

[Gray Davis Recall](#)

Field takes shape

Garamendi reverses course, steps aside; at least 155 in contest for governorship

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SACRAMENTO – Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi suddenly dropped out of the governor's race yesterday, providing the latest drama surrounding the Oct. 7 recall election, which has been marked by suspense, intrigue and Hollywood glitz.

Garamendi's reversal, on the last day of a star-studded candidate filing period, potentially means Democrats will ignite behind one major alternative candidate is Gov. Gray Davis is recalled – Lt. Gov, Cruz Bustamante.

By contrast, four high-profile Republicans will be on the ballot: actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, former baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth, Los Angeles businessman Bill Simon and state Sen. Tom McClintock of Thousand Oaks.

The easy nomination requirements – \$3,500 and 65 signatures of registered voters – led to a broad and bizarre field of 155 candidates that includes former child actor Gary Coleman; *Hustler* magazine publisher Larry Flynt; a 100-year-old woman; and Donald A. Novello, a comedian who since the 1970s has played Father Guido Sarducci.

The spectacle has become a national media fixation at the expense of California, which has been the subject of late-night television jokes and the rolling of eyes from coast to coast.

Even California Supreme Court Chief Justice Ronald George complained of the "circuslike" atmosphere created by the ease of getting on the ballot.

Garamendi dropped out of the race less than 24 hours after assuring reporters he was in for the long haul. In June, he said he didn't intend to run. On Thursday, he entered the race, offering his 25 years of experience to voters.

But yesterday afternoon, the ambitious politician who had twice run for governor decided to end his three-day campaign.

"The utter confusion, the chaos and the deep, deep concern that people have is not going to be helped by my candidacy in this race. It is only going to lead to more confusion and further divide the state," he said outside the Secretary of State's office.

Garamendi denied he was swayed by pressure from Democratic Party officials urging him to withdraw.

California labor leader Art Pulaski, who had urged all Democrats to stay off the ballot, said he had spoken with Garamendi several times during the past 24 hours. He praised Garamendi's decision, calling it a "selfless act."

"Today he made a personal sacrifice in order to protect the state from a takeover by those who seek to dismantle everything he has worked for during his years of public service," said Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation.

Bustamante also applauded his one-time rival's decision. "The Democratic Party is united around the slogan that I introduced Thursday morning: no on recall, yes on Bustamante," said Bustamante, depicting himself as a fallback for Democrats.

Davis and his supporters had tried to keep all other Democrats off the ballot. The governor believed Democratic and swing voters would be more likely to vote against recalling him if they had no alternative. But some Democrats viewed that as a risky strategy that could land a Republican in the governor's office.

The recall ballot will be divided into two parts. Voters first must decide whether to vote Davis out of office, and then choose who should replace him if he is ousted. If a majority votes to recall Davis, the candidate with the most votes will be governor.

Few, if any, prominent Democrats or consultants believed that Garamendi's candidacy would do anything but split the Democratic vote.

Garamendi's surprise announcement came only days after U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Vista, suddenly dropped out of the race moments before he was to file his papers – even though he had bankrolled the recall effort with \$1.7 million of his own money.

The recall campaign was launched earlier this year by Republican activists, but it foundered until Issa, who initially opposed the effort, opened his checkbook.

Davis became a recall target as the state budget deficit grew to \$38 billion and critics blamed him for mismanaging state finances. The budget crisis came on the heels of the state's energy crisis, which was not of Davis' making, though his handling of it was widely criticized.

Davis' defenders blame the budget deficit on the sluggish economy and the unwillingness of Republicans to raise taxes. Among other things, they criticize the recall election because it will cost \$65 million, by some estimates.

Yesterday, Davis underscored that he is on the job as governor – something his campaign intends to highlight in the coming weeks.

At a Santa Monica news conference, he signed legislation that will phase out hazardous chemicals, called PBDEs, used as flame retardants in products ranging from computers to automobiles.

"Many people are trying to become the governor. I am the governor," Davis said to laughter. "Whether the people of the state want me to stay 60 days or three-and-a-half years – as hopefully they will eventually decide – I am going to do my level best to improve their lives every day I have."

Schwarzenegger, Simon and Ueberroth turned in their candidacy papers yesterday.

Schwarzenegger, who announced his decision to run for governor on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" on Wednesday, filed his papers at the Los Angeles County recorder's office while signing autographs.

"I will be there for everybody, young and old, men and women alike, it doesn't make any difference," the Austrian-born actor said.

Schwarzenegger arrived with his wife, television journalist Maria Shriver, at the same time as another candidate, Arianna Huffington. Huffington and Shriver hugged. Still, Huffington, a one-time conservative who now crusades for environmental causes, contrasted her fuel-efficient electric hybrid car with Schwarzenegger's gas-guzzling SUV.

Some crowd members booed the columnist and yelled "Arnold, Arnold."

Simon, the Republican who lost to Davis by 5 percentage points last November, said many people told him that they wished they had voted for him in the last election.

The millionaire businessman, who has never held elective office, announced a plan to cut the deficit by getting rid of fraud, waste and inefficient programs.

Ueberroth, the chief organizer of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, filed his papers in Orange County.

Though a Republican, the 65-year-old Ueberroth plans to campaign as an independent and has positioned himself as an elder statesman who can bridge the gap between Republicans and Democrats. If elected, he said, he would serve only the remainder of Davis' term, which ends in 2007, and would not run for re-election.

The Oct. 7 recall election is the first in the state's history involving a statewide official. Only one U.S. governor, Lynn Frazier of North Dakota, has ever been recalled. That was in 1921.

In San Diego County, nine people had qualified as replacement candidates as of yesterday, from a Rancho Santa Fe golf pro to a Realtor to a scientist, according to the county Registrar of Voters Office.

Also, Nathan Whitecloud Walton, son of basketball Hall of Famer Bill Walton, filed candidacy papers. Walton, who has plans to attend graduate school at Stanford this fall, said he will advocate student issues.

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