

# The 'Wrinkle' in LA Democrats' Plans

By Victor Davis Hanson

This Tuesday, June 2, there are many national, state, and local races throughout the country. Here in California, we're looking at the [governor's race](#) to see if Steve Hilton can pull off an upset against Xavier Becerra and Tom Steyer and others, but especially the Los Angeles mayor's race.



Usually, we don't look at these races very carefully in California, or indeed any blue state, because they're shoo-ins for Democrat candidates. But this one's a little different for a variety of reasons.

Right now, in this huge field, there are three candidates. One, nominally Republican, although at times he's been an independent, [Spencer Pratt](#), with no prior political experience.

He was a real TV star a few years ago. And then there's the incumbent mayor, Karen Bass, and a city councilman, City Councilman [Nithya] Raman. And they're all polling variously between 21% and 25%, which suggests the race now is among those three.

Ostensibly, again ostensibly, Bass and Raman have the advantage because Los Angeles has flipped from a once conservative city in the 1960s and '70s to radically left due to immigration and outmigration.

But there's a little wrinkle to it. Pratt's not really identifiable as a MAGA Republican, and he's not talking about national issues. He's talking about local issues.

So, although he suffers from the reality that conservatives are not liked in Los Angeles, he's running against two far-left candidates who may in fact split the vote.

Now, the polls themselves are problematic because of two things. One, as we learned in the 2024 race, when the Harvard, NPR, or the Harris NPR poll the night before the balloting began in person said that Kamala Harris would win beyond the margin of error—that would be 4%—and of course, she lost by 1.5%.

They were 5.5%. We got the suspicion that many of those polls were designed to create momentum. So, the polls that show Bass or Raman ahead, I think, would show bias.

But on the other hand, as you can see from some of Spencer Pratt's online commercials, there's a sense that it's socially and culturally unacceptable in LA among many people on the left to say that you would even consider voting for Spencer Pratt.

In other words, if somebody calls you up on the phone and asks who you're going to vote for, and given our suspicion of surveillance and intrusion of our personal data, a lot of

people won't answer the question, or they'll say that they're not going to vote for Pratt because it's socially unacceptable.

But we do know one thing about the polls. Pratt was down at 8% to 10%—and now he's roughly equal with Raman and Bass themselves. Why is that? Because Bass is an incumbent, and her record is utterly indefensible.

She wouldn't allow people to clean the hillsides of Los Angeles during the high-wind period, when the ground is dry and the winds are up from the ocean, and that's when fires take place.

Where was she? She was in [Ghana]. Why? Who knows? A personal matter, a wedding of a friend, something.

The vice mayor was being detained for phoning in a bomb threat. The water and power woman was incompetent. She had been paid \$700,000. A reservoir that would have saved the Palisades was empty. The fire hydrants wouldn't work.

I could go on and on. And when you look at the homeless problem, that she spent billions of dollars, maybe as many as \$85,000 per homeless person, it's gotten no better, if not worse. MacArthur Park is an open drug den. Housing is still unaffordable. The downtown has been wrecked. People are leaving offices.

Law firms are leaving their offices. It's a mess. Everything about Los Angeles is a mess. And this was a vibrant city in the '80s and at the millennium, where the downtown was reinvigorated. It was booming, and Los Angeles was eclipsing even San Francisco. And that has not happened. It's a mess.

And that's what Pratt is running on. He's not running on the border. He's not running on immigration. He's not running on Iran. He's not running on communism or not. What he is saying is these people are ideologues.

He has two parts of his message. You cannot afford to live in Los Angeles. Gasoline is too high, food is too high, and especially housing—whether you own the house or you rent it—is too high.

Los Angeles is not a safe place. Why is it not safe? Because until recently, the public attorneys, the district attorneys in LA County, were letting people out without cash bail. No cash, just get out. Police arrest them, they were returned, and that destroyed all deterrence. Taxes were too high. Too many regulations.

So, the Palisades has been burned for over a year. It's not even beginning to be rebuilt. Why? Because either there are too many regulations in general, or the Left has had ideological dreams that this is a golden opportunity to take one of the most picturesque and beautiful communities in the United States before the fire and turn it into a social lab experience of high density—who knows—high-rises, a subway coming in, or something.

They have all these European ideas about how the Palisades would work under the rubric of affordable housing. Something, though, is going on because the momentum right now—if the election was held in two weeks—Spencer Pratt would win, I think.

I don't know if he'd get a 51% majority in the primaries, but he would probably beat Karen Bass. And why is that? Because they haven't heard any viable, logical, rational defense when she's on television or she tries to defend herself.

She's worried about what? Meth people who ingest dangerous drugs might have poor teeth, and that's something that she's going to address, I suppose, when people who don't take meth and pay for their own dentistry don't have a house, or they're assaulted with impunity by criminals.

She's not worried about those people. And remember, she was a

person who, a dozen or more times as a student and a young person, went to [Fidel] Castro's Cuba to show her solidarity.

But what's going on is people of all different stripes—Republican, Democrat, independent—are saying that this is a dysfunctional society, and it's a dysfunctional society because this blue-state, blue-city model doesn't work.

This is not the Democratic Party of Bill Clinton. It has no familiarity, no resemblance to what the Democrats were saying at their national conventions in 1992 and 1996.

This is a dysfunctional, dystopian city. And if we don't do something about it, even in the unlikely guise of a former reality TV star, at least he is offering concrete solutions to concrete problems.

And finally, there's one last tweak to this story. He has friends who are brilliant. I'm not suggesting that he's authorizing or paying for them, but the artificial intelligence commercials that are coming out have really revolutionized political campaigning.

It's almost as if you don't have to pay a million dollars to cut a video commercial. You can get people in their garages with laptops who can do a much better job. They're funny. They're caricatures. And they explain in large part his grassroots insurgent campaign.

So, besides his unorthodox style and his eccentric idea that we're not going to talk about politics, we're going to talk about solutions, he's campaigning in a different way.

And when he shows up in the inner city, in predominantly black and Hispanic neighborhoods, that message resonates—resonates in a way that defies DEI conventionality. He's saying to the people, the subtext: I'm not a DEI candidate. The two DEI candidates play to racial or ethnic solidarity. I don't.

I play to you as humans who share human problems with everybody, regardless of how they look. Who knows? That might be a winning message for a change.

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