

17 September 2025

Role Profile for John Laird, CA State Senate District 17

Part 1: Individual/Organization Profile

Legislator Background

- **Name:** John Laird
- **District:** California State District 17
- **Party Affiliation:** Democrat
- **Age:** 75
- **Gender:** Male
- **Race/Ethnicity:** White
- **Marital Status:** Married to husband, John Flores
- **Education level:** graduated with honors in politics from the University of California – Santa Cruz in 1972

Career breakdown:

- Non-political:

John Laird before becoming a state senator consists of local, state, and executive roles. Beginning with local politics on the Santa Cruz City Council from 1981 to 1990, then serving twice as mayor while simultaneously becoming one of the first openly gay mayors in the United States. Afterwards, he served on the Cabrillo College Board of Trustees from 1994 to 2002. Then elected to the California State Assembly in 2002, as he represented the 27th District through 2008, authored 82 bills that became law. Then joined the State Integrated Waste Management Board from 2008 to 2009 and later served as Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency under Governor Jerry Brown from 2011 to 2019.

Additionally, Laird worked as an executive director for the Santa Cruz AIDS Project, lectured environmental policy at UC Santa Cruz, hosted a public radio news program, and more.

- Political:

During his time in the State Senate, John Laird plays a major leadership role. He chairs the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education, serves as Vice Chair of both the Joint

Committee on Rules and the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, and sits on several other committees, including Budget & Fiscal Review, Judiciary, Labor and Employment, Natural Resources and Water, Local Government, and Rules.

Not to mention that during his first Senate term, he had 59 bills signed into law, focusing on issues dealing with the environment, climate change, healthcare access, educational opportunity, and agriculture.

Listed below is a list of committees Laird is/was involved in:

- Chair: Senate Budget Subcommittee #1 (Education)
- Vice Chair: Joint Committee on Rules
- Vice Chair: Joint Legislative Audit Committee
- Member: Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
- Member: Judiciary Committee
- Member: Labor, Public Employment & Retirement Committee
- Member: Natural Resources & Water Committee
- Member: Local Government Committee
- Member: Rules Committee

- **Number of years in current role:**

John Laird has been in his role as Senator for about 5 years

- **Percentage of votes received in the last general election:**

John Laird received 65% of the vote (269,862 individual votes) in the November 5th, 2024, election.

- **Issues the Senator is best known for:**

John Laird is best known for his issue positions on environmental protection, affordable housing, and LGBTQ+ rights.

- **Prominent donors to your politician's campaigns:**

The most prominent donor to Laird's political campaigns were labor organizations; such as general trade unions and public sector unions.

A list of specific donors will be listed below:

- Service Employees International Union Local 1000 Candidate PAC
- Operating Engineers PAC
- Public Employees PAC

- **Ideology on economic, social, and environmental issues**

Economic: In 2021, Laird introduced SB 390 to ensure the Employment Development Department (EDD) will be prepared the next time it encounters a period of economic turndown; specifically referencing the global pandemic, COVID-19. As it will ensure a plan (consisting of procedures and protocols) will be established and continuously revised to counter an unpredicted increase in workload.

Social: In 2021, Governor Newsom signed senate bill 258, the HIV & Aging Act (authored by Laird). The HIV & Aging Act now recognizes HIV+ seniors as part of a great social need and will now make sure that elders who suffer from HIV gain access to food assistance, transportation, and job training, and more. Allowing LGBTQ seniors “to age in peace with dignity” as stated by Laird.

Environment: In 2025, Becker and Laird introduced the Wildfire Mitigation Strategic Planning Act (SB 326). Which aims to establish a framework that will better prevent wildfires as climate change continues to increase.

Part 2: Constituent Profile

Economics

Prominent industries include

Unemployment rate: an average of 6.9%

Income levels: Median household income is 176,832 (2023)

Property levels: Median property values is 1.42 million (2023)

Poverty rate: 6.3% (2023)

Demographics

Population: 745,398 (2023)

Population breakdowns by race/ethnicity:

- Asian – 56.2%
- White – 20.8%
- Hispanic – 16.1%
- Black – 2.08%
- Other – 4.82%

Population breakdown by age/income:

- Median age – 36.6 years
- Median income - \$176,832

Urban/rural breakdown:

- The district is considered to be highly urban as it consists of mostly coastal communities.

Politics

Partisan voter registration

- As of February 20, 2024, the number of voter registrations within the district is 556,004 individuals

% voted Democrat/Republican in 2020, 2016, 2012

2020

- Democrat: 44.4%
- Republican: 31.5%

2016

- Democrat: 65.54%
- Republican: 34.46%

2012

- Democrat: 63.3%
- Republican: 36.7%

3 specific issues that are important to your constituents

- Environmental Protection & Climate Resistance
- Affordable Housing & Homelessness
- Agriculture & Farmworker Support

Constituents' general positions on economic, social, and environmental issues

- Constituents' general positions on economic, social, and environmental issues align more closely with the Democratic party based on their voting history.