

# [***Katie Porter's star dims in failed US Senate bid, leaving the Californian facing an uncertain future***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BHJ-F4K1-JC5B-G4W9-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

March 10, 2024 Sunday 11:37 AM GMT

Copyright 2024 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

**Section:** POLITICAL NEWS

**Length:** 1049 words

**Byline:** MICHAEL R. BLOOD, AP Political Writer

**Dateline:** LOS ANGELES

**Body**

LOS ANGELES — U.S. Rep. Katie Porter became a social media celebrity by brandishing a white board at congressional hearings to dissect CEOs and break down complex figures into assaults on corporate greed, a signature image that propelled the Democrat’s U.S. Senate candidacy in California.

This time, her numbers didn’t add up.

The progressive favorite known for spotlighting her soccer mom, minivan-driving home life was trounced in Tuesday’s primary election to fill the seat once held by the late Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein, finishing far behind Republican Steve Garvey and fellow Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff.

Another established Democrat, Rep. Barbara Lee, finished even farther behind and will abandon her House seat at the end of the term. But it's Porter's departure from an up-for-grabs swing district in Southern California that could cost the party dearly in the fierce fight for control of the U.S. House.

Porter didn't go down quietly. She immediately pointed a finger at “billionaires spending millions to rig this election.” That claim resulted in a brutal social media backlash from many who were happy to depict the congresswoman as a graceless loser.

“Can we stop trying to excuse every loss with the term ‘rig’ or ‘rigged'?" veteran Florida Democratic operative Steve Schale wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Some likened her bitter words to former President Donald Trump’s baseless claims of election fraud in 2020 — not a kind comparison to make in Democratic circles.

The episode represented a messy coda to what once was seen as a top-shelf campaign likely headed for the November ballot. Instead, she is now dealing with stinging fallout from the loss and her reaction to it, and facing an uncertain future after her House term expires in early January.

Perhaps chastened by the criticism, Porter later clarified her initial statement to say she didn't believe the California vote count or election process had been compromised, but she didn't recant her earlier remarks. Rigged, she said in a follow-up, “means manipulated by dishonest means.”

Porter, known as a small-dollar fundraiser and a self-styled guardian of the middle class, was the first major candidate to enter the race in January 2023. At the time, she promised to be a “warrior” in Washington who would take on big banks, Wall Street and the pharmaceutical industry.

As for her future, political watchers in California say Porter could end up somewhere in the Biden administration, on Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom’s staff or perhaps be a candidate for another statewide office in 2026 — the race for governor is wide open. She was a consumer protection attorney before her election to the House, and her knack for wringing common-sense answers from questions that become clouded by political haze remains a marketable skill.

In what might not be a coincidence, Porter's campaign began raising money for President Joe Biden on Friday, urging her supporters in an email to “donate, knock (on) doors, make calls” to get the president reelected.

“I do think it will blow over,” said veteran Democratic consultant Roger Salazar. He called her rigged-election claims a “heat-of-the-moment” reaction to the millions of dollars spent against her by super political action committees.

That's pretty much the line Porter has taken. She faults outside spending for costing her a chance at the seat, hinting that she became a target after taking on powerful forces.

“As we’ve seen in this campaign, they spend millions to defeat someone who will dilute their influence and disrupt the status quo,” she wrote on X.

But Democratic strategists believe she made strategic mistakes that contributed to her downfall.

Democratic consultant Andrew Acosta said Porter’s steady attacks on Schiff probably alienated Democratic base voters who admire the congressman, who had been a leading voice in two Trump impeachments.

“Being the angry outsider is the role Republicans usually play,” Acosta said. “It doesn’t play with Democratic base voters.”

Porter said Schiff’s ads spotlighting Garvey’s conservative credentials by directing criticism mainly at him — in a kind of a carom shot that boosted his visibility among Republican and right-leaning voters — were a “brazenly cynical” attempt to box out female candidates. In other words, her and Lee.

Paul Mitchell of Political Data Inc., a research firm that closely tracks voting trends and works with Democrats, independent candidates and academics, said Porter was simply outmaneuvered. With a large fundraising advantage, he said, Schiff was able to define the race as a contest between him and the Republican Garvey.

To the average voter “a two-person race makes a lot more sense," Mitchell said. “It strengthened both of their brands.” A one-on-one contest is “the most easily digestible narrative in American ***politics***.”

On X, Porter wrote that “we had the establishment running scared — withstanding 3-to-1 in TV spending and an onslaught of billionaires spending millions to rig this election."

"Special interests like ***politics*** as it is today because they control the politicians,” she wrote.

But Acosta and others said practices bemoaned by Porter — a candidate trying to elevate a presumably weaker opponent, or political groups with little accountability spending millions — are commonplace.

It's “indicative of the world we live in today," Acosta said, adding that the days of polite concession speeches are over.

"Now, they throw a fit and blame the system,” he said.

Meanwhile, Porter left some Democrats rankled about the House seat she had to agree to vacate to run for the Senate. It's in danger of being seized by Republicans in November, with control of the closely divided chamber on the line.

Democratic state Sen. Dave Min will face Republican Scott Baugh in the competitive 47th District in Orange County, which both parties see as crucial to their chances of winning a majority.

When an incumbent steps out of a competitive district “it goes from relatively safe to up in the air,” noted Salazar. “The House is so tight \u2026 you don’t want to lose an opportunity.”

The prospect of losing a key House seat led to plenty of angsty comments on X, many framed in the kind of blunt terms Porter has long been known for.

“Katie," one commenter wrote, "you threw away your seat."

**Load-Date:** March 10, 2024

**End of Document**