

**Role profile for Melissa Huerta, CA State Senate District 16**

***Part 1: Individual/Organization Profile.***

- Legislators background
  - Name:Melissa Huerta
  - District:California State Senate District 16
  - Party affiliation:Democratic Party
  - Age: 37 Years Old
  - Gender: Female
  - Race: White
  - Ethnicity: Hispanic
  - Marital status: Married to Gurbet Tekinbas since (2022)
  - Education level: Bachelor of Arts in Political Science obtained from California State University, Sacramento.

- *Career background*

*Non-political*

→ Mellisa Hurtado was born in Sanger CA and grew up in the central valley. She is daughter of immigrant parents from Mexico, after she graduated with her bachelor's degree in political science from Sacramento state university she returned to the valley and served on the Sanger city council, working as a community organizer for public employees issues and improving civic engagement in underserved communities from 2016 until her election to the senate in November of 2018.

*Political*

→ Elected to the Sanger City Council in 2016, focusing on local issues such as neighborhood safety, infrastructure, and youth engagement. → In 2018 won election to the CA State Senate, District 14, in which she defeated republican incumbent Andy Vidak. After redistricting she was able to successfully run for newly drawn district 16 in 2022 in one of the closest races in CA history in which she won by 22 votes

- *Listed below is a collection of committees Melissa is/was involved in:*

*2023–2024 Session (Ballotpedia)*

Senate Agriculture Committee — Chair  
Environmental Quality Committee  
Senate Health Committee  
Senate Human Services Committee  
Natural Resources and Water Committee  
Climate Change Policies Committee

*2021–2022 Session (Ballotpedia)*

Senate Insurance Committee  
Senate Agriculture Committee — Vice Chair  
Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee

Senate Health Committee  
Senate Human Services Committee — Chair

*2019–2020 Session (Ballotpedia)*

Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Governance and Finance Committee  
Senate Health Committee  
Senate Human Services Committee — Chair  
Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

*- Number of years in current role*

→ She has held her current role (State Senator, District 16) since December 5, 2022. Which is about 2–3 years as of 2025.

*- % of vote received in the last general election*

→ In the last general election which was on Nov 8, 2022, she won with 50.0% of the vote 68,460 votes vs. her opponent's 50.0% 68,438 ( Extremely narrow margin).

*- 3 issue positions for which your politician is best known*

→ *The most important issue for senator Melissa Hurtado is ensuring reliable water access and resources for California's Central Valley. She advocates for policies that support farmers and strengthen agricultural communities.* → *Works to improve medical services and health infrastructure in underserved rural areas. Prioritizes equity in healthcare delivery for working families in the Valley. (In regards to Rural Healthcare Access).* → *Melissa also makes sure to address environmental health concerns, particularly poor air quality in the Valley. Creating champions programs that fight food insecurity and expand access to nutritious food. (In regard to Air quality and Food Security)*

*- Prominent donors to your politician's campaigns*

→ California Democratic Party – (Largest financial support). → County Democratic Central Committees – (Orange County DCC, Fresno County DCC, Tehama County DCC are top 3 contributors). → Labor Unions and Advocacy Groups – California Nurses Association, National Nurses Organizing Committee, Building A Stronger California (Sponsored by Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters Small Contributor Committee). → California Real Estate PAC (CREPAC) – California Association of Realtors and other professional associations.

Ideology on economic, social, and environmental issues

*- Ideology*

*Economic:* Positions herself as a moderate Democrat on economic issues, Melissa supports rural economic development which consist of caring for agricultural industries, infrastructure, and labor rights. Issues balance pro-worker policies with sensitivity to business and agricultural needs.

*Social:* Generally progressive, advocates for health care access in rural areas, equity for underserved communities, reproductive rights, and youth/family engagement. Plants to expand civic engagement and address inequities in health and education.

*Environmental:* Moderate to mixed record, in regard that Melissa publicly supports clean air, water, and climate resilience, but has sometimes voted in ways that environmental groups such as California Environmental Voters rate lower than other Democrats.

## ***Part 2: Constituent Profile***

### ***- Economics***

- Prominent industries: Agriculture is a major industry of District 16 the Central Valley. Additional employment sectors include health care, social assistance, educational services, and small manufacturing in certain towns.
- Unemployment rate: Residents aged 16+ are active in the labor force, but the district's employment-to-unemployment ratio is consistently lower than the state average. State and county-level data indicate that unemployment is higher than in most metropolitan districts, reflecting the region's rural, agriculture-dependent economy and its vulnerability to seasonal work cycles.
- Income levels: Per Capita Income \$22,513 roughly half of California's (\$47,977) and the U.S. average (\$43,289). The median household income is \$59,782  $\pm$  \$1,186 which consists of about three-fifths of California's median (\$96,334) and about three-quarters of the U.S. median (\$78,538). Income distribution skews lower are 42% of households earning under \$50K, a significantly higher proportion than state or national averages.
- Poverty rate: The overall poverty rate is 21.4%  $\pm$  0.8% which is around ~200,771 people, more than 1.5 times California's rate of 12% and well above the national average 12.4%. 29% of children under 18 live in poverty and 18% of Seniors 65+ live in poverty.

### ***- Demographics***

- Total Population: 969,728
- *Population breakdowns by race:*
  - White: 25-30%
  - Black/African American: 5-6%
  - Asian: 8-10%
  - Hispanic/Latino: 61-62%
- *Age: the media age is 30.3  $\pm$  0.2 years, compared to the 80% of the 38.7 year old media age.*
- *Younger population compared to both state and national averages mainly due to high young working-age adults.*
- *Sex: 475,940  $\pm$  ~3,957 for the male population and 481,001  $\pm$  ~3,770 for the female population.*
- *approximately 49.7% male / 50.3% female*

### ***- Urban/Rural breakdown***

- About 75–80% of District 16's *population* lives in Census-defined urban area
- Roughly 20–25% live in areas classified as rural.

### ***- Politics***

#### **Partisan voter registration**

The latest voter registration in parts of Fresno, Kern, Kings, and Tulare counties are:

- 40.47% Democratic Party:
- 28.93% Republican Party:
- 4.08% No Party Preference
- 0.34% Other Parties

#### **2020 presidential election**

- 63.5% Democrat
- 34.3% Republican

2016 presidential election

- 61.7% Democrat
- 31.6% Republican

2012 presidential election

- 59.3% Democrat
- 38.3% Republican

- Constituents general positions on economic, social & environmental issues.

Economic:

- There is broad backing for small businesses, labor protections, and programs addressing low-income households, reflecting the district's high poverty rates. Investments in infrastructure and economic growth initiatives, such as the California Farmworkers Drought and Flood Resilience Pilot Project, are also widely supported.
- District 16 is heavily influenced by agriculture and concerned with rural employment and small-town businesses.

Social:

- Healthcare access and rural medical services are major concerns, especially for families and seniors. Education funding and resources for K–12 and vocational programs are highly valued due to the district's young median age and high child poverty rate.
- Constituents prioritize food security, childcare, and social support programs. While some rural areas lean socially conservative, urbanized communities tend to be more progressive on diversity, immigration, and community engagement.

Environmental issues:

- Constituents prioritize water conservation and management to support Central Valley agriculture and address drought vulnerability.
- Improving air quality and mitigating pollution-related health risks are important, especially in urbanized towns and surrounding agricultural areas is crucial for the public health of district 16.
- Policies that enhance climate resilience, protect crops, water supply, and public health, while remaining agriculture-friendly, are strongly supported.

## Citations

OpenSecrets (<http://www.opensecrets.org/>)

Project Vote Smart (<http://www.votesmart.org/index.htm>)

Ballotpedia ([https://ballotpedia.org/Main\\_Page](https://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page))

IGS Research (<http://igs.berkeley.edu/library/research/govweb/>)

California Secretary of State (<http://www.sos.ca.gov/>)

Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov/>)

California Department of Finance (<http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/>)

Almanac of California Politics (book)

[https://sd16.senate.ca.gov/news/press-release/senator-hurtado-releases-statement-after-california-farmworker-climate-drought?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://sd16.senate.ca.gov/news/press-release/senator-hurtado-releases-statement-after-california-farmworker-climate-drought?utm_source=chatgpt.com)