Governor

Open seat (Gavin Newsom term-limited). Under the top-two system, Xavier Becerra (D, 28.0%) and Steve Hilton (R, 24.6%) advanced from the June 2 primary. Rated Solid Democratic by Cook Political Report (Oct 2026).



Xavier Becerra

DEMOCRAT · OPEN SEAT

Former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, California attorney general and U.S. Representative.



Steve Hilton

REPUBLICAN · OPEN SEAT

Former Fox News host and senior adviser to U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron.

Where the candidates stand on the issues Pope Leo XIV has raised, in their own words and votes. Bracketed numbers link to sources. We do not rate, score, or endorse candidates.

WAR & PEACE

POPE LEO XIV *Leo invited citizens of every country involved in the war with Iran to contact their leaders and members of Congress "to work for peace and to reject war and violence."* Remarks at Castel Gandolfo, Apr. 7, 2026 (Vatican News via The Good Newsroom)

XAVIER BECERRA

Calls the Iran conflict a reckless foreign war by President Trump and blames it for higher gas prices, saying getting Trump to end it is the first step.

[1] CalMatters en Español: governor's race
[2] ABC30: debate clash

STEVE HILTON

Has said he would sue any California city that boycotts Israel in violation of law and that the state should increase business with Israel.

[1] OnTheIssues: Steve Hilton

AI & THE DIGNITY OF WORK

POPE LEO XIV *"No one can be reduced to productivity, to cognitive performance, or to mere data."* Magnifica Humanitas presentation, May 25, 2026

XAVIER BECERRA

AI plan says "Workers Must Share in the Gains": track job displacement, fund retraining, hear affected public employees before automation, and require human review of high-stakes automated decisions; backs strengthening state AI safety laws.

[1] Becerra campaign: Artificial Intelligence

STEVE HILTON

Says AI companies' priority must be safety, through their own action or regulation, and backs pausing AI use in classrooms for young students; criticizes labor rules he says raise costs and lower wages, especially in agriculture.

[1] ABC30: debate clash
[2] Newsweek: key issues before CNN debate
[3] Ballotpedia: Steve Hilton

THE POOR & THE SAFETY NET

POPE LEO XIV *The preferential choice for the poor is "a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society."* Dilexi Te, Oct. 4, 2025

XAVIER BECERRA

Pledges a Day One executive order to maintain coverage for Californians hit by federal Medi-Cal cuts and a fee on large employers whose low-wage workers rely on Medi-Cal; proposes free "Power Hour" electricity for low-income households.

[1] Becerra campaign: Health Care
[2] Newsweek: key issues before CNN debate

STEVE HILTON

Proposes no state income tax on the first $150,000 of income, paid for by cutting high-speed rail, homelessness nonprofits and state departments; opposes state-subsidized health care for undocumented immigrants.

[1] Newsweek: key issues before CNN debate
[2] OnTheIssues: Steve Hilton

ELECTIONS & CIVIC LIFE

POPE LEO XIV *Authentic democracy, "far from being a mere procedure," "recognizes the dignity of every person and calls each citizen to participate responsibly in the pursuit of the common good."* Message to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Apr. 9, 2026

XAVIER BECERRA

Opposes Proposition 39, the voter ID ballot measure. Says every vote should be counted and voting should be easier even if counting takes longer, calling unsubstantiated fraud claims an effort to make voting harder.

[1] CalMatters en Español: governor's race
[2] ABC7: Hilton on voter ID and vote counting

STEVE HILTON

Supports Proposition 39, the voter ID measure, saying ID would speed up vote counting by removing signature verification; said he has seen nothing suggesting fraud that would warrant intervention.

[1] OnTheIssues: Steve Hilton
[2] ABC7: Hilton on voter ID and vote counting

LIFE OF THE UNBORN

POPE LEO XIV *Abortion "cuts short a growing life and refuses to welcome the gift of life."* Address to the Diplomatic Corps, Jan. 9, 2026

XAVIER BECERRA

Campaign health plan pledges to protect "reproductive care" from federal restrictions; he cites defending reproductive rights against the Trump administration as attorney general.

[1] Becerra campaign: Health Care
[2] Becerra campaign: Fighting Donald Trump

STEVE HILTON

Has called abortion an "awful, awful outcome" and said he would encourage adoption and end taxpayer funding for "abortion tourism"; said he would allow Louisiana to extradite a Bay Area abortion doctor.

[1] KQED: Hilton on abortion extradition

THE DEATH PENALTY

POPE LEO XIV *Someone who opposes abortion but favors the death penalty "is not really pro-life."* AP via PBS NewsHour, Sept. 30, 2025

XAVIER BECERRA

Said in May 2026, "As Governor, I will extend California's moratorium on executions," calling capital punishment costly and flawed; as attorney general he defended death sentences in court.

[1] DPI: Becerra vows to extend moratorium

STEVE HILTON

Says he personally opposes the death penalty but would rescind California's execution moratorium, citing voters' rejection of repeal measures in 2012 and 2016.

[1] DPI: Becerra vows to extend moratorium

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

POPE LEO XIV *"Defending human life also includes welcoming, protecting and assisting immigrants."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

XAVIER BECERRA

Pledges a state lawsuit against federal immigration agencies over aggressive enforcement and cites defending Dreamers. Says most Americans do not want federal resources spent "going after people who are just going to work every day."

[1] CalMatters en Español: governor's race
[2] 10News: competing visions
[3] Becerra campaign: Fighting Donald Trump

STEVE HILTON

Supports full cooperation with ICE and prioritizing "the removal of dangerous criminals"; says "you've got to have a strong and secure border." Backs Trump's deportation effort but says farmworker deportations are the president's call.

[1] OnTheIssues: Steve Hilton
[2] 10News: competing visions
[3] KPBS: debate fact check

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY & EDUCATION

POPE LEO XIV *Religious freedom is "the right of every person to worship according to conscience."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

XAVIER BECERRA

No public position found.

STEVE HILTON

Would launch Education Savings Accounts and open enrollment, protect charter schools and restore "parent trigger" laws as steps toward "introducing school choice."

[1] OnTheIssues: Steve Hilton
[2] Ballotpedia: Steve Hilton

CARE FOR CREATION

POPE LEO XIV *"We cannot love God, whom we cannot see, while despising his creatures."* AP, Oct. 1, 2025

XAVIER BECERRA

Calls the clean-energy transition urgent but says climate action "only succeeds if it is affordable, reliable, and fair"; would treat clean energy and grid resilience as public investments and require data centers to use clean energy.

[1] Becerra campaign: Energy & Utilities
[2] Becerra campaign: Artificial Intelligence

STEVE HILTON

Pledges $3-a-gallon gas by increasing in-state oil production and rolling back regulations; would repeal climate mandates and opposes "forced electrification of farm and transportation vehicles."

[1] KPBS: debate fact check
[2] OnTheIssues: Steve Hilton
[3] Ballotpedia: Steve Hilton

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