

MEMORANDUM

TO: Joan Buchanan for Senate
FROM: Mark Bunge, Garin-Hart-Yang Research
DATE: January 14, 2015
RE: Key Findings from SD-7 Special Election Survey

On behalf of Joan Buchanan for Senate, Garin-Hart-Yang Research recently completed a survey among a representative sample of 401 voters in California’s SD-7 who are likely to participate in the upcoming special election to fill DeSaulnier’s vacant Senate seat. Our sample was based on a very conservative electoral model in anticipation of a low-turnout special election. Interviewing was conducted on January 12, 2015, and the survey has an overall margin of error of ±4.9 percentage points.

Among the four declared candidates in the SD-7 special election, Assemblywoman Buchanan is the best known, best liked, and the clear favorite to win in March.

- We tested name recognition and favorability toward the four candidates who have announced their intentions to compete for the vacant SD-7 seat. Assemblywoman Buchanan enters the race with (by far) the highest name ID and the best favorability ratings, giving her a major head start and significant advantage in a compressed campaign.**

District-wide, two-thirds (65%) of likely special election voters already know Joan Buchanan, giving her twice the name recognition of Susan Bonilla (33%). Democrat Terry Kremin (8%) and Republican Mark Meuser (17%) are virtual unknowns. In a special election that is likely to garner only modest attention, Bonilla’s name ID deficit is a significant disadvantage and an extremely steep hill for her to climb in just two months.

Name Recognition and Favorability			
	Positive Feelings %	Negative Feelings %	Total Name ID %
SD-7 Candidates			
Joan Buchanan	31	12	65
Susan Bonilla	14	5	33
Terry Kremin	2	0	8
Mark Meuser	5	1	17
Other Public Figures			
Jerry Brown	60	25	98
Mark DeSaulnier	34	12	61
Steve Glazer	16	13	49
Catharine Baker	26	9	53

Assemblywoman Buchanan also enters the race with excellent favorability ratings. Among all voters, Buchanan has a positive favorability ratio of nearly three to one, with 31% expressing positive feelings to just 12% negative. Both Democrats (43% positive, 6% negative) and DTS voters (36% positive, 8% negative) express overwhelmingly positive feelings toward Buchanan. Assemblywoman Bonilla has a similar favorability ratio at 14% positive to 5% negative, but again, two-thirds of voters do not know enough about her to express an opinion either way.

Importantly, voters who already know both Democratic assemblywomen are more favorable toward Joan Buchanan. Buchanan’s favorability ratings (54% positive, 18% negative) are notably higher than Bonilla’s (42% positive, 15% negative) among voters who are familiar with both candidates. Historically this is an important portent of what is likely to happen as the campaign unfolds and voters learn more about the candidates.

- 2. Joan Buchanan’s name ID and favorability advantages translate into a strong lead over Bonilla in the vote for state Senate.** Buchanan enters the race with a 17-point lead (29% to 12%) over Bonilla in the four-way trial heat, driven by a big advantage among registered Democrats, who prefer Buchanan over Bonilla by 46% to 18%. Buchanan also leads Bonilla 24% to 14% among DTS voters. Despite being relatively unknown, Meuser stands in second place by virtue of being the only Republican in the race and receiving the lion’s share of the Republican vote. A quarter of likely voters are undecided, which is to be expected in an election that hasn’t been formally announced yet.

Voter Preference in SD-7 Special Election: 4-Way Vote

Joan Buchanan, a Democrat, California state assembly member	29%
Susan Bonilla, a Democrat, state legislator, and teacher	12%
Terry Kremin, a Democrat, mechanic, scientist, and teacher	3%
Mark Meuser, a Republican, counselor at law	26%
None/other (volunteered)	4%
Undecided	26%

We also tested Buchanan and Bonilla head-to-head in a two-way trial heat, which Buchanan leads by more than two to one (38% to 17%), including a 49%-to-20% lead among registered Democrats.

Voter Preference in SD-7 Special Election: Head-to-Head

Joan Buchanan, a Democrat, California state assembly member	38%
Susan Bonilla, a Democrat, state legislator, and teacher	17%
Neither/other (volunteered)	10%
Undecided	35%

- 3. Joan Buchanan’s advantage over Bonilla is a function of her larger base within SD-7, but also having a stronger profile outside of her base.** Three-quarters of voters in AD-16 know Joan Buchanan, where her favorability rating stands at 40% positive to 14% negative. In Bonilla’s 14th Assembly District, 75% of voters know the assemblywoman, and she holds a favorability rating of 37% positive to 15% negative.

However, Buchanan’s former district, AD-16, includes fully 60% of the voters in the 7th Senate District, while Bonilla represents just 20% of the district in AD-14. Moreover, fully half of the voters *outside* of AD-16 know Buchanan, while just a quarter of the voters outside of AD-14 know Bonilla.