

## **ACT/ADC Scares Ed Royce into Retirement :)**

OK, maybe there was a little more to it than that :) But the fact remains that on Monday, mere months after ACT/ADC adopted Congressman Ed Royce for early retirement, the Orange County Republican announced he will not run for re-election in 2018! His retirement could be a major step toward turning Congress Blue next year.

There had been some quiet rumors that this might happen, but it still came as a major surprise to both parties. Royce's 39<sup>th</sup> District is one of many diverse, suburban districts that have been trending away from Republicans under the weight of Donald Trump's massive unpopularity. Registration is expected to be dead-even or slightly Democratic by election day 2018, and Hillary Clinton carried the 39<sup>th</sup> by 8% in 2016 (after Romney carried it easily in 2012).

As a result, Royce was facing a brutal re-election fight for the first time in decades. Several well-funded Democratic challengers were already campaigning, grass-roots enthusiasm in the district was surging, and liberal groups of all kinds (ACT/ADC included) had targeted the race.

Royce's retirement does not make this a slam-dunk for Democrats. But national organizations promptly moved the 39<sup>th</sup> from the "leans Republican" column to "leans Democratic." This will now become one of the most hotly-contested open seats in the country and could see bitter, divisive primaries in both parties.

At least two more Democrats have recently jumped into what was already a crowded field (seven Dems and two independents at last count). Meanwhile, Republicans have a deep bench of potential candidates, including: Michelle Steel, chair of the Orange County Board of Supervisors; former Assemblywoman Young Kim; Scott Baugh, former chair of the Orange County Republican Party; former state Senate minority leader Bob Huff, who represented parts of this district; Assemblyman Phillip Chen; and former Assemblywoman Ling-Ling Chang.

Whoever wins the Republican primary will have plenty of resources for the November election – but probably less than Royce, who had more than \$3,500,000 in cash-on-hand. On the one hand, the next Republican will not have to defend Royce's lock-step voting record in support of Trump. On the other, winning the primary will probably require a lip-lock embrace with Trump.

**In light of this development, we are temporarily halting our series of articles on Democratic challengers in the 39<sup>th</sup>. We may resume the series once the dust has settled – or ACT/ADC could revisit our targeting decision. Now that the blue-team's odds are so much better in the 39<sup>th</sup>, some may prefer to look at other red-to-blue target districts where help is needed.**