack. It seemed that the election was politics as usual except for the record low voter turnout that typified the decade. The school board president, Arthur Gardner had decided not to run again, perhaps knowing that his less than brilliant leadership the previous spring held little to recommend him or perhaps he was just tired of the fight. Julian Nava, who had strongly supported the strikers, was able to defeat his opponents in the April primary. That left three seats up for the May general election.

The two other incumbents had not been as lucky as Nava. Georgiana Hardy, a moderate member, was pushed into a run-off with conservative candidate Dolly J. Swift. Ultra-conservative, J.C. Chambers faced newcomer and liberal Janice Bernstein. Gardner's seat was a contest between conservative Philip G. Bardos and liberal Arnett Hartsfield, the only African-American candidate. The issues centered on desegregation and unions. The liberals wished to ready the district for integration and for the most part supported the teachers' contract, while the conservatives wished to fight both desegregation and unionism in the courts. These issues were not especially exciting ones for Los Angeles voters and they stayed away from the polls for the most part. Like previous at-large elections, the voters of Los Angeles did not decide either way on any of the issues, because they reelected both Hardy and Chambers, a moderate liberal and an ultra-conservative respectively, and elected a moderate-to-conservative, Philip Bardos, to replace a moderate.¹⁴

Just as in 1971, 1973's board elections proved to be of little interest to voters. Campaign organizers had difficulty in getting people to attend candidate forums or debates. *The Times* seemed relatively uninterested too, only taking a hard position in its desire to be a part of Richard Ferraro's defeat. They came close to achieving their mission in the primary. Robert Docter was the only incumbent who was reelected. Richard Newman and Richard Ferraro were forced into run offs, but for very different reasons. Newman was unable to obtain full conservative support and was

¹⁴ Bergholz, "Light Turnout Seen in City Election Tuesday," *LAT*, Apr. 4 1971; Boyarsky, "Turnout of 35% Expected Today for City Election," *LAT*, May 25 1971; & Boyarsky, "Wachs Captures Seat From Potter," *LAT*, May 26 1971.


spread out allowing for a relative unknown liberal, Diane Watson, to challenge him in May. After the primary, Newman was able to consolidate conservative support and Watson's obscurity kept her from winning the seat. The only real issue of the election stemmed from Ferraro's "flashes of temper and contumacy," but even that failed to cause a blip on the voter radar screen. The outcome was therefore a 4-3 conservative control of the board.¹⁵

Two years later the school board election scene was quite different. There was more controversy surrounding the desegregation order, funding was insufficient, enrollments were increasing, and the United Teachers of Los Angeles was beginning to flex its muscles. For the most part this played out in debates over what the school board's position should be in regards to desegregation and unionism and how to handle the changing school system with diminishing resources and increasing violence. In short, the public, or at least a few very interested public groups as evidenced by the consistently low voter turnouts, were beginning to involve themselves more directly with school board politics.¹⁶

Four offices were in contention the 1975 election, one without an incumbent. Georgiana Hardy, after more than 20 years of service on the board and perhaps prompted by the forced run-off in 1971, was retiring. She chose to endorse Rita Walters, an African-American woman and liberal, to be her successor. Nava easily defeated his opponents in the primary by supporting parent advisory committee, a moral obligation to alleviate segregation, and a duty as a Mexican-American to retain a seat on the board to represent the Hispanic perspective on education. His victory was also greatly assisted by the endorsement of UTLA and the "800 volunteers to walk 500 precincts for the candidates" that such

¹⁵ Rawitch, "3,000 Invited by 14 Speakers: Nightmare for Candidates: Only 20 Come to Hear Them," *LAT*, Mar. 1973; Editorial, "The Best for the School Board," *LAT*, Mar. 26 1973; Editorial, "...For a Solid School Board..." *LAT*, Apr. 5 1973; Rawitch, "Newman, Ferraro Face School Board Runoffs," *LAT*, Apr. 4 1973; Staff, "School Board Race: A Change Since Primary," *LAT*, May 25 1973; Rawitch, "Ex-State Aide Backs Charge of Ferraro's Ouster at Hearing," *LAT*, May 26 1973; & Rawitch, "Newman, Ferraro Win in School Board Races," *LAT*, May 30 1973.

¹⁶ Editorial, "The Best," *LAT*, Mar. 28 1975 & Shuit & Trout, "Eight Runoff Campaigns Open," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1975.



support entailed. This support also aided Kathleen Brown Rice to force incumbent J.C. Chambers into a runoff by garnering an impressive 43% of the vote compared to his 38%.¹⁷

The primary election was a good sign for a liberal victory in May. Philip Bardos, who could be considered a moderate conservative, was also forced into a run-off. Rita Walters did not win Hardy's seat outright, but she led her conservative opponent, Dolly Swift, in the polls. Walters joined Kathleen Brown Rice and Robert Peters as liberal candidates for the general election in May. The liberal platform was one of experimenting with integration, favoring collective bargaining, and an evaluation of district spending to find inefficiencies. The conservatives opposed integration efforts, supported a stronger stance against school violence, and opposed the expansion of student and parent involvement programs. Chambers and Bardos supported the 83 cent tax increase on the May ballot. Walters' opponent, Dolly Swift, refused to take a position on the tax increase, but this was the only split among the conservative bloc.¹⁸

In the weeks leading up to the general election, both liberals and conservatives consolidated their campaigns and created political groups. The liberals created an association called Citizens Committee for Effective Schools that encompassed individuals and organizations such as the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and, most importantly, UTLA. Independent Parents and Taxpayers, the conservative coalition, claimed to be fighting for an independent board that would not be unduly influenced by the teachers' union. The issue of mandatory integration had seemingly been answered by the reversal of Gitelson's court order in March by the California Appeals Court greatly diminishing its use as an inspiring rallying cry for the conservatives.¹⁹

Another blow to the conservative bloc was the failures of the threats of an UTLA take over or the implementation of a voluntary

¹⁷ Editorial, "The Best," *LAT*, Mar. 28 1975; Trout, "Nava Appears Favorite to Retain School Board Post," *LAT*, Mar. 17 1975; & Shuit & Trout, "Eight," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1975.

¹⁸ Trout, "Schools and College Board Runoffs Due: Chambers Behind," *LAT*, Apr. 2 1975; Shuit & Trout, "Eight," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1975; McCurdy "School Races Enter Last Stage." *LAT*, May 15 1975.

¹⁹ McCurdy, "School Races." *LAT*, May 15 1975.

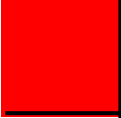
integration plan were not enough to get all three of them elected. After 16 years on the school board, J.C. Chambers was defeated. While his outbursts during the teachers' strike 5 years ago was not enough to defeat him in 1971, his off-color remark in regards to the intellectual ability of African-Americans may have done him in. As for Dolly Swift, her second attempt at Hardy's seat was unsuccessful, especially with the lessening of the threat of mandatory busing. The board, after a six-year dry spell, once again had an African-American member with the election of Walters. The one bright spot for conservatives was the reelection of Philip Bardos, who had moderate leanings. The liberals did not need to unseat Bardos to gain control of the board, however. With the election of Rice and Walters, liberals regained a 4-3 majority on the board that they had lost in 1973. This majority was bolstered a year later when conservative member Dr. Donald Newman suddenly passed away and the liberal majority appointed liberal-moderate, Howard Miller to Newman's office making the majority 5-2.²⁰

The dynamics of school politics had made a fundamental shift by the time that the 1977 elections rolled around. While financing was still a driving issue, the court battle over desegregation had pushed integration and busing to the fore. In June of 1976, the California Supreme Court had ruled that there was *de facto* segregation in LAUSD and that under state law the district was obligated to take "reasonable and feasible" steps to correct it. Early in the primary races, many speculated that busing would prove to be the defining issue in the school board elections. However, there were few candidates even in the 1973 and 1975 elections who supported mandatory busing, with the notable exception of Robert Docter. The difference between liberals and conservatives on the issue of mandatory busing was that the liberals stated that they would carry out court orders, while conservatives expressed a willingness to fight mandatory busing for as long as possible.²¹

The three seats that were up for election in 1977 were liberals Howard Miller and Robert Docter and conservative Richard

²⁰ Ibid.; McCurdy, "Liberals Win 4 of 6 School Office Races," *LAT*, May 28 1975; & McCurdy, "Miller Has Solid Backing in School Race," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1977.

²¹ McCurdy, "State High Court Orders L.A. to Integrate Schools," *LAT*, June 29, 1976 & McCurdy, "School Board Race--Spell It 'Busing'," *LAT*, Jan. 27 1977.



Ferraro. Miller's introduction of an antibusing resolution had come under some criticism by the black-Jewish coalition that had supported his appointment, but was able to gain the support of UTLA. Docter, however, had two major obstacles in his way to re-election. With the reality of mandatory busing looming on the horizon, groups across the district were gathering to oppose the imminent threat. As a self-proclaimed pro-buser, this did bode well for Docter. The deathblow, however, came from other quarters. In his efforts to comply with the federal mandates regarding integrating teachers, Docter supported the teacher reassignment by lottery and provoked the ire of the UTLA. They swore not to support any member who had voted for the lottery and were true to their word. As for Ferraro, *The Times* again attacked him repeatedly for his notoriously difficult behavior towards other school board members and general rough behavior. The outlook for all of the incumbents was dim.²²

The April primary found that the voters were unhappy with all three incumbents by forcing them into run offs. While *The Times* and the two liberal incumbents insisted that the integration issue would be decided in the courtroom, voters did not agree. Miller's conservative challenger, Daniel A. Danko, opposed any mandatory busing while Miller himself continually stated that he would follow the law. Docter was up against anti-buser extraordinaire and leader of BUSTOP, Bobbi Fiedler. Ferraro, who had been criticized for not even supporting voluntary busing, was challenged by Rita Walters in her second attempt at the board. In all cases the issue of desegregation played a major role in the rhetoric and campaigning of the candidates.²³

Whether or not the voters would be moved to participate in the general election by these arguments remained to be seen. The

²² McCurdy, "Spell It 'Busing'," *LAT*, Jan. 27 1977; McCurdy, "Dokter Defeated by Heavy Vote in Valley," *LAT*, June 6 1977; Staff, "Teachers Group Endorses Three for School Board," *LAT*, Feb. 18 1977; & McCurdy, "Busing Foes Run Strong in School Races," *LAT*, Apr. 6 1977.

²³ Editorial, "School Board: a Hit and a Ms.," *LAT*, Mar. 31 1977; McCurdy, "Dokter in Tough Contest," *LAT*, Mar. 23 1977; McCurdy, "Three L.A. School Board Races Forced Into Runoffs," *LAT*, Apr. 7 1977; McCurdy, "Called Ineffective on School Board: Ferraro Battling 6 Challengers," *LAT*, Apr. 1 1977; & Editorial, "The Influence of Qualifications," *LAT*, Apr. 8 1977.

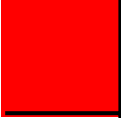
primary turn out was reportedly lower than many elections in which desegregation issues were not in question. This did not stop opponents from attacking each other's stances on busing at every turn. There were no clear slates in these races either. UTLA refused to endorse either Docter or Feidler, thus crippling Docter financially. Mayor Bradley took the liberal route and endorsed Miller, Docter, and Walters. *The Times*, looking for balance as usual, recommended Docter and Walters, but believed that Miller's record was suspect and Danko's qualifications were insufficient for the position.²⁴

The polls seemed to be favoring anti-busers until the last few weeks before the election. In the beginning of May, Miller's questionable past performance was overshadowed by Danko's indiscretion. Saying that he would rather "go to jail" than obey a court order that would require the mandatory busing of his own children, Danko caused a major controversy and probably alienated all but his radical supporters. A week before the election, Ferraro's chances seemed diminished when it was revealed that he was under investigation by the county Grand Jury. It seemed that he had been voting for contracts in which the company that funded his chair at Pepperdine were involved. There were no big revelations before the Docter-Fiedler race, but *The Times* reported the expected low voter turn out as a sign that the supposedly key issue, desegregation, was not the voter draw it had been touted to be. Anti-busing apathy was attributed to the recent hearings of the *Crawford* case in court and the general feeling of resignation towards desegregation whereas low turnouts among minorities were attributed to the victory of Mayor Bradley in the primaries.²⁵

This played out on Election Day in a normal split between liberal and conservative candidates. Miller was reelected, as was Ferraro and Fiedler was elected. This seems to have confirmed that desegregation was not as powerful an issue as some claimed.

²⁴ McCurdy, "Three," *LAT*, Apr. 7 1977; McCurdy, "Teachers' Group Backs Ferraro Foe," *LAT*, Apr. 22 1977; & Editorial, "Toward Quality Education," *LAT*, May 25 1977.

²⁵ McCurdy, "Prefers Jail to Busing Children, Danko Says," *LAT*, May 6 1977; McCurdy, "Campaign Heating Up in 3 Board of Education Races," *LAT*, May 25 1977; McCurdy, "Doubt Emerges on Influence of Busing Issue in L.A. School Board Contests," *LAT*, May 30 1977; & McDermott, "So You Thought Busing Was the Big School Board Election Issue..." *LAT*, June 5 1977.



Miller, a man who had a record of upholding court orders, won in a landslide. Ferraro was able to win reelection despite the alleged conflict of interest. He maintained his ignorance and a bare majority of voters believed him. Fiedler, however, was determined to tout her victory as a message to the sitting judge on how voters felt about mandatory busing. She beat Docter 55% to 45%, yet her constituency was only a majority of 28% of voters. Despite this statistical reality, Fiedler and her supporters set their sights for the 1979 election and the three liberals who would then be up for election.²⁶

While observers reported that the election demonstrated that desegregation lacked importance to minorities and white liberals, these same groups were still wary of the threat of more antibusers on the school board. With these threats in mind, City Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky had introduced a bill to repeal the Progressive practice of citywide elections for school board members in 1976. The city's voters rejected the measure, but with the passage of Proposition 4 in 1978 allowing non-residents of Los Angeles to vote on charter amendments that would affect the school district, Yaroslavsky felt that he had another chance at changing board elections from citywide to district offices in the summer of 1978.²⁷

The reality of an electorate controlled by whites, but a school district majority minority left many minority groups and other liberals feeling that citywide elections did not give them fair representation on the school board. The board was remarkably white for its school population demographics with only one Mexican-American and one African-American. With this in mind the city council approved Yaroslavsky's motion 11-2 to have a measure created and put on the November ballot. While the measure was supported by Mayor Bradley and various labor groups, the Board of Education itself was conflicted on the idea. While there was a fear of making the board more partisan, only

²⁶ McCurdy, "Mrs. Fiedler Ousts Docter; Ferraro Reelected Easily," *LAT*, June 1 1977; McCurdy, "Inspired Busing Foes Look Ahead to '79 Board Races," *LAT*, June 2 1977; McCurdy, "Docter Defeated," *LAT*, June 6 1977 & Jones, "Docter 'Disappointed but Not Destroyed'," *LAT*, June 2 1977.

²⁷ Staff, "District School Elections Urged," *LAT*, June 9 1978.

Philip Bardos and Bobbi Fiedler openly attacked the measure at first.²⁸

By October of that year, the campaign was in full swing. The seven districts had been drawn up; West San Fernando Valley, the East San Fernando Valley, West Los Angeles, the Hollywood area, South-Central and downtown Los Angeles, East Los Angeles-Huntington Park, and the harbor area. It was decided that the four members who were to be up for election in 1979 would be required to run from a district and therefore have established residency. The other three members were to serve out their citywide terms until 1981 when they would be required to run from a district. The school board voted to oppose Proposition M with Bardos, Ferraro, Fiedler, and Nava supporting the motion, Rice and Watson opposing it, and Miller abstained from voting.²⁹


The opposition from the board only increased as the election drew near, but they were not heeded. Fiedler and Nava criticized the proposed districts for seemingly egalitarian reasons, but the fact of their residency may have prompted their actions. The greatest argument against districts was the politicalization of the school board. Ironically, Fiedler was one of the loudest proponents of this argument. *The Times*, however, very skillfully countered these arguments by pointing out in an October 23rd editorial that the board was already a politicized and that district elections would hopefully lend stability to the board. It seemed that the threat of an anti-busing sweep in 1979 alarmed even this notorious champion of the status quo.³⁰

Days before the election, Nava changed his mind, decided to support Proposition M, and announced that he would not run for reelection. He was just the first casualty of this change in school board procedures. The other victims of this political maneuvering were Ferraro and the anti-busing groups. Ferraro was in the

²⁸ Boyarsky, "L.A. School Board Election by Areas May Go on Ballot," *LAT*, July 21 1978.

²⁹ McCurdy, "Proposed Education Board Electoral Districts Outlined," *LAT*, Oct. 17 1978 & McCurdy, "2 on School Board Attack Districting Proposal," *LAT*, Oct. 18 1978.

³⁰ McCurdy, "2," *LAT*, Oct. 18 1978; Staff, "Board Members, Civic Groups Assail School Voting Proposal," *LAT*, Oct. 24 1978; & Editorial, "School-Board Elections: Yes on M," *LAT*, Oct. 23 1978.



unfortunate position of just having won reelection, but living in a district (East Los Angeles) that had the political clout to insist on having an election in 1979. As for busing, the votes in opposition to Proposition M held a narrow lead in the West San Fernando Valley, but it one in all other precincts including the east and central portions of the valley. Fiedler and her anti-busing supporters were not able to convince voters in her stronghold that district offices were a threat to them.³¹

The struggle over the proposition did not end with its passage. Unfortunately, the City Council had the most difficult decisions ahead of them. They had to choose the assignment of members to districts and therefore which districts would hold elections in 1979. The votes kept ending in a deadlock, so Councilman Joel Wachs suggested that the council hold a lottery to determine those seats that they could not agree on. He defended his proposal by saying "We are all out to protect our own political interests. No one gives a hoot or holler about the educational system." Nine other council members agreed and a lottery was held.³²

The outcome was disagreeable to a large segment of those involved. Miller and Fiedler were assigned to the districts where they lived, so the anti-busing valley would not have elections in 1979. Ferraro was not assigned to East Los Angeles where he resided because leaders and city officials there wanted an election. So he was forced to run for the East L.A. seat, move in 1981 to a district with an election, or not run for election in 1981. While most of the leaders of East Los Angeles, Hollywood-Wilshire, South-Central Los Angeles and Harbor were pleased to have elections in their districts first, Councilman Arthur Snyder of east Los Angeles and several San Fernando leaders wanted Ferraro to be assigned to East Los Angeles, thus freeing up a spot in the Valley. They were unsuccessful in their endeavor to sway the council, even though one member received death threats from anti-busers.³³

³¹ McCurdy, "Nava Won't Run for Reelection to School Board," *LAT*, Nov. 1 1978; McCurdy, "Prop. M Districting to Fix Political Makeup of Board," *LAT*, Nov. 6 1978; & McCurdy, "Busing Issue May Have Lost Political Clout," *LAT*, Nov. 9 1978.

³² McCurdy, "Council Uses Lottery to Set School District Election," *LAT*, Nov. 16 1978.

³³ McCurdy, "Council Uses Lottery," *LAT*, Nov. 16 1978 & Boyarsky, "Ordinance on School District Elections OKd," *LAT*, Nov. 23 1978.

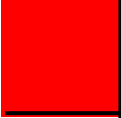
Even though districting was a liberal political move to stave off a complete change of the school board in 1979, circumstances along with their actions conspired to drastically change the board. Diane Watson had been elected to the state senate and her seat needed to be filled. Bardos was forced to withdraw from the race due to some difficulty he had with establishing residency, which left the Harbor district race without an incumbent. South-Central Los Angeles was also without an incumbent and Ferraro chose to run in East Los Angeles district but was not an incumbent and would keep his at-large seat if he lost.³⁴

The three least contested elections were District 3, the Hollywood-Wilshire Area, District 1, South—Central, and District 7, the Harbor Area. Kathleen Brown Rice was running in District 3 as an incumbent and seemed to have no real opposition. She did, however, have some difficulty in getting UTLA endorsement, but they were able to smooth things over before the primaries. Most of the leading candidates in District 1 were African-American, thus keeping with its creation as a seat for a minority. Integration was not an issue, but quality education was and so was the general disparagement of the sitting school board. The leading candidate was second time candidate, Rita Walters who received endorsements from both *The Times* and UTLA. As for District 7, *The Times* endorsed John Greenwood, a hospital administrator and all around bland candidate. While he had some competition from anti-buser Sam Fujimoto, Greenwood had broader support. The primaries found Rice and Walters victorious, while was left Greenwood facing a stronger than suspected Fujimoto in the general election.³⁵

The real race was in District 5, East Los Angeles. District 5 was the other district that was keen on electing a minority representative to the board, as was the reason for its creation. Unfortunately, neither of the leading candidates in this race were Hispanic. Ferraro, had decided to run in this district, because did

³⁴ McCurdy, "School Board Candidates Look to District Elections," *LAT*, Nov. 30 1978 & McCurdy, "Bardos Drops Out of School Board Race," *LAT*, Jan. 9 1979.

³⁵ McCurdy, "Teacher Group Denies Support to Ms. Rice," *LAT*, Feb. 2 1979; McCurdy, "Two in School Race Win Endorsements," *LAT*, Mar. 3 1979; Scott, "School Board Candidates' Views," *LAT*, Feb. 26 1979; & Ramos, "Candidates Assail School Board," *LAT*, Mar. 26 1979.



not wish to leave the board nor did he want to move from his longtime residence in Eagle Rock. His opponent, Rev. Vahac Mardirosian, however, was an honorary Hispanic, having been raised in Mexico and leading educational efforts in East Los Angeles. It was from this experience and a general dislike of Ferraro that Mardirosian received the support of the Congress for Effective Education, *The Times*, and UTLA.³⁶

The campaign before the primaries focused on the current situation in the district's schools. Mardirosian was critical of the district's failure in raising graduation rates and low reading scores among Hispanics. He did not support busing because he, along with an increasing number of Hispanic parents, was not convinced of its efficacy and felt that the burden was placed too heavily on minority shoulders. Ferraro, on the other hand, believed that the reintroduction of corporal punishment was the key to curbing violence in schools and was adamantly opposed to busing. For the third time since his election in 1969, Ferraro was forced into a run-off.³⁷

This was not however, the biggest school board news of April 1979. What was really newsworthy was the recall of Howard Miller. Orchestrated by Roberta Weintraub and others from the Proposition 13 campaign, Miller's recall was a ploy to get another anti-busing member on to the board. While Miller was unsuccessfully petitioning the courts to get his name on the recall ballot, Weintraub was spreading the falsehood that Miller had run as an anti-busing candidate then switched once he was elected. A fellow candidate and 1977 opponent of Miller, along with Miller's people, tried to set the record straight by reminding voters that Miller had sworn to uphold court orders and the court had order mandatory busing. The Committee to Recall Howard Miller, went

³⁶ Ramos, "East Side Activist Wins Backing for School Board," *LAT*, Jan. 7 1979; Editorial, "Four for the School Board," *LAT*, Mar. 25 1979; & McCurdy, "Two," *LAT*, Mar. 3 1979.

³⁷ Ramos, "East Side Activist," *LAT*, Jan. 7 1979; Ramos, "Profiles of Six East Side School Board Candidates," *LAT*, Mar. 5 1979; & Ramos, "Latino Representation: Key to School Race," *LAT*, Mar. 5 1979.

so far as to manipulate the voters pamphlet, which brought about a reprimand from the Editors of *The Times*.³⁸

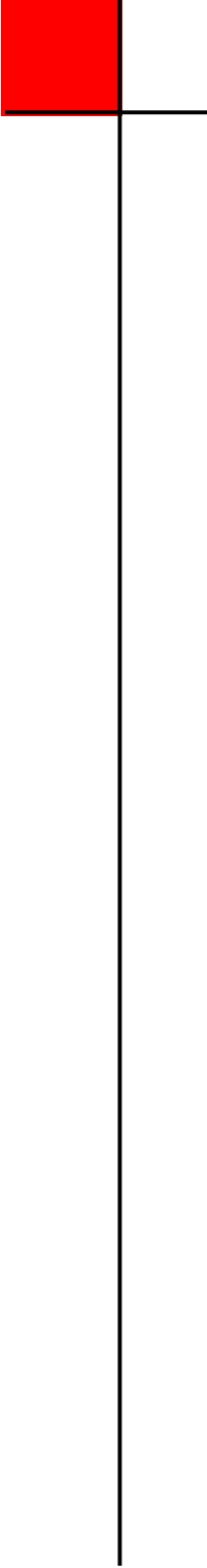
Unfortunately, the anti-busers were not the only ones to resort to questionable tactics in the 1979 general election. Ferraro launched an attack against Mardirosian, which not only elicited disapproval from *The Times*, no love lost there, but also from the school board itself. Ferraro printed a pamphlet that accused both Mardirosian and Nava of hiring school administrators, whose only qualifications were their Hispanic surnames. The board immediately disavowed the statement 6 to 1 and reprimanded him for not retracting the statement. A few days later he was in the spotlight again for claiming the support of Councilman Snyder, who had wisely declined to support either Ferraro or Mardirosian. It seemed that Ferraro was losing the race especially in light of Mardirosian's endorsements from Mayor Bradley, major labor unions and UTLA.³⁹

As Election Day dawned, it seemed very likely that the majority of school board members would be opposed to mandatory busing, but it was not clear who those board members would be. Miller, whose recall had been citywide, lost his seat by 57.8% and was replaced by Roberta Weintraub. It seemed that her insistence that the recall was about forced busing rang true with voters. Another victory that was much to the chagrin of *The Times* and UTLA was in District 5. Ferraro once again slipped the noose and was elected to the seat in East Los Angeles. To balance out these two victories, moderate-liberal Greenwood was elected to District 7. The composition of the board after this election was tied 3-3 with Ferraro's at-large seat vacant.⁴⁰

³⁸ Luther, "Miller Sues for School Board Ballot Spot," *LAT*, Apr. 3 1979; McCurdy & Scott, "Victories of 2 Backers May Assist Miller," *LAT*, Apr. 5 1979; Blake, "Judge Rejects Miller Bid for Spot on Ballot," *LAT*, Apr. 7 1979; McCurdy, "Miller Says Ouster Would Not Stop Forced Transfers," *LAT*, May 27 1979; & Editorial, "For Schools, for Community," *LAT*, May 23 1979.

³⁹ Scott, "Ferraro Stands By Charge Leading to Censure Move," *LAT*, May 23 1979; Scott, "Ferraro Slips Into Another Controversy," *LAT*, May 26 1979; & McCurdy, "Did Miller Betray the Voters on Busing?" *LAT*, May 27 1979.

⁴⁰ Scott, "Outcome Sure to Leave Antibusing Majority on Board," *LAT*, May 27 1979.



The 1970s'school board elections saw the rise of both liberals and conservatives and the break down of traditional Progressive reforms. Instead of campaigns based on qualifications, the races in the 70s were increasingly politicized and polarized. There was a marked decrease in the interest of voters in general, which opened the way for political interest groups to hold a greater sway over the board members. This in turn led to the retirement or defeat of members elected in the 1960s who had previously acted independent of interest group support. The election of a one-issue candidate, Fiedler, led to the dismantling of the Progressive citywide elections. Politicians and civic leaders who understood that in order to combat the greater electoral power of anti-busing whites, minority representation would have to be almost guaranteed led this effort. By the end of the 1970s, the district had been sectioned off and claimed by various factions and was therefore truly representative of the struggles that had been playing out on the ground in the district since the early 1960s.

1980s School Board Elections Analysis

School board politics had changed drastically between 1960 and 1979. Members were no longer solely elected based upon their views on education and how the district should be run or on their qualifications. Political views slowly began to dominate the election races. Various interest groups joined the fray over who controlled the school board, most notably African-Americans, anti-busers, and unions. What began as a board with officials elected at large, who would control the policies of the school district and promote the welfare of all students was transformed into a group of politicians, elected from districts that were created with certain groups in mind, who were committed to represent the interests of their constituents and not necessarily the students'. While this may seem as if the creation of districts itself destroyed the Progressive system of professional management, in reality this act stripped away the façade of impartiality and apolitical representation that for years had hidden the slow destruction of the system. What was left in its place was an admittedly sullied and perhaps ideologically flawed institution, but it was a truer interpretation of what had been going on for years. By

institutionalizing the mechanisms that had already been in existence, school board politics became more transparent and open to more than just one interest group (traditionally middle-class whites).

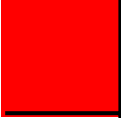
The change both reflected the already existing changes that had taken place in school board politics and opened the way for more radical alterations in the next decade. The transformation that occurred in the composition of the school board and its politics began in the fall of 1979 with the election of a replacement board member for Richard Ferraro. Ferraro had successfully run for the new East Los Angeles district leaving his at-large seat vacant. The school board spent countless hours bickering over whom they would appoint to fill the empty seat. At stake was the ideological control of the board, which was split 3-3 between liberals-moderates, who were willing to work with the court, and conservatives, who were adamantly against mandatory busing for integration.⁴¹

This deadlock prompted the City Council to devise a solution that was independent of the school board. In August, after the board's 124th vote was unsuccessful, the City Council agreed to hold a special election in November for the vacant seat. Liberal members of the council along with some minority organizations opposed the election, but in the end it was agreed that the special election was necessary. The three conservative members were in favor of the election, which would be at-large and therefore in their favor. This election was estimated to cost roughly \$100,000 and would be paid by the school board. Although there were objections to the expense, most observers realized that the board was not going to come to a decision.⁴²

The candidates represented the dominant interest group and the most struggling interest group in school board politics. Tom Bartman was a republican lawyer who had worked for Bustop and was therefore strongly aligned with the anti-busing movement. While Bartman had the support of his everyone in his movement, the other groups were not as solidly aligned. There were

⁴¹ Roderick, "School Election Gets Tentative OK by Council," *LAT*, Aug. 16 1979.

⁴² *Ibid.* & Bernstein & Roderick, "Council, Bradley Approve Special School Election," *LAT*, Aug. 23 1979.



difficulties in the liberal camp that would play out through the rest of the decade and even into the 1990s. Yet there was a general consensus that a Hispanic was needed on the board. The Hispanic constituency did not vote in significant numbers, nor were they a coherent voting block. So it proved to be difficult to rally around one candidate before the election. There was also a sense that liberals were firm supporters of the black community at the political expense of Hispanics. Due to these circumstances there was not one single “liberal” candidate.⁴³

By October, most liberals had rallied around Boyle Heights resident Albert Juarez. Juarez had gained the support of Mayor Tom Bradley, the AFL, and liberal board members Kathleen Brown Rice, Rita Walters and John Greenwood. Juarez was able to get this support by attempting to make the election into something other than a debate over busing. Juarez, like most Hispanics, was not a resolute pro-buser. He in fact supported voluntary segregation plans, not mandatory and felt that the state bilingual education program and a return to basics in education were more important issues. His greatest coup in the election was the endorsement from *The Times* editors. With this, he gained more recognition than the other Hispanic contenders and was labeled a safe vote.⁴⁴

As the election drew closer, Juarez garnered more endorsement from liberal Hispanic and Jewish lawmakers and community leaders, bolstering his showing at the polls. Not only was Juarez able to turn this support into a victory over the other Hispanic candidates, but he also forced Bartman into a runoff. His chances for victory in February were not too rosy considering that Bartman received 46% of the vote in November and Juarez only received 15%. It was hoped by his supporters that the February election would see the consolidation of the liberal voters behind Juarez.⁴⁵

⁴³ Roderick, “23 Candidates to Seek School Board Set,” *LAT*, Sept. 1 1979 & Reich, “Hispanics Seek to Remedy Their Political Weakness.” *LAT*, Sept. 4 1979.

⁴⁴ Roderick, “Latin Endorsed for School Board,” *LAT*, Oct. 11 1979; Roderick, “Political Control of Board of Education at Stake; 23 Candidates Vie for Vacancy,” *LAT*, Oct. 21 1979; & Editorial, “Juarez for the School Board,” *LAT*, Oct. 21 1979.

⁴⁵ Roderick, “School Races Suddenly Livened,” *LAT*, Nov. 4 1979 & Boyarsky, “Bartman to Face Juarez in School Runoff,” *LAT*, Nov. 7 1979.

There was one other development that could be seen as being in Juarez's favor. While Bartman had run on an anti-busing ticket, it was believed that the issue after the November election would be dead in the water. The voters of California passed Proposition 1, which would align California's equal protection laws with the 14th Amendment and would no longer require mandatory busing for cases of *de facto* segregation. Already anti-busing lawyer were preparing their arguments against the *Crawford* decision based on this constitutional amendment. School board politics and district policy had been dramatically changed overnight.⁴⁶

As with the primary election, the usual suspects lined up behind the same candidates. With the additional support from UTLA, which had lost two elections the previous spring, Juarez remained the liberal favorite. Bartman also kept all the same supporters, but instead of seeing busing as a dead issue, he and his supporters saw the recent electoral victory as a mandate to fight even harder. This meant that issues such as the looming budget cuts, overcrowding, and bilingual education were resolutely ignored by his campaign. The issue was busing, not the school system.⁴⁷

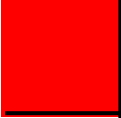
This proved to be a sound strategy and Bartman won the office which gave conservatives control of the board for the first time in five years. In all, the elections were estimated to have cost \$800,000 and in the end did not change board policy. Judge Egly was ostensibly in control over school integration policies, not the board and Proposition 1 had changed the playing field anyway. Instead, 15% of the electorate had chosen a politician whose stance on wide educational issues was relatively unknown. Fortunately, the end of busing and the creation of districts would facilitate the end of one-issue candidates that had been so prominent in the late 1970s.⁴⁸

Tom Bartman was not the only replacement on the school board in 1980. Kathleen Brown Rice married a local television executive on

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Roderick, "First Blows Struck in Bartman-Juarez Runoff Race," *LAT*, Nov. 8 1979; Editorial, "Alberto Juarez for the School Board," *LAT*, Jan. 27 1980; & Roderick, "Control of School Rests on Tuesday Election," *LAT*, Feb. 4 1980.

⁴⁸ Ibid. & Roderick, "Bartman Easily Defeats Juarez in School Race," *LAT*, Feb. 6 1980.



July 31st. Soon there was both good news and bad news for the couple. Brown's husband was promoted to the head of CBS Sports, but the position was in New York. This led to speculation that Brown would move to New York and resign from the board. She confirmed these reports in late August, giving her two weeks notice to the board and the public. She was concerned about who the board would choose as her replacement, but neither she nor the liberal minority would have much say in the matter.⁴⁹

Unlike the board's struggle to fill a vacancy the year before, the 1980 appointment went rather smoothly owing to the 4-2 conservative majority. Walters made repeated attempts to impose some sort of timeline on the appointment, but each time she was refused. Instead, Bartman's timetable was followed which required applications for the post to be filed by October 21st, a public meeting on November 17th, and a board vote on November 24th. The field was narrowed down to ten and on November 26th the board named Silver Lake area businessman Anthony A. Trias to the District 3 seat. The vote was 4-0 with Walters and Greenwood abstaining in favor of a vote to fill the vacancy in the spring elections. Their wishes were not heeded and the conservative strengthened their grip on the school board with a 5-2 majority and an anti-busing supporter in a liberal district.⁵⁰

The next election was the first district elections for three seats; the East San Fernando Valley, the West San Fernando Valley, and West Los Angeles. The shuffling here gets a little complicated, but it was very cordial. Bartman's seat was up for election, but had become the East San Fernando Valley district. He lived in the West San Fernando Valley district which Fiedler had vacated after she was elected to Congress the previous fall. This allowed him to run for that office, thus freeing up the East San Fernando Valley district where Roberta Weintraub lived and from which she was more likely to win than the West Los Angeles district her seat had been assigned to. This ensured that two anti-busers would run

⁴⁹ Roderick, "Will Move to N.Y., Kathleen Brown Reports," *LAT*, July 22 1980 & Ginott, "Kathleen Brown to Quit School Board in 2 Weeks," *LAT*, Aug. 26 1980.

⁵⁰ Ginott, "School Board Votes to Fill Brown's Seat," *LAT*, Oct. 7 1980; Staff, "Candidates for School Board Narrowed to 10," *LAT*, Nov. 11 1980; Roderick, "District 3: Microcosm of Big-City U.S.," *LAT*, Nov. 18 1980; & Roderick, "Conservatives Name Trias, Foe of Busing, to L.A. School Board," *LAT*, Nov. 25 1980.

from the anti-busing stronghold of the San Fernando Valley, but left a liberal seat open in West Los Angeles.


Weintraub received token resistance to her candidacy, as did Bartman. The issues that faced Weintraub were especially discouraging, but she was able to overcome an accusation of forgery and a changed position on closing Valley schools. The opposition from UTLA and *The Times* editors was also a strike against Weintraub and Bartman, but they managed to carry the anti-busing crusaders with them to the polls. The ending of mandatory busing in April was not a reason to drop these two members, but to reward them for their dedication to the cause.⁵¹

The results of the April primary were a mixed bag for the liberals and conservatives alike. While anti-busing candidates easily won the San Fernando seats, the victories were not unexpected. They insured that conservatives retained control of the board, which in those terms made the election in the West Los Angeles district irrelevant. The race was inconsequential because the conservatives could not gain greater control through that seat, nor would the liberals lose more control. This is because the contest was between a number of liberals with no real strong conservative candidate. The primary served to narrow down the two liberals that would run against each other in the general election.⁵²

As might be expected these two candidates had somewhat similar political positions. Alan Gershman, General Telephone official, was seen to have a better political background, which won him the support of *The Times*. Before the primaries UTLA had chosen to support him and the candidate who would soon be his opponent, PTA president Patricia MacNeil. This support for both candidates continued through to the general election. Neither candidate attracted a lot of attention or money and the race was relatively tame compared to recent contests. Mostly they spent their

⁵¹ Roderick, "182 Plan to Run in City, School Races," *LAT*, Jan. 20 1981; Roderick, "Weintraub Supports Closing 10-15 Schools," *LAT*, Mar. 8 1981; Roderick, "Weintraub Foes Criticize Transfers," *LAT*, Mar. 26 1981; Editorial, "3 for the School Board," *LAT*, Apr. 5 1981; & Roderick, "Weintraub Working for Votes, Recognition as Political Figure," *LAT*, Apr. 5 1981.

⁵² Roderick, "Election Leaves School Board Firmly in Hands of Conservatives," *LAT*, Apr. 16 1981.



campaigns maligning the school board and proposing solutions to problems that had been ignored during the fight over mandatory busing. In the end, Gershman's politics won over MacNeil's 52% to 48%.⁵³

The 1983 election was the turning point for school board politics. The campaigns of the two conservative incumbents, Ferraro and Trias, were the anti-busers last gasps. The issues of teacher unionism and the wishes of UTLA would soon eclipse the old stand-by. Again, this did not happen over night, but it is easy to see in this election the power of UTLA and the diminishing significance of anti-busing as an issue to rally around.

The two conservative candidates tried repeatedly to paint their opponents as pro-busers. In Trias case, this did not prove difficult. His leading opponent, Jackie Goldberg, was a local teacher who had been a leader in the Integration Project. Goldberg defended her position by standing by her belief that the district was segregated, that she would encourage parents to participate in voluntary programs, and that she would "support the evidence whatever way it comes out" even mandatory busing. She got a break when Trias was named in a lawsuit. He was quickly cleared of any responsibility, but the publicity could not have come at a worse time for him. The results of the primary showed that the voters were not pleased with Trias. Not only did Goldberg force him into a runoff, he actually finished second with 24% of the vote to Goldberg's 38%.⁵⁴

In District 5, Ferraro had a tough time with his leading opponent. For years *The Times* had opposed Ferraro's reelection with no luck, but by 1983 the momentum against Ferraro had come to a turning point. Ferraro had accused United Neighborhoods

⁵³ Editorial, "3." *LAT*, Apr. 5 1981; Roderick, "2 Leading Members of Board Accused of Bungling Jobs," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1981; Baker, "2 Liberals Battle for School Board Seat," *LAT*, May 20 1981; Editorial, "Two for Education Posts," *LAT*, May 21 1981; Baker, "2 Vie for L.A. School Board Position Vacated by Fiedler," *LAT*, May 31 1981; & Faris & Roderick, "Political Impact of School Voting Results Seen," *LAT*, June 4 1981.

⁵⁴ Roderick, "Busing, Union Loom as Issues in School Races," *LAT*, Apr. 8 1983; Roderick, "Trias Denies School Board Endorsements," *LAT*, Apr. 9 1983; Roderick, "Ferraro, Trias Face Runoff Vote for School Board Seats," *LAT*, Apr. 13 1983; & Roderick, "2 Political Newcomers Jolt L.A. School Board Picture," *LAT*, Apr. 14 1983.

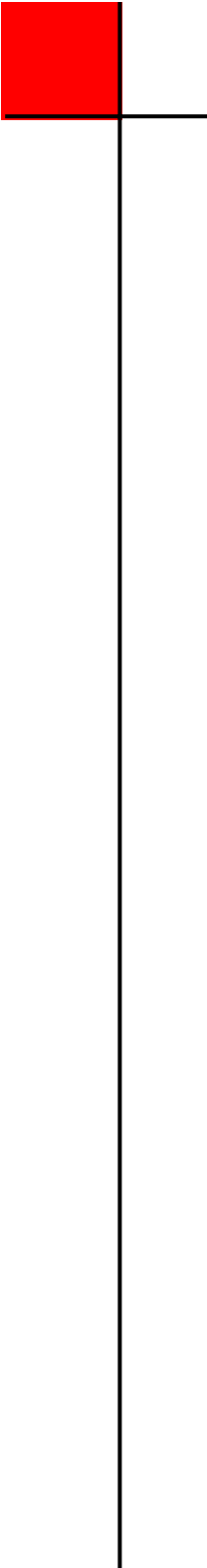
Organization of being radical and refused to meet with them. He also upset other Hispanic leaders by claiming to be Latino due to his Italian heritage. The surprising blow to Ferraro was from his fellow conservative board members who were fed up with his “abrasive, unstudied style.” While four years earlier his opposition was neither local nor Hispanic, he was not so lucky in 1983. Ferraro’s opponent, Larry Gonzalez, was a staffer for Sen. Art Torres and had volunteered and held various jobs in LAUSD. A graduate from an East Side high school, Gonzalez was the local boy in the District 5 election. The endorsements of Mayor Tom Bradley, Superintendent William Anton, and funding from UTLA also helped Gonzalez to force Ferraro into a runoff.⁵⁵

The primaries were a great success for the liberal forces in school board politics and for UTLA. Rita Walters and John Greenwood were reelected with the minimum of fuss. Both of these incumbents had the backing of *The Times* and UTLA. At stake for UTLA was the question over agency fees, which they nominally supported. Both Gonzalez and Goldberg supported the unions desire to hold an agency shop election to decide the matter. In both cases the candidates received significant support from the union. So much so that they were able to “outspend and out-campaign” the incumbents. While Goldberg was clearly dominant in the District 3 election, Gonzalez had a small snag in District 5. Another Hispanic opponent, Raul Ruiz a California State University, Northridge professor, was able to split the anti-Ferraro vote and prevent Gonzalez was winning outright. This would not be the case in the general election.⁵⁶

The campaigns leading up to the general election in late May were not swan songs because neither conservative candidate had the grace or the insight to realize their imminent defeat. Both candidates were clearly outclassed. Trias bumbled along, hoping that Goldberg’s radical ties would hang her in the end. Ferraro continued to harp on Gonzalez’s lack of qualifications, (he had not

⁵⁵ Roderick, “Ferraro Faces Toughest Election Fight,” *LAT*, Apr. 7 1983; Roderick, “Busing, Union,” *LAT*, Apr. 8 1983; & Roderick, “Ferraro, Trias,” *LAT*, Apr. 13 1983.

⁵⁶ Roderick, “Ferraro, Trias,” *LAT*, Apr. 13 1983; Editorial. “2 Incumbents Face Stiff Fights in L.A. School Board Contests.” *LAT*, Apr. 10 1983; Gonzalez was still able to poll higher than Ferraro, 41% to 36%, Roderick, “2 Political Newcomers,” *LAT*, Apr. 14 1983; & Roderick, “Busing, Union,” *LAT*, Apr. 8 1983.



gone to college) and kept accusing him of being state Senator Torres' puppet. These two tactics seem very inept in a district where there was low rates of college attendance and a great deal of support for Torres. While Trias may have gained some support for his portrayal of Goldberg as a radical, Ferraro most likely alienated voters with his insinuations of Gonzalez's ignorance due to a lack of a degree.⁵⁷

The general election went as expected and the board gained two more liberal members giving them a 5-2 majority. The issues in this election definitely focused on the needs of the students, low test scores, high dropout rates, and overcrowding. While Trias and Ferraro had desperately attempted to make the issue about mandatory busing, a tactic that had worked two years earlier for Bartman and Weintraub, the East Los Angeles and Hollywood-Wilshire voters were having none of it. Goldberg and Gonzalez both garnered close to two-thirds of the vote in their districts showing a clear mandate. The voters in the Hollywood-Wilshire area overwhelmingly rejected the official that conservatives had appointed three years earlier. Gonzalez said, "It goes to show that the community asked for change." This change was feasible because of the 1978 City Charter amendment creating the separate districts for board members. Observers agreed that the system had worked to bring and retain diversity to the board.⁵⁸

The 1985 elections started with a surprising announcement. Tom Bartman, despite his favorable reputation as a dedicated and effective board member, decided not to run for re-election in the spring. His decision may have been based on the strength of two candidates for his District 4 seat; both of whom could out flank him on the right. One, David Armor, was a RAND policy analyst and the other, Carrie Vacar, was the chairman of a powerful community group, VOICE (Valley Organized for Improved Childhood Education). He may also have based his decision on the

⁵⁷ Roderick, "2 Political Newcomers," *LAT*, Apr. 14 1983.

⁵⁸ Editorial, "School Board: Forces for Change," *LAT*, May 23 1983; Roderick, "School Race Unites Old Adversaries," *LAT*, May 22 1983; Roderick, "Slumbering Issue of Busing Revived as School Board Race Centerpiece," *LAT*, June 2 1983; Roderick, "Liberals Win Control of L.A. Board of Education," *LAT*, June 8 1983; Roderick, "Latinos Finally Gain a Voice on Board," *LAT*, June 9 1983; & Faris, "Backers of Ferraro Wary of the Future," *LAT*, June 9 1983.


difficulties facing the district with its growing number of limited English speakers and the reported 60 to 70 hour weeks that he was working to keep up with these problems. Whatever his reasons, Bartman left a race open which would help to redefine school board politics without busing.⁵⁹

The West Valley was not the only portion of San Fernando that was experiencing demographic change. In the six years since Weintraub had been elected the East Valley had been transformed into the Valley's "most ethnically diverse region." This did not bode well for Weintraub's conservative politics, but she did have a few redeeming qualities. For one thing, the NAACP had refilled the desegregation case in federal courts and was threatening to bring busing back to LAUSD. Busing was guaranteed to bring white voters to Weintraub's side and it was traditionally a non-starter for Hispanics. Weintraub could also count on monetary support from many sources, which hinged upon her securing of equal promotional opportunities for women in administration and her support of the rights of homosexual teachers.⁶⁰

The primaries went according to *The Times* predictions. The two incumbents, Weintraub and Gershman, "won easy victories against relatively unknown challengers," reflecting the public's general approval of the school system. While the open race in District 4 came down to a runoff between conservative David Armor and Chatsworth High teacher, Elizabeth Ginsburg. Armor had opposed school closings and mandatory reassignments, proposed adequately training staff who dealt with limited English students, and tougher expulsion guidelines for violent students. As for Ginsburg, the need to reduce class-size, improve deteriorating conditions at schools, and reduce counselors' caseloads were her

⁵⁹ Moreland, "Bartman Won't Seek Another Term on Board of Education," *LAT*, Jan. 8 1985 & Moreland, "West Valley Seat Up for Grabs." *LAT*, Jan. 9 1985.

⁶⁰ Moreland, "West Valley Seat." *LAT*, Jan. 9 1985; Moreland, "Latino Group Endorses Longoria in School Race," *LAT*, Feb. 20 1985; & Moreland, "'The Only Thing That She's Changed Is Her Hair Color.'"--a community volunteer, Weintraub, Old and New: Conservative Image Blurs," *LAT*, Apr. 5 1985, Weintraub gained support from a gay rights activist group, MECLA, which usually endorsed liberals.



main campaign points. With the backing of UTLA she was able to secure a spot in the runoff.⁶¹

The campaign for the general election had a dismal start. The outlook for voter turnout was grim. The school board had effectively neutralized the conflict over school closures by placing a moratorium on the practice and the NAACP case was getting nowhere in federal court. While the general public was apathetic to the outcome, several public figures and groups showed interest in the two candidates. Aside from UTLA's endorsement and financial support, Ginsburg was able to secure the "help from members of the San Fernando Nuclear Freeze Committee" and MECLA (Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles). Armor had the support of Representative Bobbi Fiedler (R-Northridge), L.A. City Councilman Hal Bernson, various district administrators, and board members Tom Bartman and Roberta Weintraub. As for local groups, Armor gained the endorsements of the Professional Educators of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Unified School District Police Officers Association, Union Oil Co., and California Plant Protection Inc. Even with the backing of UTLA, Ginsburg was outgunned.⁶²

The week before the election, Ginsburg received further influential backing but it proved ineffective. *The Times* editors endorsed Ginsburg as a candidate with "far greater experience" and "vision," which Armor lacked. This did not sway voters and Armor was elected 53.4% to 46.6% with only 19% of the electorate voting. The key to the campaign had not been issues, but money. Armor was able to raise \$70,000 to Ginsburg's \$28,000, although this was supplemented by teacher volunteers. The lesson to UTLA

⁶¹ Moreland, "School Board, College Trustee Vacancies Stir Lukewarm Voter, Candidate Interest," *LAT*, Apr. 7 1985; Savage, "On College District Incumbent Escapes Runoff; Other Close," *LAT*, April 10 1985; Moreland, "Armor Denounces Past Policies on Campus Closures," *LAT*, Feb. 14 1985; Moreland, "West Valley Seat," *LAT*, Jan. 9 1985; & Moreland, "West Valley School Race Is a Low-Key Affair," *LAT*, Apr. 2 1985.

⁶² Moreland, "West Valley School," *LAT*, Apr. 2 1985; Moreland, "School Runoff Foes Must Work to Lure Voters to Polls," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1985; & Moreland, "Ideological Contest: Campaign Gifts Point Up Split in School Race," *LAT*, May 29 1985.

was loud and clear. In order to get candidates elected, you had to have money.⁶³

The news story about Armor's victory included this blurb:

Just a few hours after winning election to the Los Angeles school board, David Armor on Wednesday boarded a plane to North Carolina, where he will testify against a mandatory busing plan.

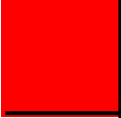
This behavior should have been a tip off as to Armor's commitment to his newly acquired post. By April of the next year, barely 10 months after taking office, Armor resigned his post to take a job with the Defense Department. While a request to serve as a top deputy to the assistant secretary for force management and personnel is understandably difficult to turn down, his district would be unrepresented until the board found a replacement. Luckily, Bartman was available and the board voted unanimously to appoint him to the seat until a replacement could be elected in 1987. Quite a different tact then had been taken in 1980 with Brown's departure, but perhaps the board saw the folly in appointing someone to fill the seat for the three full years when an election was just a year away.⁶⁴

The next election in 1987 would proved to be an interesting one due to the sheer number of seats up. With Armor's vacated seat up for grabs, Bartman had been appointed on the condition that he would not run, there were five seats up for election. Larry Gonzalez of District 5 had decided to run for Los Angeles City Council, thus leaving two seats without incumbents. Tony Trias decided to go on a fool's quest and tried to retake the District 3 seat he had lost in 1983, but the real fight was between UTLA and the two incumbents who had displeased the union.⁶⁵

⁶³ Editorial, "Ginsburg for the School Board," *LAT*, May 27 1985 & Moreland, "School Board Victor Rejoins Battle on Busing," *LAT*, June 6 1985.

⁶⁴ Moreland, "School Board Victor," *LAT*, June 6 1985; Savage, "Armor Resigns Trustee Post for Job With Defense Dept.," *LAT*, Apr. 8 1986; Moreland, "3 Already in Running to Fill Armor School Post," *LAT*, Apr. 9 1986; Staff, "The Region," *LAT*, May 7 1986; & Moreland, "Board Fills Seat, Alters Ethnic Ration in 28 Schools," *LAT*, May 20 1986.

⁶⁵ Woo, "Stage Set for Lively Races for Council, School Panels," *LAT*, Jan. 18 1987 & Moreland, "5 Spirited School Board Races Shaping Up," *LAT*, Mar. 16 1987.



The union was able to set up two viable candidates in District 1 and District 7, against Walters and Greenwood. While Goldberg also had earned the union's ire over her stance on union dues for non-union members and unresolved contract issues, they left her and her district alone. Walters' opponent, Mark Ridley-Thomas, was well financed and well known in the district, but he really stood no chance against an incumbent who had won reelection four years earlier with 91% of the vote. Greenwood's race was quite a different story. While Greenwood was able to outspend his opponent, Warren Furutani, he could not get any traction with the voters. Unfortunately for Greenwood, his accusations of radicalism and inexperience held no sway, but voters remembered his support of placing local campuses to year-round schedules and busing students away from local, crowded schools. Although a runoff would have been expected, Furutani actually beat Greenwood outright in the primary becoming the first Asian American *elected* to the school board.⁶⁶

As for the two seats without incumbents, one was relatively quiet and the other much contested. District 5, East Los Angeles, was a contest between two Hispanics, one conservative and the other liberal. Raul Ruiz was no stranger to school board elections and had most likely expected to be able to win the seat. His challenger, Leticia Quezada was able to pick up more support and won in the primaries. In the West San Fernando Valley, the fight was between a liberal education coordinator for Chatsworth High, Julie Korenstein, and a number of conservative candidates. After the primaries the field was narrowed down to Korenstein and conservative accountant, Barbara Romey. While Korenstein had done well, the conservative voting history of the area was against her.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ramos, "Teachers' Union Flex Muscles in School and College Board Elections," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1987; Ramos, "L.A. School Board's Walters, Goldberg Lead Pack in Vote," *LAT*, Apr. 15 1987; Ramos, "Greenwood Ousted From School Board; Walters Easy Victor," *LAT*, Apr. 15 1987; Williams, "Greenwood Challenges Furutani's Background," *LAT*, Apr. 9 1987; & Ramos, "Teachers Union Comes Out 1-1 in School Board Election," *LAT*, Apr. 16 1987.

⁶⁷ Moreland, "5 Spirited School Board Races Shaping Up," *LAT*, Mar. 16 1987; Ramos, "L.A. School Board's," *LAT*, Apr. 15 1987; Moreland, "7 Candidates Vie for Seat in L.A. School Board Race," *LAT*, Feb. 24 1987; & Ramos, "Teachers' Union Flex," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1987.

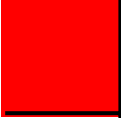
The dominant theme of all of these races was UTLA involvement. While, the union could not get rid of incumbents like Walters and Goldberg who had strong support from their constituency, Walters knew that the union, not Ridley-Thomas was “my real opponent.” What was seen as a “test of political clout” proved ambiguous but threatening. The union was not able to determine all the races, but they were able to greatly influence two of the three they decided to be involved in. While Francis Haywood, a UTLA vice president tried to deny that the union was “trying to take over” the school board, it is clear that Furutani owed his election to UTLA and that Korenstein’s liberal politics worked with the help of union money.⁶⁸

The election of Korenstein in June only further confirmed the strength of UTLA. She and Romey were in agreement over the need for a double-digit salary increase for teachers, they both opposed year-round calendars and proposed opening previously closed schools. Their major differences stemmed from their supporters and their individual experience. As one reporter put it “Romey’s backers look like a Who’s Who of Valley conservatives.” She had the support of Assemblywomen Cathie Wright (R-Simi Valley) and Marian W. La Follette (R-Northridge), state Senator Alan Robbins, Los Angeles City Councilman Hal Bernson, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich, Bobbi Fiedler and Weintraub. These endorsements had won the Valley in the past and were expecting to win it again.⁶⁹

One the other end of the spectrum Korenstein had the support of U.S. Representatives Anthony C. Beilenson (D-Los Angeles) and Howard L. Berman, (D-Panorama City), state Senators Gary K. Hart (D-Santa Barbara) and Herschel Rosenthal (D- Los Angeles), Assemblyman Terry B. Friedman (D- Tarzana), Los Angeles County Supervisor Ed Edelman, UTLA and *The Times*, who called her “understanding of the importance and the imperfections of bilingual education” an asset. This sentiment was reflected in the voting and Korenstein soundly beat Romey with 58% of the vote.

⁶⁸ Ramos, “Greenwood Ousted,” *LAT*, Apr. 15 1987; Clifford, “Low Turnout Marks Voting for Council, School Posts,” *LAT*, Apr. 15 1987; Ramos, “Teachers Union,” *LAT*, Apr. 16 1987.

⁶⁹ Ramos, “Council Race Heats Up; School Candidates Battle Apathy,” *LAT*, May 26 1987 & Moreland, “School Board Race: Busing Foes Ride Again for Romey,” *LAT*, May 16 1987.



Becoming the first liberal Valley representative in almost 10 years and the first liberal elected from the Valley to the school board, Korenstein attributed her success to “precise targeting of a select group of voters and a backlash to negative campaign tactics of her foe.” However Wayne Johnson, UTLA president took some credit for the victory. Bolstered by this and previous victories, Johnson also warned that Korenstein was expected to be “‘amicable’ to union requests and concerns on educational issues. ‘If she isn’t,’ Johnson added, ‘we’ll try to do to her what we did to John Greenwood.’” With this in mind, board members tried to reach a contract settlement with the union.⁷⁰

In 1989, relations between the union and the board were again strained. A contract had still not been approved for the current school year and the union was gunning for Gershman. A measure that ran counter to the union’s dominant involvement in the 1987 board races had recently passed. Proposition 73 was a bill sponsored by a republican, an independent, and a democrat, but opposed by the majority in the Assembly and Senate. The bill was popular with the electorate after the 1988 bribing scandal that involved state Senator Alan Robbins and an insurance lobbyist. After the bill passed it placed limits on contributions to candidates from individuals and groups. It also placed restrictions on the amount of money a politician could hold in their campaign funds from one year to the next. These new restrictions would prove difficult for school board candidates, but not impossible to maneuver around.⁷¹

UTLA supported two candidates in the primary elections. They had decided not to oppose the reelection of Weintraub in the West

⁷⁰ Ramos, “Council Race,” *LAT*, May 26 1987; Moreland, “School Board Race,” *LAT*, May 16 1987; Moreland, “Gloves Come Off in Last Round of Bitter School Board Race,” *LAT*, May 31 1987; Editorial, “Korenstein for School Board,” *LAT*, May 27 1987; Moreland, “Korenstein Victory Tied to Targeting of Voters,” *LAT*, June 4 1987; & Ramos, “Teacher Unions Take Credit for Election Results,” *LAT*, June 4 1987.

⁷¹ Paddock, “State Leaders Unite Against Reform Plan.” *LAT*, Apr. 16 1988; Gladstone, “Reformer Criticized by Sponser of Rival Measure,” *LAT*, May 1 1988; Staff, “California Elections: Statewide Propositions on Tuesday’s Ballot,” *LAT*, June 5 1988; Harris, “Hearing Set on Campaign Spending Restrictions,” *LAT*, December 30 1988; & Enriquez, “Incumbent’s Race for School Board Includes Plenty of Brickbats to Dodge: Korenstein Runs a Gantlet of Criticism,” *LAT*, Jan. 4 1989.


Valley, instead concentrating their efforts on fighting Korenstein's detractors and getting rid of Gershman. Korenstein had faced picketers at her home the previous summer and an attempted recall in September. She told reporters that she was not worried because the opposition had not been able to collect enough signatures for a recall. She also knew that UTLA's support was what counted. Her statement that "To run for the board and not have support of teachers, you don't have a chance in hell of winning" was succinct and true for her district. Gershman's resistance to UTLA's demands for a large raise had singled him out for defeat. The question was how to get around new campaign restrictions and who to run against him.⁷²

UTLA gave both candidates the maximum \$5,000 contribution and then successfully urged its members to make individual contributions to the candidates. Opposing UTLA and supporting Gershman and Korenstein's main challenger, Gerald Horowitz, was the school district administrators and central office managers. Horowitz was also supported by the "Valley's old anti-busing political coalition," which Korenstein had defeated two years earlier. Their main complaints against her was her support of a district counseling program for gay and lesbian students, campus health clinics, and the district's bilingual education plan. For her part, Korenstein stated that she supported raising district salary offers, was critical of the centralized top-heavy administration, and would resist efforts to bus students to the West Valley from overcrowded (read inner-city) schools. Korenstein's campaign was affective in at least one respect. Due in no small part to UTLA's efforts, she was able to raise \$74,584 or three times as much as her nearest contender. Unfortunately for her, she was unable to avoid a runoff with Horowitz, but only by .08% of the vote plus 1.⁷³

An equally discouraging outcome had resulted for another incumbent. While Weintraub "narrowly escaped a runoff" to win

⁷² Connell, "Gershman Tops Foes in Fund Raising for School Board Race," *LAT*, Apr. 1 1989; Enriquez, "Incumbent's Race," *LAT*, Jan. 4 1989; Connell, "Teachers Union Marks Gershman for Board Defeat," *LAT*, Feb. 10 1989

⁷³ Connell, "Gershman Tops," *LAT*, Apr. 1 1989; Connell, "L.A. Schools Election: It's a Three-Way Tug of War," *LAT*, Mar. 21 1989; Enriquez, "District Is Flunking, Say School Board Challengers," *LAT*, Apr. 2 1989; Connell, "Gershman Tops," *LAT*, Apr. 1 1989; & Enriquez, "Razor-Thin Split Forces Runoff in School Board Vote," *LAT*, Apr. 21 1989.



reelection and Korenstein scarcely did not, Gershman was not so lucky. Gershman's challenger, Mark Slavkin, was a deputy to Westside Los Angeles County Supervisor Ed Edelman. He was endorsed by U.S. Senator John Tunney, Representative Anthony C. Beilenson (D-Los Angeles), and UCLA Chancellor Charles Young. Slavkin criticized Gershman for maintaining the status quo and he promised to increase the pay and the power of teachers. Gershman stuck to his guns and kept insisting that the pay increases would necessitate deep cuts in other indispensable services, including instructional support.⁷⁴

While Korenstein's campaign rhetoric eventually proved successful, Gershman's did not. Korenstein and Slavkin were both able to raise large sums of money by soliciting small donations from UTLA members and those members also walked the precincts and worked phone banks for them. Days before the election Korenstein received support from some teachers and administrators who had worked under Horowitz and condemned his leadership style. No such group came forward for Gershman. The biggest problem with his strategy was that he was unable to carry it out. Like Korenstein, he was devoted to the settlement of the Teachers' Strike and subsequent negotiations. While Korenstein's opponent was an administrator and was also hampered by the strike, Slavkin was not. Coupled with low voter turnout and high teacher activism, Korenstein and Slavkin won easily.⁷⁵

The consequence of these races was contrary to Wayne Johnson's statements earlier in the campaign. While he had attested before the primaries that UTLA merely wanted access to board members and denied trying to control them, the message the union sent was clear. Walters had recognized it in 1987, Greenwood was the first casualty, and Korenstein openly

⁷⁴ Connell, "2 School Board Members Look Like Winners," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1989; Connell, "L.A. Schools Election," *LAT*, Mar. 21 1989; & Connell, "Teachers Union Marks," *LAT*, Feb. 10 1989.

⁷⁵ Connell, "2," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1989; Amy Louise Kazmin "Educators Say Former Boss's Election Would Be 'Disaster'," *LAT*, June 5 1989; Colvin, "Korenstein Accuses Horowitz of Neglecting His School," *LAT*, May 24 1989; Mitchell, "Teachers Strike Settlement Rekindles School Board Race," *LAT*, May 28 1989; & Muir, "Experts Rate Vote Outlook-It's Apathy Hands Down." *LAT*, June 6 1989.

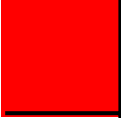
acknowledge the union's necessity in winning school board elections. While Johnson had been humble before the June election and the May strike, he was much more candid afterwards. He asserted that the "political strength of teachers cannot be underestimated" and that "the message is you better listen to us or you are in political trouble."⁷⁶

While teacher control over governing and administering a school or district could be seen as desirable, control of any politically elected office by a union is not. The union's control over policy decisions was directly linked to their ability to raise the increasingly staggering sums of money needed for each candidates' reelection bids or, if thwarted in its endeavors, to raise funds for the challenger who would most likely defeat the incumbent. While union support did not guarantee that a board member would follow all union directives, it did ensure that they would think seriously before opposing the union and would only do so if they had equally strong supporters outside of UTLA. This would not be the case districtwide until the end of the next decade.

1990s School Board Elections Analysis

The 1990s was a tumultuous decade for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board of Education. Public opinion of the district had sunk to an all time low with the school board being held accountable. Calls for reform permeated all levels of society and the board was often required to adopt these reforms. Implementation was hampered, however by the recession that hit the state in the early 90s. This not only harmed the district in terms of physical upkeep, classroom supplies, and educational programs it also strained the relationship between the United Teachers-Los Angeles (UTLA) and the district. After a bitter strike in 1989, which gained the union a 24% raise over three years, the union was forced to take massive pay cuts during the recession in

⁷⁶ Connell, "L.A. Schools Election," *LAT*, Mar. 21 1989 & Enriquez, "Teachers Give a Lesson in Power at the Polls," *LAT*, June 8 1989.



order to keep LAUSD solvent. The financial woes of the district prompted special interests, namely teachers and administrators, to campaign for school board seats. With the powerful backing of their respective unions, both factions were able to gain substantial representation on the board. The need for educational reform was also integral to their victories at the polls, because they portrayed themselves as professionals who held a better understanding of education than their opponents. Yet the lack of improvement by the end of the decade caused a backlash against these factions led by the reformers of the era. The changes in the board over this period were drastic, but perhaps not all that momentous.

The 1991 election was the first since the 1989 Teachers' Strike. The effects of this event were still clearly visible throughout the campaign. Four seats were up for election and of those two involved the incumbents and two were open seats. The two seats occupied by incumbents, Districts 5 and 7, were expected to be relatively easy campaigns due to the low backing their opponents received. Former board member, Richard Ferraro decided to run against Leticia Quezada in the 5th District and Warren Furutani only faced one challenger in the 7th District. The open seats were to be interesting campaigns however. Districts 1 and 3 were left vacant by their incumbents for two different reasons. Rita Walters of District 1 left her seat after 11 years to run for City Council. As for District 3, Jackie Goldberg stated that she was leaving in order to return to teaching. Both members had drawn the ire of UTLA during the strike. More than 16 candidates had filed for these seats.⁷⁷

The April 9th primaries decided three of the four races. As expected Leticia Quezada and Warren Furutani won reelection to their offices. The other two races were not as certain and the campaigns were heavily financed. UTLA involved itself in both races by supporting teachers Jeff Horton in District 3 and Sterling Delone in District 1. By the end of the primary campaigns UTLA had given each of these candidates \$15,000 and substantial volunteer hours. This brought Horton's campaign finances to roughly \$57,000 while Delone had raised almost \$65,000. Fortunately for Horton his only opponent was Tony Trias who had lost the seat 8 years previously. Trias was unable to raise funds

⁷⁷ Merl, "17 File for School Board Races, Including Ferraro," *LAT*, Jan. 15 1991.

and was overwhelmed by Horton in the primaries. The other union backed candidate was not so lucky and faced a real challenge in the 1st District.⁷⁸

The administrators had learned a valuable lesson from the 1989 Teachers' Strike. While they had also benefited financially from the union's victory, they had power in the district. Realizing that the most important strength of the union was its access to school board members through its financial support of candidates and board members who were former teacher, the administrators organized a their own union. The Associated Administrators of Los Angeles (AALA) was then able to follow the teachers union's lead by not only financing candidates, but also having members become candidates. While teachers and administrators had participated as candidates in school board elections previously, their efforts had not been motivated by group politics. The school board race in District 3 was the opening salvo in the administrators' and teachers' open battle for control of the school board.⁷⁹

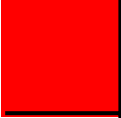
This conflict is best exemplified by the District 1 election. Of the 8 candidates in this race, 5 worked for the school district and one was an administrator. That administrator was Barbara Boudreaux the principal of Marvin Avenue School and a 31-year school district employee. She received \$20,000 in contributions from administrators and she was endorsed by AALA. The 1,500-member union was tiny compared to the numbers of teachers that UTLA represented, but it proved powerful in the race. Neither Boudreaux nor UTLA's candidate, Delone, received 50% of the primary vote, which necessitated a runoff.⁸⁰

Again, the two candidates relied on their respective unions for financial and volunteer support. Of the \$50,000 that Boudreaux reported in mid-May, \$7,000 was from the administrator's union. Individual administrators also made private contributions to her campaign. At the end of May, Delone had raise \$174,000 and roughly \$130,000 was in money and services provided by UTLA.

⁷⁸ Merl, "4 Seats Up for Election in L.A. School Board Race," *LAT*, Apr. 1 1991; Merl, "Horton Leading for Goldberg Seat: Race for Walters' Is Close," *LAT*, Apr. 10 1991.

⁷⁹ Merl, "It's Union Versus Union in Race for School Board," *LAT*, May 28 1991.

⁸⁰ Merl, "4 Seats," *LAT*, Apr. 1 1991.



He also received \$9,000 from CTA and individual contributions from teachers and other district employees. The bulk of the political financial power in the district was clearly behind Sterling Delone.⁸¹

The difference in source of funds reflected the candidates' professional lives, but not their personal background. Both Boudreaux and Delone grew up in Los Angeles's black community. They were also graduates of LAUSD schools and sent their own children to schools in the district. While Boudreaux had taken the administrative route, Delone had stayed in the classroom and taught social studies for 16 years at local schools. With their similar backgrounds and ties to the district's community, the debates should have revolved around educational issues and the candidates' ideas for resolving these problems. As the post-primary campaign unfolded this assumption would prove to be false.⁸²

Since neither candidate could accuse the other of not representing the district racially or of carpet bagging, the campaigns revolved around endorsements. This was reinforced by the relatively similar plans for district improvement: parent involvement and community networks. Both candidates also gained support from various local leaders. Boudreaux enjoyed the endorsement of the majority of church leaders, Rita Walters, Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, and several African-American celebrities. Delone also came highly recommended by leaders in the community. U.S. Representative Maxine Waters, several area Assembly members, and two school board members (Goldberg and Furutani) all supported his campaign.⁸³

With this seeming equality between the candidates in experience, vision, and endorsements there was relatively little to separate the two for the voters. This did not prove to be a problem for the Boudreaux campaign. Copying a picture from a Delone campaign flyer, Boudreaux went on the offensive. Her campaign sent out a

⁸¹ Merl, "It's Union," *LAT*, May 28 1991.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*; Merl, "Delone, Boudreaux Close in Race for Walters' Seat on School Board," *LAT*, June 5 1991; & Merl, "Horton Leading," *LAT*, Apr. 10 1991.


flyer with the same picture, but pointed out that a young girl was sitting on Delone's lap. Using the recent scandals of teacher-student molestation, Boudreaux's flyer stated that, "Parents do not want their little girls sitting on the teachers' lap!" The flyer also went on to criticize Delone's connections to Goldberg and UTLA. Delone responded weakly by complaining that Boudreaux was campaigning against the teachers union but not him. Unfortunately, he was smart enough to realize what was really going on, but not quite insightful enough to realize that attacking UTLA was the central part of Boudreaux's campaign.⁸⁴

When the election began on June 4th, Boudreaux had a significant lead from absentee ballots. The election was not over quickly, however, and Boudreaux's lead narrowed throughout the day. She narrowly led Delone and at the end squeaked by with a 50.5% to 49.4% victory. Boudreaux thus delivered a substantial defeat to UTLA and led the administrators' first successful challenge to the teachers unions' twenty-year fight to control the district. This victory is even more impressive when the funding of candidates is evaluated. Delone was clearly better financed than Boudreaux, but through this Boudreaux was able to associate him with the political machine that she then placed herself in opposition against. This followed neatly with former board member Walters' habit of accusing UTLA and teachers for the ills of the district. After 12 years of this rhetoric, the voters decided to elect someone who espoused the same attitude.⁸⁵

While race had not played a significant role in the school board races in Districts 1 and 5 it was only because those districts had been created to elect representatives of the African-American community and the Latino community respectively. Since only candidates of those ethnicities seemed to have a chance in the elections, representation was not threatened. As the Latino community grew, however, one member out of seven did not seem to be a balanced representation in a school district whose enrollment was majority Latino. In light of this perceived inequity, Latino leaders came together in the spring of 1992 to press the City Council to redistrict the school board. Only a little more than a

⁸⁴ Merl, "Delone, Boudreaux," *LAT*, June 5 1991 & Merl, "It's Union," *LAT*, May 28 1991.

⁸⁵ Merl, "Delone, Boudreaux," *LAT*, June 5 1991 & Banks, "Teacher Unions Dealt Defeats in School, College Board Races," *LAT*, June 6 1991.



decade after the school board offices were turned into districts, this move attested to the rapidly changing demographics of LAUSD and the rising power of Latinos in Los Angeles.⁸⁶

Latino leadership did not want to stretch their political clout to far, so their redistricting plan or the Alatorre plan, only called for one more Latino seat and was respectful of most of the current members' districts. The old District 3 would retain 73% Latino constituency and stretch into the northeast San Fernando Valley. The new district would consist of Bell, Cudahy, Huntington Park and South Gate and would be an 80% Latino district. Unfortunately, no matter how carefully a plan was devised, there were still consequences for the other board members. There were three glitches in the first plan: Slavkin's home would be in Boudreaux's district, there would be only one Valley seat, and Weintraub and Korenstein were placed in the same district. This latter mix-up was soon corrected, but the first two were unavoidable.⁸⁷

The Latino group, led by Marshall Diaz was determined to create the new district seat however. They were able to obtain tentative approval by Asian American and African American civil rights groups and mollify Korenstein with her own district, although she was indignant over the reduction of Valley representation. The Latino coalition was also sure to remind the City Council's Ad Hoc Redistricting Committee that they would sue the district for racial discrimination if the plans were not accepted. This, along with the inclusion of the Westside into Boudreaux's district, led parent activists to create the Westside Coalition. They wanted to keep their district intact due to the high level of parent involvement and innovative educational programs. The dissolution of their district was a major concern to these parents.⁸⁸

The Westside was not the only district that had major concerns regarding redistricting. While the Latino coalition had somewhat

⁸⁶ Simon, "Latinos Draw Remap Plan to Boost Clout on School Board," *LAT*, Mar. 24 1992.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* & Schwada, "Reapportionment Plan Puts Trustees in Same District," *LAT*, April 2 1992.

⁸⁸ Schwada, "Separate Districts Are Drawn," *LAT*, Apr. 7 1992 & Chu & Jones, "Parents Will Fight School Remap Plan," *LAT*, Apr. 22 1992.

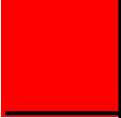
placated Korenstein by giving her a district, they did nothing to reassure her constituents. Concerned over how the new district would stretch to downtown, Valley parents enlisted Councilwoman Joy Picus to create an alternative plan. They were especially upset that the Valley would be split among four board members. While the Latino group believed that the problems for Latino students were the same no matter where they lived, many parents, even Latino parents, did not feel the same. One mother, Juana Sanchez, said that if the two sets of problems were combined “you’ll have total chaos.”⁸⁹

There already was total chaos surrounding the Alatorre plan itself. Opposition groups scrambled to create alternative plans into late spring and into early summer of that year. The fact that redistricting was necessary was never seriously under dispute. The Voting Rights Act was seen as requiring the greater representation of Latinos in the school district. The fact that this would “splinter and weaken the Valley’s voice” was an unfortunate but unavoidable side affect. There was an upside for Weintraub, however, as the new plan would literally shave off the Latino area of her district that had created a viable opposition in the last school board election. While most Valley residents saw the redistricting as a reduction of their power, it was in reality an assurance that they would have at least one district safe from the ever-shifting demographics of the Valley.⁹⁰

The fight over the plan escalated through June. Legislatures based in the Valley battled it out in City Hall. Wachs actually stated that he would rather get sued and that it was “time to stop rolling over and playing dead.” He and others felt that the threat of being sued was preferable to losing power in the Valley and losing the Westside district. While the Latino coalition had let Korenstein keep a district they had done nothing for Slavkin. The Westside Coalition was able to get the Alatorre plan changed so that Korenstein’s district encompassed parts of the Valley and the

⁸⁹ Chu & Jones, “Parents Will,” *LAT*, April 22 1992; Chu, “Parents to Fight Latino Group’s Redistricting Plan,” *LAT*, May 14 1992; Schwada, “School Board Remap Plan Creates 2nd Latino District,” *LAT*, June 13 1992.

⁹⁰ Schwada, “School Board Remap,” *LAT*, June 13 1992; Schwada, “Panel Backs School Board Plan,” *LAT*, June 16 1992; & Schwada, “Council Chooses Sides for School Remap Battle,” *LAT*, June 17 1992.



Westside. This would leave place Slavkin and Korenstein in opposition in the next year's school board races, but the Westside felt that Slavkin had a better chance there than in Boudreaux's predominantly black district.⁹¹

By the end of June one council member, Joy Picus, had created an alternative plan. Picus created an East Valley-based school board seat that would ensure that both of the Latino seats would be outside of the Valley. Four board members, Horton, Quezada, Boudreaux and Weintraub were against this plan and worked to gain support of the Alatorre plan. This created a stalemate and both plans were evaluated for their respective legality. The Picus plan actually received minority support. Again, Latino parents in the Valley reiterated their belief that their children had different problems than those in downtown. An African-American group based in Pacoima also supported the Picus plan, thus demonstrating that many Valley residents felt that the downtown/Valley split was more important than any split along ethnic lines. Unfortunately, this struggle led to a stalemate for both plans and the controversy continued into July.⁹²

The City Council voted on the two plans July 8th. Legal advisors to the council felt that the Picus plan was not as defensible in court as the Alatorre plan and that had a significant impact on the vote. The council voted 9 to 5 in favor of the Alatorre plan, which would take effect in the next year's elections. Adoption of a redistricting plan, which severely reduced the political clout of the Valley prompted calls for the dissolution of the school district. The United Chambers group began a campaign to create a district solely for the Valley. It seems that if those in the Valley felt that they were inadequately represented and that the only cure would be to have a district of their own.⁹³

⁹¹ Schwada, "Council Chooses," *LAT*, June 17 1992 & Timnick, "Slavkin to Run in New School Board District," *LAT*, June 18 1992.

⁹² Schwada, "School Remap Vote Could Be a Cliffhanger," *LAT*, June 30 1992 & Schwada, "Remap Plan for 2nd Latino Seat on L.A. School Board Fails," *LAT*, July 1 1992; & Schwada, "School Board to Weigh Disputed Redistrict Plan," *LAT*, July 2 1992.

⁹³ Schwada, "Council OKs School Board Redistricting," *LAT*, July 8 1992 & Chu & Meyer, "Group Renews Proposal to Split Up School District," *LAT*, July 15 1992.

While the calls for a break up of the district proved futile, the redistricting did affect the 1993 election. The reshaping of school board districts had the potential to completely change the face of the board. Along with the prospect of adding another Latino member to the board, the redistricting threatened three incumbents with defeat at the polls. Slavkin and Korenstein's seats were completely redrawn and they were up for election. Weintraub was also threatened by Korenstein's moves toward challenging the incumbent in the only completely all-Valley district left. The only sure thing was that the April primaries were not going to be easy.


The surprise of the campaign season was announced in January. Weintraub decided not to seek reelection in order to "turn her energies toward breaking up the mammoth school district." She also accused the union of being too powerful and of having too much political influence. Whatever Weintraub's reasons for leaving the school board, she opened up the way for both Korenstein and Slavkin to run for a seat without opposing each other. In order to do this, Korenstein filed for District 6, Weintraub's seat. This also allowed Korenstein to keep her place as the representative of an all Valley district.⁹⁴

With Korenstein safely out of the way in District 6, Slavkin was able to file for District 4. This district no longer consisted of only Westside constituents. While 60% of the voters were from the Westside, the district was now also composed of parts of the Valley. This meant that the race was open to Valley residents and several showed up to register as candidates. The most serious of these was Northridge resident Judy Solkovits. As a former UTLA president, Solkovits was a credible threat to Slavkin's reelection. The other threat was an elementary school teacher, Douglas Lasken, who, along with Solkovits, hoped to draw off the teacher support that had helped Slavkin in the previous election.⁹⁵

For his part, Slavkin had experience and name recognition on his side. He hoped that his call for radical decentralization would

⁹⁴ Cheevers & Chu, "Weintraub Plans to Leave School Board," *LAT*, Jan. 20 1993 & Staff, "Korenstein Files to Run for Weintraub's Board Seat," *LAT*, Jan 21 1993.

⁹⁵ Chavez & Chu, "New Shape for School Board Races," *LAT*, Jan. 26 1993; Timnick, "3 Teachers Challenging Slavkin in New District," *LAT*, Feb. 1 1993; & Chu, "West Valley Is New Battleground," *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993.



mobilize voters to go to the polls and vote for him. As for the support of teachers and the union, Slavkin cleverly pointed out that they were not supporting their former president, Solkovits, nor did they support the current teacher, Lasken. Slavkin used this as evidence that the union or teachers did not trust them and that there just was not much support to be had due to the “low morale.” While none of the candidates had the union on their side, Slavkin did have the greatest financial support. He had raised \$20,000 in comparison to Lasken and Solkovits dismal showing of \$5,000 and \$400 respectively. Slavkin’s prospects were good for reelection.⁹⁶

As for the other incumbent, the race would not be easy. In District 6, Korenstein had the name recognition to help her, but her opponent had district politics on his side. Korenstein’s major opponent was Eli Brent, president of AALA. He had been involved in local education for 40 years and felt that the “teachers union had become too influential with the Board of Education.” He accused Korenstein of being UTLA’s candidate, while he himself was AALA’s candidate. Korenstein countered that she received support from three factions of the district: rank-and-file teachers, parents and students. The rancor between administrators and teachers had only worsened with the recent pay cut and this campaign was going to be the manifestation of those bad feelings.⁹⁷

The ill will in the district did not only exist between administration and teachers, dissatisfaction with the district ran deep and wide throughout Los Angeles. LAUSD had slashed budgets in the face of monumental deficits, installed metal detectors to fight the ever-increasing trend of gun violence, and there was talk of another teachers’ strike to combat the 10% pay cut they had received. These problems had prompted a break up call that was very serious and was seen as almost inevitable from many camps. The district and all those associated with it were seen in a bad light and the election would determine whether that taint was greatest on

⁹⁶ Timnick, “3 Teachers,” *LAT*, Feb. 1 1993; Chu, “West Valley,” *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993; & Chavez, “10 Candidates, 1 Vow: Reform,” *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993.

⁹⁷ Chavez & Chu, “New Shape,” *LAT*, Jan. 26 1993 & Comeaux, “District Breakup, Rift with Union to Be Key Issues,” *DN*, Jan. 28 1993.

Korenstein as an incumbent or Brent as a representative of the administrators union.⁹⁸

In order for Korenstein to fight Brent she would have to choose between severing her ties with the union or fully embracing it and its money. Korenstein took the latter course and made the 1993 District 6 race into a near replay of the 1991 District 1 race. Korenstein, pitting the teachers against the administrators, was therefore compelled to bring other actors into the discussion. In order to combat Brent's accusations that the teachers were demanding disproportionate amount of the district's funds, Korenstein accused Brent of only wanting to "keep high-paid people high-paid" and she used the gambit of promising to secure more state funding. Korenstein's argument was that administrators were the ones who were overpaid, Brent was running for the office in order to keep the status quo, and that the state should be providing more funds anyway.⁹⁹


This lack of funds had hit both of these groups where it hurt the most, the pocketbook. The two groups were fighting "bitterly" over where the deficits would be made up. One of the concessions that the administrators and clerical groups had made was a 12% pay cut. The teachers, however, rejected this plan and subsequent offers. They finally agreed to a 10% cut with a cut in school supply funds to make up the difference. The administrators saw UTLA as an obstacle to fiscal stability and the teachers saw the administrators as a threat to their livelihood. The two were afraid of their futures in the district and felt that strong, effective voices on the board would help to secure their power.¹⁰⁰

The candidates' alliances to their respective unions both harmed and assisted them in the campaign leading up to the primary. Korenstein was the only candidate in the three school board races that UTLA financed throughout the campaign. Two weeks before the primary, Korenstein had received \$44,142 in campaign contribution, half of which had been from UTLA. Brent was able to

⁹⁸ Comeaux, "District Breakup," *DN*, Jan. 28 1993.

⁹⁹ Chu, "Incumbents Face Aggressive Challengers," *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993.

¹⁰⁰ Chu & Smith, "Korenstein, Brent Move to Forefront in Battle for Funds," *LAT*, April 9 1993.



use this funding as evidence that Korenstein was a UTLA puppet. But Korenstein had three things in her favor. One, Brent received the majority of his funding from individual administrators and administrators' groups, which did not have significant financial resources. Two, the new district was composed of 60% of Korenstein's old district. And three, Korenstein had a history of championing the Valley and the rhetoric that resonated with residents.¹⁰¹

Despite this edge, or perhaps because UTLA was not using its resources in the other races, Korenstein received an unprecedented inflow of cash in the last two weeks of the campaign from UTLA. With the assistance of its affiliate, Political Action Council of Educators (PACE), the union was able to contribute roughly \$80,000 in cash to Korenstein's campaign. This raised her total contributions to \$130,000. As for Brent, the union he was affiliated with was relatively new and not as well funded as UTLA. While Brent had been able to keep pace with Korenstein up to the \$50,000 mark, he received no contributions of more than \$1,000 in the two weeks prior to the election. UTLA was able to literally outspend him 3 to 1. Whether it was because Korenstein could outspend him or because she had a tentative pro-breakup stance or because she was such a familiar figure in the Valley, Korenstein received the requisite 50% of the vote to be reelected.¹⁰²

Korenstein was not the only incumbent up for reelection. Slavkin was facing contenders in a newly modified district and trying to win without UTLA support. The union had abandoned Slavkin over his pro-pay cut stance in recent contract negotiations. Luckily for him, they did not seem very enthusiastic about the other candidates and were content to stay out of the District 4 race altogether. The two

¹⁰¹ Chavez, "10 Candidates," *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993; Chu & Smith, "Korenstein, Brent," *LAT*, Apr. 9 1993; Chu, "Incumbents," *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993; & Enriquez, "Teachers Union Gives Korenstein Late \$80,000 Boost," *LAT*, Apr. 17 1993.

¹⁰² Enriquez, "Teachers Union," *LAT*, Apr. 17 1993 & Chavez & Merl, "Korenstein and Slavkin Reelected to School Board," *LAT*, Apr. 21 1993.

candidates facing Slavkin were a former UTLA president, Judith R. Solkovits, and 2nd grade teacher Douglas M. Lasken.¹⁰³

The candidates had similar and differing opinions on many issues. All three candidates supported LEARN, but they also had reservations as to its funding. All of the candidates were critical of the school calendar, but had different ways of dealing with it. All three candidates seemed to support the current busing of students from overcrowded schools, but Slavkin would let parents decide the school their students were bused to. Slavkin and Lasken supported district breakup, but Solkovits opposed it. Slavkin was the only one with a comprehensive plan to fix every problem. He proposed abolishing the school board and creating “high school complexes” that would have decisions over everything from funding to busing.¹⁰⁴

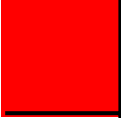
This race was unique in that the amount of funding each candidate received did not guarantee a victory. Slavkin raised over \$47,000 more than his two other opponents who both raised roughly \$1,000. Lasken had actually put a personal limit of \$1,000 on his campaign, which did not seem to hurt him. While Slavkin raised close to \$50,000 he won the primary by only 3% of the vote. It would seem that a well-funded candidate could have forced Slavkin into a runoff.¹⁰⁵

As for the race in the newly formed District 2, financing was essential to getting name recognition and spreading the candidates’ messages. At first the race seemed to one of administrator versus businessman and former school board member. Vicki Castro was the first person to declare candidacy for the newly created Latino district. She was a veteran of LAUSD and after working seven years as a teacher; she spent the rest of her 25-year career as a principal. Louis Gonzalez soon entered the race and was considered a favorite due to his past position as a school board member and subsequent experience as a station

¹⁰³ Chavez, “10 Candidates,” *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993 & Chu, “Decision ‘93/A Look at the Elections in Los Angeles County Los Angeles School Board,” *LAT*, Apr. 11 1993.

¹⁰⁴ Chu, “Decision ‘93,” *LAT*, Apr. 11 1993 & Chavez, “10 Candidates,” *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993.

¹⁰⁵ Chu & Smith, “Korenstein, Brent,” *LAT*, Apr. 9 1993 & Timnick, “Slavkin Wins in Race for New District,” *LAT*, Apr. 22 1993.



manager of a local Latino TV station. Both of these candidates were Latino and had roots in the Latino community, so ethnicity would not play a crucial role in the campaigns.¹⁰⁶

The candidates in District 2 were similar to the candidates in District 4 because they were able to focus on issues not the administrators versus teachers battle that was taking place in District 6. As such, they had some agreements and some disagreements on policy. The candidates “pledged” to increase parent involvement and were supportive of LEARN. Gonzalez, however, felt that the reform did not go far enough and proposed elected boards of parents (who would be the majority), teachers and other school employees for each school. The candidates wanted more schools to relieve overcrowding and to stop busing. They also agreed that the breakup of the district would be harmful and opposed the movement. They supported the installation of metal detectors in secondary schools, but Castro wanted to place more school police in uniform and to offer more social services to students. With the two candidates taking such similar stances on a majority of issues it was their experiences that differentiated them.¹⁰⁷

Castro had the advantage of over 30 years in a school setting. She had worked with parents to create instructional clinics and was familiar with the difficulties that Latino immigrants dealt with on a day-to-day basis. Due to her background she was able to raise nearly \$33,000 by the end of March, mainly from principals and administrators. Unfortunately, Castro’s life in the school district meant that she had a limited understanding of such governmental terms as joint powers agreements. Her opponent used this to illustrate her inability to handle the larger business of the school district, which he as a businessman would be better able to handle. Gonzalez was therefore able to gain the support of those who liked his innovative ideas like leasing space from universities to handle

¹⁰⁶ Staff, “Belvedere Principal Runs for School Board Seat,” *LAT*, Jan. 15 1993; Chavez & Chu, “New Shape,” *LAT*, Jan. 26 1993; Helfand, “3 L.A. School Board Candidates Agree on Issues, Stress Qualifications,” *LAT*, Mar. 28 1993; & Helfand, “Decision ‘93/A Look at the Elections in Los Angeles County Los Angeles School Board,” *LAT*, Apr. 11 1993.

¹⁰⁷ Helfand, “3 L.A. School Board Candidates,” *LAT*, Mar. 28 1993; Chavez, “10 Candidates,” *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993; & Helfand, “Decision ‘93,” *LAT*, Apr. 11 1993.

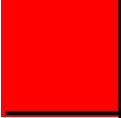
overcrowding and training teacher assistants and aides in bilingual education. He had received roughly \$40,000 by the end of March and the race looked close.¹⁰⁸

Just as in the case of Korenstein, there was a last minute increase in funding to the Gonzalez campaign. Apparently deciding that Gonzalez was better than an administrator, UTLA decided to endorse Gonzalez two weeks before the election. It was unclear exactly how much money they gave him if any, but they did promote his campaign among their 28,000 members. Unfortunately for Gonzalez this support was too little too late. Castro won the race far ahead of Gonzalez. She attributed her win to her stance on school safety, but that was not much different than Gonzalez's. Perhaps Gonzalez was too innovative for the voters or Castro's backing from the large group of Latinos who work for the districts in support roles was what carried the vote for her. Whatever the case, Castro's victory proved that the creation of a second Latino district succeeded. It also created a minority majority on the board for the first time in its history. It would take time to see if this created any substantial differences in the school district.¹⁰⁹

Castro's election signified more than the possibility of equal ethnic representation on the school board. As an administrator, her election solidified the AALA's place on the school board. The board now consisted of two administrators and two teachers. While the other three board members were not former district employees, Slavkin and Furutani had received substantial support from UTLA, in their original campaigns for their seats and were seen as teacher friendly. Quezada was a bit of an odd duck and neither teacher support nor administrator support figured largely in either of her school board campaigns. With neither union possessing a majority on the board, they would redouble their efforts for the next election.

¹⁰⁸ Helfand, "Decision '93," *LAT*, Apr. 11 1993; Chavez, "10 Candidates," *LAT*, Mar. 29 1993.

¹⁰⁹ Staff, "UTLA Backs Gonzalez in School Board Race," *LAT*, Apr. 2 1993; Chavez & Merl, "Korenstein and Slavkin," *LAT*, Apr. 21 1993; & Chavez, "Minorities to Be Majority on Governing Panel for First Time," *LAT*, Apr. 22 1993.



Four seats were up for election in 1995 and two incumbents announced that they would not run for reelection, thus leaving two open districts. In the races with incumbents, the easiest one to call was District 1. After Boudreaux's victory over the UTLA supported candidate four years earlier, the union and everyone else decided to stay out of her district. She ended up running without any opponents and won the primary.¹¹⁰

In the other incumbent's race, Horton faced two strong contenders. An advocate for education reform, especially in terms of AIDS education and support services for gay and lesbian teenagers, Horton was running as the first openly gay school board member. This brought out opponents who were aligned with the conservative Christian right. Business owner Peter Ford and record company executive John M. Souchack both opposed more than Horton's stance on sexuality. Horton opposed district breakup, they supported it. Horton supported LEARN, they opposed it. Horton opposed Proposition 187, which they supported. They also supported prayer in schools and government vouchers for education. While both of the conservative candidates claimed they were aligned with Christian groups, they denied being "handpicked by the conservative Christian bloc." Their concerns were therefore to be seen as personal ones.¹¹¹

Even though Souchack had adequate financial backing, Ford was the biggest threat to Horton. Ford was independently wealthy, owned both a Picasso and a Chagall, and was willing to spend \$200,000 of his own money on his campaign. Horton had lost UTLA support when he voted for the pay cut in 1992, but was able to raise close to \$80,000 by the first week of April. Because Horton was able to stay financially viable and because his district was 62% Democrat, he was able to win reelection in the primary. His advocacy of what was considered homosexual issues and his

¹¹⁰ Pyle, "Furutani Won't Seek Reelection to School Board," *LAT*, Jan. 12 1995; Pyle, "26 File Papers to Seek 4 L.A. School Board Seats," *LAT*, Jan. 18 1995; & Pyle, "School District Vote Fragmented by Hot Issues, Wide Field," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1995.

¹¹¹ Pyle, "26 File," *LAT*, Jan. 18 1995 & Pyle, "2 Conservatives Target Horton on Aids, Gay Issues," *LAT*, Apr. 7 1995.

loss of UTLA support, however, did not bode well for the next election.¹¹²

In the meantime, the newcomers were battling it out in District 5 and 7. District 7, Furutani's district, was a contest between relative unknowns. Of the four candidates, two were administrators and two were businesswomen. The strongest candidate was Gardena Adult School Principal George Kiriyaama. He had the support of Furutani and had worked for the district for over thirty years. He was able to raise more than \$140,000 and his closest competitor, retired school administrator Sid Brickman, was only able to raise \$35,000. While the major candidate was an administrator, UTLA decided not to take any part in this election.¹¹³

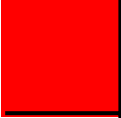
In this case, money won out over any campaign stance. It is very possible that the voters only heard Kiriyaama's message and not those of the other candidates. However, it could very well be that residents of District 7 were pleased with Furutani and voted for his choice of successor. Whatever the case may be, this was marked as one of the costliest school board races in the district's history. Kiriyaama's opponents expressed their disgust with the situation after his election and accused him of carpet bagging, excess spending, and political opportunism. Unfortunately, as seen in the previous elections where candidates had individually spent close to \$100,000, the highest being \$130,000 spent by Korenstein, Kiriyaama's budget was to become the rule not the exception in later elections.¹¹⁴

The District 7 race was not the only one where newcomers were fighting for support and funding. In the district that Quezada was leaving, candidates needed to solidify their campaigns quickly because there were so many contenders. The most prominent was Quezada's former aide and assistant to Councilwoman Rita Walters, Ernest Delgado. Delgado was joined by Lucia V. Rivera,

¹¹² Pyle, "2 Conservatives," *LAT*, Apr. 7 1995 & Pyle, "School District Vote," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1995.

¹¹³ Pyle, "26 File," *LAT*, Jan. 18 1995; Kowsky, "Runoff Seems Likely as Race of Newcomers Winds Down," *LAT*, Apr. 9 1995; Pyle, "School District Vote," *LAT*, Apr. 12 1995; & Garcia & Kowsky, "Kiriyaama Wins Seat Vacated by Furutani," *LAT*, Apr. 16 1995.

¹¹⁴ Garcia & Kowsky, "Kiriyaama Wins," *LAT*, Apr. 16 1995.



Kitty Hendrick, Gonzalo Molina, Theresa Montano, Lew McCammon, Doug Tokofsky, and Ron Rodriguez. Most of these candidates had one thing in common: they were teachers. Of these, the majority was Latino.¹¹⁵

After the political wrangling three years earlier over the creation of a second Latino district, Latino activists were insistent that the “original” Latino district would stay safely in Latino hands. While candidates claimed that ethnicity was not the most important aspect of the race, many community members disagreed. Father Juan Santillan of Our Lady Help of Christians in Lincoln Heights likened not electing a Latino to the seat with “cutting our own throats.” Others felt that the election of a white candidate would be a regression and a significant loss to the community. This loss became an even greater possibility when the two lead Latino candidates dropped out for various reasons. This left parent volunteer and community liaison Lucia V. Rivera as the top Latino candidate.¹¹⁶

This change in the roster of candidates did not bode well for Latino activists because the other top candidate was not Latino. Doug Tokofsky was a popular social science teacher at Marshal High School who had coached LAUSD’s first national academic decathlon winners eight years previously. While UTLA did not want to get involved in ethnic politics, they were concerned that the balance of administrators to teachers could be upset by a loss in this district. They had briefly considered supporting both Tokofsky and Rivera, but dropped the idea in light of the union loyalty that both Tokofsky and his mother had long displayed. Tokofsky was not a completely undesirable candidate for the district, because he was familiar with the local schools and he was fluent in Spanish. Whatever the results, the race questioned Los Angeles ethnic politics and the importance of representation of a community on an ethnic level.¹¹⁷

The issue was exacerbated by the results of the 1994 fall election. The district would faced serious changes due to the passage of

¹¹⁵ Pyle, “26 File,” *LAT*, Jan. 18 1995.

¹¹⁶ Pyle, “Ethnicity Plays Role in School Board Race,” *LAT*, Feb. 27 1995.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* & Pyle, “School District Vote,” *LAT*, Apr. 12 1995.

Proposition 187 and its restrictions against providing social services, education included, to illegal immigrants. District 7, with its high Latino population, most likely consisted of a large segment of illegal immigrants. As the traditional “clearinghouse” for Latino complaints, there was a fear that the district represented by a white man would end this much-needed community resource. Also, while 70% of residents were Latino, only half of them were registered voters. It was felt that a local representative would better serve the non-voting population if they shared that population’s ethnicity.¹¹⁸

The primary revealed that the voters were unsure whether or not they needed a Latino to represent them fairly. No candidate received a majority and the two top vote getters were Tokofsky and Rivera. Both candidates then revised their campaigns to reflect their background and to specifically attack their opponent’s campaign. Both agreed that parental involvement was the answer to many of the district’s problems, but Rivera had experience as a parent volunteer and advocate, while Tokofsky had a certain reserve due to his status as a teacher. In this way union politics was brought into the debate.¹¹⁹


With Tokofsky’s endorsement by UTLA and Rivera’s endorsement by AALA, the race quickly lost ethnicity as the key factor and swiftly focused on union affiliation. Tokofsky was accused of being UTLA’s “pawn” and Rivera was considered to be an administrators’ “operative.” She tried to portray herself as a parent of four who knew how to work the system, whereas she labeled Tokofsky as being insensitive to parents. As for Tokofsky, he saw himself as a politically savvy teacher who had insider knowledge of the district. With Castro as a Latino representative on the school board, ethnic politics did not seem as important to the unions as maintaining equilibrium or gaining a majority.¹²⁰

Apparently voters still felt ambivalent about choosing a teacher over a Latina and the election was very close. Tokofsky had an initial 26-vote lead and this led to the careful and time consuming

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Jennings, “School Board Rivals Keep Sights on Issues,” *LAT*, May 28 1995.

¹²⁰ Ibid. & Pyle, “It’s Teacher Vs. Parent in 5th District Contest,” *LAT*, June 4 1995.



count of absentee and other ballots by hand. Eventually it was declared that Tokofsky won by 72 votes and would represent the district. Due to the extremely close race, Rivera demanded a recount. This was no mean feat, because the candidate who called a recount was obligated to pay the nearly \$13,000 fee to the county. Rivera had tremendous support and was able to raise the money. This process extended the election decision by a week forcing Tokofsky to wait until the second week of spent July to be declared the winner by 76 votes.¹²¹

Fortunately for school board candidates, ethnicity did not play a role in the 1997 elections. However, the perennial contest between teachers and administrator's began to register with the public. Whether or not they approved is not known, but candidate rhetoric began to express dissatisfaction with the monopoly the two groups had exercised over the board. This did not show up in Castro's district where she ran unopposed, nor in Korenstein's where she was able to win reelection with 65% of the vote against extremely under funded candidates. The struggle for control between the two unions was showcased in an unusual way in District 4, Slavkin's seat.¹²²

After eight years on the school board, Mark Slavkin decided to leave and follow other career opportunities. This left his largely Westside district up for grabs. The result was that four candidates with different backgrounds entered the race. One candidate was a parent volunteer and business owner. Another was a long-time activist. And the two with the most clout were a labor affairs attorney, Kenneth Sackman, and a "political veteran and arts

¹²¹ Pyle, "School Race Too Close to Call," *LAT*, June 7 1995; Pyle, "Tokofsky Apparently Beats Rivera by 72 Votes," *LAT*, June 19 1995; Staff, "Tokofsky Declared Winner of L.A. School Board Race," *LAT*, June 20 1995; Pyle, "Loser Demands Recount in Close School Board Race," *LAT*, June 29 1995; & Staff, "Tokofsky Retains Win After Recount of School Board Votes," *LAT*, July 8 1995.

¹²² Chiang, "4 Racing to Follow Slavkin," *DN*, Mar. 9 1997; Renwick, "4 Vie for Rare Opening on School Board," *LAT*, Mar. 23 1997; Editorial, "The Best Bets for L.A.'s Schools," *LAT*, Mar 26 1997; Chiang, "Korenstein, Foes Motivated," *DN*, Mar. 31 1997; Hardy, "Fields-Sackman Runoff Brewing," *DN* Apr. 9 1997; & Hardy, "School Board Runoff Has Candidates Busy," *DN*, Apr. 10 1997.

supporter,” Valerie Fields. There were no administrators in the field, but union politics would play out in this race anyway.¹²³

The two heavy hitters, Sackman and Fields, both had significant financial support. Sackman received support from his union connections. He also resonated with the voters because he promoted himself as a businessman and denounced the abilities of “3 retired teachers and 3 retired principals (to run) a \$5-billion business.” Claiming that he had business savvy, Sackman attributed the budget problems to board members who lacked finance and business backgrounds. Fields, on the other hand used her experience as a teacher and aide to former Mayor Bradley as a testimony to her understanding of both education and city politics.¹²⁴

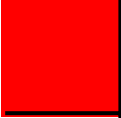
Fields’ political connections served her well financially and politically. She was able to gain the support of UTLA (which donated \$50,000), Mayor Riordan, Mike Roos, LA County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, and school board members Castro, Tokofsky and Kiriya. Largely due to these connections and her endorsement by UTLA, Fields was able to raise \$115,000 by the end of February. In contrast, Sackman was able to claim a \$62,000 war chest by this time. He largely relied on local unions, including school employees and school police. Again, while Sackman was not an administrator, he received support from those who opposed UTLA control of the board.¹²⁵

Sackman scored a moral victory in the primary when he outpolled Fields 46% to 28%. He did not receive the requisite 50% to avoid a runoff. The disparity between fund raising began to be felt in the runoff, but Sackman felt that he still had the edge. He discounted Fields’ teaching experience by pointing out that she had not been in a classroom since 1964 and claimed that both her age (78) and her affiliation with UTLA would affect her job performance. Despite these arguments, the 10% of registered voters who bothered to go to the polls voted for Fields 59% to 41%. Her election created a majority of four former teachers on the board, but Sackman’s

¹²³ Renwick, “4 Vie,” *LAT*, Mar. 23 1997 & Chiang, “4 Racing,” *DN*, Mar. 9 1997.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* & Editorial. “The Best,” *LAT*, Mar 26 1997.



campaign raised the issue of whether business experience or educational experience was a more important attribute in a board member.¹²⁶

The influence of local businessmen had been a major factor in the district since the beginning of the reform movement in the late 1980s. After over a decade of reforms and no tangible improvement, these men and women learned a lesson from UTLA and AALA. Realizing that getting the board to agree to reforms and getting these reforms implemented were not the same thing, they set their sights on taking over the school board. They organized the Committee on Effective School Governance to develop a series of reforms for the district to implement and the Coalition for Kids to raise money to fund the campaigns of school board candidates who would implement these reforms. The 1999 elections were perfect for these reformers because four seats were up for election, thus providing the potential to gain a swift majority.

These seats were Districts 1 - Boudreaux, District 3 - Horton, District 5 – Tokofsky, and District 7 – Kiriyaama. Riordan, the public face of these reforms, found three candidates to challenge the incumbents and was convinced to back one of the incumbents. In District 1, Riordan and his Coalition provided some support to an already established candidate, Genethia Hayes, but because he was not popular in that district he did not emphasize his involvement. Corporate manager Caprice Young challenged Horton in District 3. Tokofsky was the only incumbent supported by the Coalition and Kiriyaama faced a local community activist in District 7. The telling characteristic for the new candidates was that none of them were affiliated with teachers or administrators.¹²⁷

Opinions were split over the mayor's involvement in the school board races. Many people in the city were angry over what they saw as a "school system torn by divisiveness and inefficiency" that produced a high percentage of illiterate students. The business

¹²⁶ Hardy, "School Board Runoff," *DN*, Apr. 10 1997; Smith, "Labor Attorney, Veteran Insider Vie for Open Seat," *LAT*, May 30 1997; Orlov & Van Proyen, "No-Shows 'Disgusted'," *DN*, June 4 1997; Chiang, "Fields edges Sackman in School Board Race," *DN*, June 4 1997; & Staff, "Final Election Returns," *LAT*, June 5 1997.

¹²⁷ Sahagun, "Seniors Hold Key in School Race," *LAT*, Mar. 22 1999 and Smith, "Candidates Give Differing Views of L.A. Unified," *LAT*, Mar. 18 1999.


community seemed to be the leaders of this desire for change. Reports in March revealed that 157 of the city's "leading figures in business, finance and law" contributed to the Coalition for Kids. Many of them were the same people who contributed to Riordan's 1996 charter commission candidates. Yet the fear that these candidates would feel obligated to follow Riordan's suggestions echoed similar fears regarding the involvement of the district's unions.¹²⁸

Besides the controversy regarding the mayor's involvement in school politics, the creation of the Coalition for Kids produced another controversy: How much money is too much money to spend on a school board campaign? The Coalition had no trouble raising large sums and had collected almost \$1.4 million by the end of March, most of which went to political strategist that worked on behalf of the candidates. By the primary this total had reached \$1.9 million and the amounts contributed directly to candidate by those who also contributed to the Coalition is unknown. Also unknown, at least to third of registered voters, was who the current board members were. A telephone poll conducted the third week of March found that there was widespread ignorance regarding the school board and that a quarter of voters would vote for any candidate endorsed by Riordan.¹²⁹

Other factors beside money and name recognition favored the mayor's candidates. A majority of residents were so dissatisfied with the district that they felt breakup was in order. School administrators, state officials, former Governor Pete Wilson, and parents were blamed for the schools shortcomings, not teachers. Almost all of the respondents to the poll felt that the "school district faces a crises" and that they would vote for candidates who supported the reforms proposed by the Committee on Effective School Governance, which emphasized the implementation of a business model for the district. Yet with all of this attention to reform, the issues were rarely discussed in the papers and in many

¹²⁸ Smith, "Candidates," *LAT*, Mar. 18 1999 & Sahagun, "Riordan Funds for L.A. School Board Races Come With Strings Attached," *LAT*, Mar. 25 1999.

¹²⁹ Sahagun, "Riordan Funds," *LAT*, Mar. 25 1999; Orlov, "Mayor-Backed Candidates Campaign Ardently," *DN*, Apr. 2 1999; Sahagun, "Few Angelinos Give School Board Good Grades," *LAT*, Apr. 4 1999 & Richardson, "Riordan Endorsements Could Influence School Board Votes," *LAT*, Apr. 4 1999.



campaigns the debates centered on where contributions were coming from.¹³⁰

The lack of coverage in the media is especially noticeable in District 7. George Kiriya had been elected four years previously as a replacement for the only Asian member on the board. A local businessman, Kiriya relied on local support for his campaign. He was able to raise close to \$136,000. While this would have been sufficient in earlier races, it was a drop in the bucket for this one. His opponent, Mike Lansing, raised over \$460,000 and also received support from the Coalition for Kids political strategists. Judging by Kiriya's performances at scheduled debates, he may have understood how dismal his chances were from the beginning. He refused to participate in debates with his challenger and at one event read a 15-minute speech before walking off the stage. With Riordan's support, almost half a million dollars in campaign money, and a standoffish incumbent, Lansing won the primary 54% to 46%.¹³¹

The other Coalition challenger in District 3 fared just as well. The difference between the two campaigns was that incumbent Horton put up a tougher fight. He accused "a few rich people who are not residents of [his] district or, in some cases, Los Angeles" of trying to unfairly influence the election. He also advised the mayor to "take care of the city." As for himself, Horton was concerned with being able to complete the reforms implemented during his eight-year tenure on the board. Yet once again money and the mayor's support seemed to be the deciding factors. Horton raised over \$90,000, a decent sum in the past, but nothing compared to Caprice Young's total of \$665,000. With more than \$600,000 of

¹³⁰ Richardson, "Riordan Endorsements," *LAT*, Apr. 4 1999; Sahagun, "Few Angelinos," *LAT*, Apr. 4 1999; Editorial, "A Prod to School Board," *LAT*, Feb. 21 1999; & Sahagun, "School Board Debate Ends Before It Starts When Kiriya Walks Out," *LAT*, Apr. 9 1999.

¹³¹ Orlov, "Mayor-Backed Candidates," *DN*, Apr. 2 1999; Sahagun, "School Board Debate," *LAT*, Apr. 9 1999; Sahagun & Doug Smith, "Issues May Be Scarce, but Passion and Politics Aren't," *LAT*, Apr. 11 1999; Baker, "School Reform Wins," *DN*, Apr. 14 1999; & Staff, "Election Results: Primary," *LAT*, Apr. 13 1999.

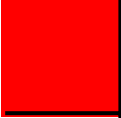
this coming from the Coalition, Young's victory of 57% to 43% owed much to Riordan.¹³²

The third candidate to win in the primary election was Tokofsky in the 5th district. Often cited as the original Latino district, Tokofsky had been elected four years previously in a controversial election that questioned ethnicity and representation. Not surprisingly, Tokofsky's main challenger was a Latina. Yolie Flores Aguilar predicated her campaign on the same rhetoric that other Coalition candidates were using. Mainly, she accused Tokofsky of micromanagement and of being part of the problem, not the solution. Fortunately for Tokofsky he was not only able to secure Riordan's endorsement, he was also able to raise roughly \$200,000 on his own from local Latino sources. With the Coalition's \$68,000 contribution late in the race, Tokofsky had more than twice the resources of Aguilar. Tokofsky's real accomplishment lay in his ability to garner support from influential Latino officials like Assembly Speaker Villaraigosa. These endorsements coupled with his espoused commitment to rooting out bureaucratic inefficiency enabled Tokofsky squeak by with yet another very close victory in District 5.¹³³

While the campaign in District 5 was unpleasant, the most divisive fight in the 1999 school board elections had to be in District 1 between incumbent Barbara Boudreaux and challenger Genethis Hayes. Boudreaux was considered an "old-style civil rights activist" and had so much support in her district that no one had opposed her in the 1995 election. Councilwoman Rita Walters, U.S. Representatives Maxine Waters and Julian Dixon, AALA, other school employee unions and the AME Southern California Ministerial Alliance endorsed Boudreaux. Her opponent, Genethia Hayes, was endorsed by Riordan & McKinzie; civil rights attorney Connie Rice; Rev. William Epps of Second Baptist Church; Arturo

¹³² Smith, "Candidates," *LAT*, Mar. 18 1999; Sahagun, "Schools Candidates Trade Barbs at Last Forum," *LAT*, Apr. 8 1999; Orlov, "Mayor-Backed Candidates," *DN*, Apr. 2 1999; Sahagun & Doug Smith, "Issues May Be Scarce," *LAT*, Apr. 11 1999; & Staff, "Election Results: Primary," *LAT*, Apr. 13 1999.

¹³³ Smith, "Candidates," *LAT*, Mar. 18 1999; Sahagun & Doug Smith, "Issues May Be Scarce," *LAT*, Apr. 11 1999; Baker, "School Reform Wins," *DN*, Apr. 14 1999; Fears & Olivio, "Results Suggest Race Card's Power in Elections Is Fading," *LAT*, Apr. 15 1999; & Hong & Sahagun, "Holden Forced Into Runoff; Tokofsky Wins," *LAT*, Apr. 24 1999.



Ybarra of the Watts Century Latino Organization; Lillian Mobley, executive director of the South-Central Multipurpose Senior Center; IBEW Local 18 and UTLA. With the backing of both Riordan and UTLA, Hayes was able to spend over \$200,000 by the first week of April, four times as much as Boudreaux. Between them both they had raised \$1 million, which had to have been a record for school board primaries.¹³⁴

Like the 1991 District 1 campaign, both candidates were black and had lived in the district for years. This did not prevent Boudreaux from using race as a factor in the election. Genethia Hayes was the executive director of the Southern California Leadership Conference of greater Los Angeles and was supported by many in the civil rights community. It was her affiliation with Riordan that allowed Boudreaux to attack Hayes's blackness. Boudreaux capitalized on the mayor's unfavorable status in the African American community and portrayed herself as someone who had not "abandoned" her blackness. She alluded to Hayes when she said that "Many African Americans have sold out their own people for dollars, and many of my voters know who they are." Hayes then accused Boudreaux of being "divisive" whereas she herself would expand programs in order to "reduce inter-ethnic rivalries." The issue of race and Riordan's support would be themes throughout the campaign for District 1.¹³⁵

In debates, Hayes tried to cite Boudreaux's eight years on the school board as a reason for voting her out. Hayes contended that the low-test scores, lack of textbooks and other school supplies were signs that Boudreaux was not doing her job. This was "not only heartbreaking" but also "unethical and immoral especially since education is the only way children of color have to level the playing field" according to Hayes. Clearly Hayes was using this as evidence that Boudreaux was not really a civil rights advocate. In the next forum, Boudreaux and her supporters again attacked Hayes's connection to Riordan. They accused her of "plantation politics" and they accused Riordan of trying to "anoint, select and

¹³⁴ Sahagun, "Seniors," *LAT*, Mar. 22 1999; Orlov, "Mayor-Backed Candidates," *DN*, Apr. 2 1999; & Sahagun, "School Board Hopefuls' Forum Erupts in Shouts," *LAT*, Apr. 10 1999.

¹³⁵ Sahagun, "Seniors," *LAT*, Mar. 22 1999 & Sahagun, "School Candidate Calls for Reform," *LAT*, Mar. 26 1999.


finance candidates of their choice to govern our future.” Hayes resolutely stuck by her claim of independence and stated that Riordan “backed her after she had decided to run.” Whatever the case, the community was divided between the two candidates.¹³⁶

This divide in the community was evident in the election returns. 47% of voters chose Hayes, while 46% of voters chose Boudreaux. Since neither candidate received the majority, a general election would be held in June. Commentators were unsure what this result meant. Some felt that Boudreaux’s “race card got trumped” because she finished 1% behind Hayes. Others felt that her tactics of labeling Hayes an outsider due to her affiliation with Riordan helped to combat the considerable disparity between Boudreaux’s campaign budget and Hayes’s. Yet they also felt that Hayes got this money because she was more open to the different ethnic groups that were increasingly calling the 1st district home. Whatever the meaning behind the results, the outcome of the election surly meant that the community was in for another round of accusations and countercharges involving racial issues.¹³⁷

With the election of three Coalition candidates and Hayes’s UTLA support, Boudreaux was facing an uphill battle. She accused the opposition of vandalizing her house and attacking her teenaged granddaughter just two weeks before the election. This, along with her repeated accusations of “plantation politics,” brought her campaign under greater scrutiny, not Hayes’s. She did change tact from her previous campaign, in that she tried to focus on the gains made during her tenure. Boudreaux cited slowly rising test scores, rising attendance, and falling dropout rates as signs of her successes. She stated that she would “stick with existing programs,” she “will not be bought, and [she] will not compromise.”

¹³⁶ Sahagun, “School Candidate,” *LAT*, Mar. 26 1999 and Sahagun, “School Board,” *LAT*, Apr. 10 1999.

¹³⁷ Fears & Olivio, “Results Suggest,” *LAT*, Apr. 15 1999.



Boudreaux was fighting for her political life and she did not leave any stone unturned.¹³⁸

As for Hayes, her background in education and local civil rights groups were attractive to supporters and voters. Hayes had taught in LAUSD for five years and had also been a principal of a private school for five years. She had taught parenting classes, was a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and was a consultant for the state Department of Education. She promoted herself as a “seasoned coalition builder” and exercised this skill by also focusing on Latinos, a small but growing group in the community. She claimed that her experience in both education and business would give her the knowledge to run the district. Hayes called for an audit and a review of central staff in order to reform the district from the inside out. She denied that poverty was the culprit behind poor test scores and academic problems. Instead she reasoned that District 1 and therefore its students had been deprived of “critical resources for so long.” For Hayes, race was not the primary campaign topic, failing schools was.¹³⁹

The most outstanding part of Hayes’s campaign had nothing to do with rhetoric and everything to do with cash. Hayes was able to raise over \$300,000 after the primary. Her largest donors were the Coalition, CTA and UTLA. By the end of the election she would set a record for most collected at \$834,658 for both the primary and the general election. Despite this daunting figure, Boudreaux was not completely out of the race. She had the support of AALA and almost every prominent African American elected official in the state and in Los Angeles. Celes King III, head of the Congress for Racial Equality, expressed what many of these leaders felt. King said, “I know and like both candidates...But I have problems with outsiders trying to take away the initiating portions of the election

¹³⁸ Sahagun, “Boudreaux Says Foe’s Camp May Be Involved in Beating,” *LAT*, May 27 1999; Hong, & Sahagun, “Candidates Trade Charges in School Board Debate,” *LAT*, May 27 1999; & Sahagun, “Boudreaux, Hayes Offer Voters a Clear Choice,” *LAT*, May 30 1999.

¹³⁹ Sahagun, “Boudreaux, Hayes,” *LAT*, May 30 1999.


process in this community.” In total, Boudreaux raised an impressive \$462,413 to finance her entire campaign.¹⁴⁰

Despite the intense political wrangling involved in the race and the record amount of money spent on the campaigns, the Los Angeles County Registrars Office predicted a turnout of only 20%. To sway these voters, Boudreaux broadcasted a radio spot the night before the election with Representative Waters and Supervisor Burke extolling her accomplishments as a board member. Many of her supporters felt that the move was too late and her campaign had been derailed by her attacks on Hayes and Riordan. On election night Boudreaux accused the mayor of being “power drunk” and she believed her loss was due to running out of money. Whatever the case, Hayes won a narrow victory of 51% to 49%. This victory gave Riordan’s faction four members on the board and was touted as a “successful overthrow” of the board.¹⁴¹

The real test of the elections’ importance would come after the mayor’s slate was sworn in. One immediate affect was that *The Times* ran all four board members’ inaugural speeches for the first time in its over ninety year history of covering school board elections. Defeated incumbent Horton doubted that even a majority could get much done. He stated that they should continue the reforms the current board had implemented and that “They will discover there is no magic wand.” Former board member Councilwoman Jackie Goldberg reminded the winners that they spent \$2 million to create “the most negative attitudes toward public education in the history of this city, and now it’s their job to change that.” While the rhetoric of the campaigns was undeniably disparaging of the district, it did build on an existing dissatisfaction with the district. The difference was that this discontent was now

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.; and Sahagun, “Boudreaux Says,” *LAT*, May 27 1999; Sahagun, “Hayes on Way to Victory in Schools Race,” *LAT*, June 9 1999.

¹⁴¹ Sahagun, “Boudreaux, Hayes,” *LAT*, May 30 1999; Sahagun, “Hayes on Way,” *LAT*, June 9 1999; Staff, “Election Returns: June 8 Election,” *LAT*, June 16 1999; & Newton, “Riordan Emerges as Election’s Big Victor,” *LAT*, June 10 1999.



directed at the school board and not the entities that controlled finances of the district as in the past.¹⁴²

As for the victorious candidates, they believed that the tasks ahead of them were challenging yet possible. Many of them did not have a platform of their own, so they adopted the recommendations of the Committee on Effective School Governance. This encompassed a business model of running the school district which included “setting broad goals, demanding accountability and staying out of day-to-day details of running” the district. To start with, the new board members wanted to redirect more money and resources to reading and math, order an audit of the district, shorten meetings and focus on high policy decisions, not micromanage the superintendent.¹⁴³

Whether or not the members would engage in implementing the policy remained to be seen, but members of the Committee were confident that not only would the members follow their recommendations, but that the new policies would work. Head of the Committee Harold Williams pledged that his group would make sure that there would be implementation. He said, “Either as friends or as watchdogs, we will be there.” Another prominent member of the Committee, Virgil Roberts, cautioned that the reforms would not take place overnight, yet the victories “will make a difference.” Fernando Guerra, head of the Center for the Study of Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University, felt that success was assured due to the “clear mandate from voters and an influx of new funds from state reform initiatives and Proposition BB.” Even *The Times* Editorial Desk got into the love fest and claimed that “The new majority shares a commitment to a better way of doing business on behalf of the nearly 700,000 children who attend

¹⁴² Hayes, “Los Angeles School Board Member Genethia Hayes Inaugural Address,” *LAT*, July 21 1999; Lansing, “Los Angeles School Board Member Mike Lansing Inaugural Address,” *LAT*, July 21, 1999; Tokofsky, “Los Angeles School Board Member David Tokofsky Inaugural Address,” *LAT*, July 21 1999; Young, “Los Angeles School Board Member Caprice Young Inaugural Address,” *LAT*, July 21 1999; Smith, “Two on Riordan’s School Slate Declare Victory,” *LAT*, Apr. 14 1999; & Sahagun & Smith, “Riordan Takes Pride in School Slate’s Showing,” *LAT*, Apr. 15 1999.

¹⁴³ Baker, “School Reform Wins,” *DN*, Apr. 14 1999; Smith, “Two,” *LAT*, Apr. 14 1999; & Sahagun & Smith, “Buoyed by Hayes’ Win, School Reformers Plan Major Changes,” *LAT*, June 10 1999.

public schools in the district.” They even felt that UTLA was neutralized because the candidates it had backed also had major support from the Coalition. While the commentators were hopeful, the school board still faced some difficult obstacles.¹⁴⁴

The obstacles the board faced ranged from the mundane to the profound. The mundane consisted of listening to the complaints of parents, employees, and students as the “court of last resort.” The profound would be the deep contentions that existed on the board, which had been exacerbated by the negative campaigns conducted by the incoming members and the resentment on the part of certain factions over Riordan’s interference. While one new member, Caprice Young, recognized the impediments and “cautioned against expecting massive improvements overnight,” others perhaps failed to see the difficulties. Riordan was especially gleeful after the victories having previously claimed that the current board was “evil and inept.” He felt that the election was “the first step in the revolution needed to change the disaster of Los Angeles education” and that the achievement “sent a message, a loud and clear message, that the system is in disgrace and needs to change.” Whether or not the change enacted by the 1999 school board election was substantial or just window dressing remained to be seen.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. & Editorial, “A Needed Broom to the Board,” *LAT*, June 10 1999.

¹⁴⁵ Sahagun & Smith, “Riordan Takes Pride,” *LAT*, Apr. 15 1999; Smith, “Buoyed,” *LAT*, June 10 1999; Baker, “School Reform Wins,” *DN*, Apr. 14 1999; & Orlov, “Riordan Works Election Overtime,” *DN*, Apr. 13 1999.



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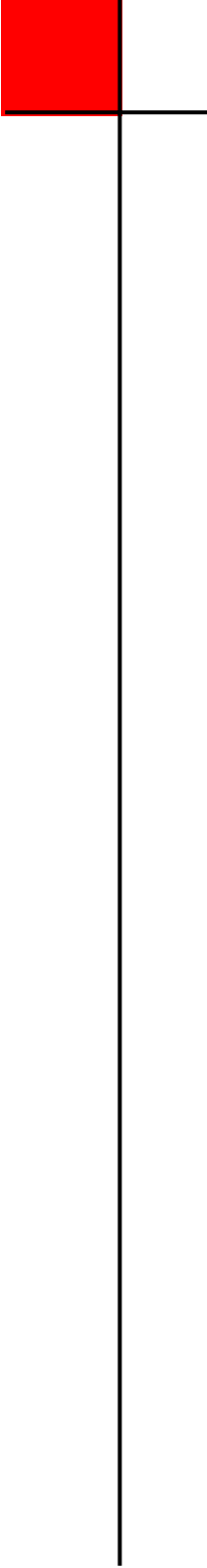
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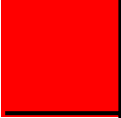
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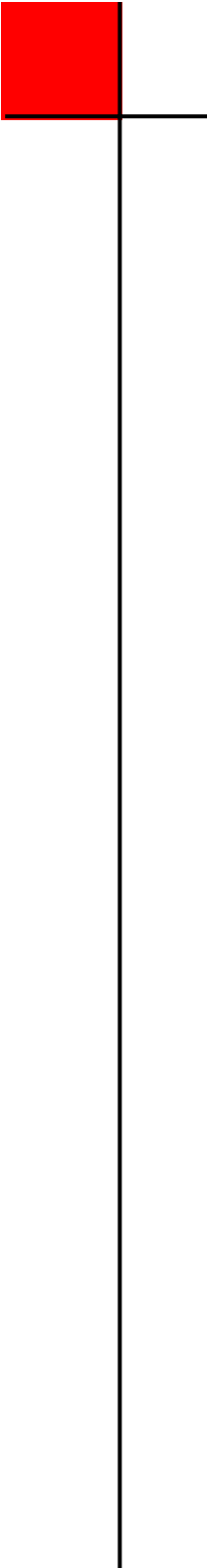
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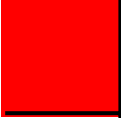
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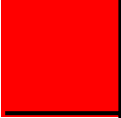
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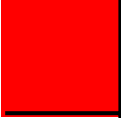
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