

Endorsements



Over the next couple of weeks, the *Santa Barbara Independent* will be rolling out its endorsements for the March 5, 2024, primary election. If you are surprised to learn there's an election coming right up, you are hardly alone. In all the din of national and international news, the local and statewide races have not gotten the attention they should. Because of that, turnout is expected to be low. As a result, your vote matters more than ever.

Check our Election 2024 section (independent.com/election-2024) for continuing information on this year's primary and general elections. As always, the *Independent* only endorses in races that we have researched carefully. Thank you for considering our suggestions.

Register to vote at registertovote.ca.gov.

County Supervisor, 3rd District: Joan Hartmann

Of all the contests on the Santa Barbara ballot this March, the race for the County Board of Supervisors' 3rd District — which runs from western Goleta to Lompoc — is far and away the single most important.

The good news for those of you who live in the 3rd District: The choice has never been as easy. Or as imperative.

Joan Hartmann.

In the 40 years the *Independent* has been endorsing candidates for elected office, we've been lucky to encounter several exemplary political representatives. Hartmann, who is now seeking a third term, would rank among the top of the list. She brings to the position a rare intelligence and an exceptional commitment to public service. Few elected officials have been as willing to do the grinding work required to master the public policy minutia and complicated machinery of government that get things done. And no one works harder representing her constituents.

When people turn to Hartmann's office for help or to advance a cause, they don't always get what they want. But when they walk away, they know they have been heard.

And if you think that's easy, try it yourself.

Since first being appointed to the county Planning Commission in November 2012, Hartmann has been focused on one thing: Santa Barbara County.

Not Sacramento.

Not Washington, D.C.

But Santa Barbara County. And more specifically, the 3rd District.

What happens in the 3rd District matters greatly to everyone in the county. The 3rd is — and has always been — the key swing vote on the five-district Board of Supervisors. It can tip the balance toward the more conservative North County or the more liberal South County. On matters of oil, growth, housing, environment, public safety, climate change, and social justice — just to name a few — the philosophy and character of the 3rd District supervisor carries disproportionate weight.

Two years ago, the boundaries of the 3rd were changed. For the first time since 1970, the 3rd now no longer includes the reliably liberal voting bloc of Isla Vista's college students. Supervisor Hartmann now finds herself running for a newly drawn district in which half the voters aren't familiar with how remarkably hardworking and effective she is.

That's what makes your vote so imperative.

When the former 3rd District included the small and ignored City of Guadalupe, Hartmann made sure it got the best representation possible. Today, the 3rd includes Lompoc. For the past two years — when the new district lines were ratified — Hartmann has knocked her socks off making sure Lompoc no longer feels like the stepchild of local government.

When pressed for help in responding to Lompoc's homeless crisis — the worst in the county — Hartmann tried to help broker a deal to convert an old 60-room motel into permanent homeless housing. Ultimately, the City of Lompoc got cold feet. But not because Hartmann wasn't there.

Hartmann has also championed multiple economic initiatives to bring jobs, education, and training programs to Lompoc. She has supported revitalizing Lompoc's cultural



Joan Hartmann

INGRID BOSTROM

life, enthusiastically backing efforts to bring Lompoc's once-vibrant but long-dead downtown theater back to life.

We mention homelessness because when Isla Vista was still part of the 3rd District, Hartmann and her staff moved mountains during the COVID pandemic to bring order to the tent-city chaos overwhelming Isla Vista's parks. Hartmann encouraged the county fire marshal to declare the encampments a fire hazard, which allowed moving its occupants into an experimental tiny-home village managed by Good Samaritan, a tried-and-true organization specializing in homeless services. She then helped purchase a former Isla Vista sorority house and hired Good Samaritan, and now it is Hedges House of Hope, a supportive housing facility that's run with a conspicuous lack of melodrama. The tiny homes were then transported to a Lompoc shelter, where they remain desperately needed.

Hartmann and her competent staff got it done.

On energy development, Hartmann has been unequivocal: Climate change is real, and the time to wean ourselves off oil production — and the greenhouse gases generated — is now. Hartmann emphatically voted no to ExxonMobil and its convoluted efforts to restart production at its Gaviota refinery. Instead, Hartmann has voted yes to wind farms, solar energy, and green-powered alternatives.

On criminal justice reform, Hartmann has been focused on keeping mentally ill people out of County Jail's revolving door and putting them into treatment programs. It is a difficult balancing act involving safety, fiscal, and civil-rights issues, but Hartmann, not one to pound the table, has pushed, with soft-spoken diplomacy, to keep as few people behind bars as is humanly — and humanely — possible without compromising the safety of the public.

On housing, Hartmann has championed workforce, affordable housing, while stopping efforts to convert prime ag land into market-rate housing. Market-rate housing, Hartmann rightly insists, won't address the egregious housing crisis

ENDORSEMENTS SO FAR

U.S. PRESIDENT:

Joe Biden

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE, 24TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

Salud Carbajal

STATE SENATOR, 21ST DISTRICT:

Monique Limón

MEMBER OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY, 37TH DISTRICT:

Gregg Hart

COUNTY SUPERVISOR, 3RD DISTRICT:

Joan Hartmann

confronting county residents. How can the average working person hope to rent a home when the average market-rate studio now exceeds \$3,000 a month? Hartmann is right. They can't.

In her two terms in office, Hartmann has worked successfully to find nuanced solutions to complex problems. She is a major reason why the current Board of Supervisors — whose members represent many conflicting constituencies and political viewpoints — engage each other in a civil, productive manner. Notably, the table-banging is kept to a minimum. Instead, Hartmann does the work. And things get done. ■

