

THE 1994 CAMPAIGN: CALIFORNIA; Senate Candidates Trade Bitter Exchanges Over Immigration

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Body

The **California Senate** race, the most expensive Congressional race ever and one of the most vituperative, ground through its last full day of **campaigning** today, with the outcome of Tuesday's voting but a guess.

The race, in which Senator Dianne Feinstein, a liberal Democrat, is seeking re-election in the face of a strong challenge from Representative Michael Huffington, a conservative Republican from Santa Barbara, was marked in its final hours by more **bitter exchanges over** illegal **immigration**.

Ultimately, the issue, the hottest in **California** this fall, could determine the winner, producing an unusually large and equally unpredictable voter turnout.

Both **candidates** had undocumented aliens on their household staffs in the past, and today Mr. Huffington accused Ms. Feinstein of "stonewalling" the public disclosure of her employee's **immigration** records.

The Congressman, who also accused President Clinton of aiding Senator Feinstein on the **immigration** matter, said the records would show that she knew all along that her employee, a housekeeper, was in the country illegally.

"I believe the Clinton Administration, along with Mrs. Feinstein, is stonewalling releasing the records because they want to see her elected," Mr. Huffington asserted in San Luis Obispo during the first of a final series of rallies around the state.

Ms. Feinstein, who insists she never knowingly hired an undocumented person, answered Mr. Huffington's accusation with a final, acerbic television commercial in which she said he was the one who knowingly hired an undocumented worker.

Like Mr. Huffington, Ms. Feinstein also embarked today on a final series of appearances around the state.

At every opportunity, she accused Mr. Huffington of trying to buy an election, a reference to the blitz of negative advertising, financed by \$28 million from his fortune in Texas oil money, that has ground down her once substantial lead. She has recovered somewhat from the advertising blitz, private polls on both sides indicate, particularly since the disclosure that Mr. Huffington's family once employed an undocumented nanny. But the recovery is fragile, those who have seen the polls say.

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Ms. Feinstein also reminded audiences today that her opponent declared his strong support for a state ballot initiative on illegal **immigration** just a few days before the disclosure about the nanny.

The initiative, Proposition 187, would deny most government services to illegal aliens. Ms. Feinstein favors stronger **immigration** controls, but she contends that Proposition 187 is too drastic.

In recent days, the debate **over** the measure has been fanned by rallies and demonstrations, most opposing it. This morning students at a number of Los Angeles high schools and crowds of Hispanic workers in the city's garment district took to the streets again to protest the initiative.

Polls indicate the vote on the proposition could go either way. Equally in doubt is how much effect the proposition will have on voter turnout and which **candidates** that will favor.

"It's the great imponderable of this election," said Steven Merksamer, a Sacramento lawyer who has worked on numerous Republican **campaigns**. "You don't know whether to believe what people have been telling the pollsters because the proposition issue has so many overtones in it, not the least being race."

Mr. Huffington, whose fortune has been estimated at \$75 million, has spent twice as much on his **campaign** as the Senator, whose total stands at \$14 million.

Mr. Huffington defended his unprecedented personal expenditure today with the argument that "one of the reasons I'm spending my money is so that for the next six years she won't be spending your money." The best way to cut down on **campaign** spending, he added in an appearance at San Luis Obispo, is to provide **candidates** with free access to television, the most expensive part of modern political **campaigns**.

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