

Role Profile: Jerry McNerney

California State Senate district 5 | POLI 190

Part 1- Individual portfolio

Legislator Background

- Name: Gerald “Jerry” McNerney
- District: California State Senate District 5, which currently includes all of San Joaquin County and the Tri-Valley area of Alameda County.
- Party affiliation: Democratic Party
- Age: 75 (born June 19, 1951)
- Gender: Male
- Race/ethnicity: White; biographical sources describe him as being Swiss and Irish descent
- Marital status: Married to Mary McNerney since 1977; they have three children
- Education: B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of New Mexico; he also attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point from 1969-1971.

Career Background

- Non-Political career: McNerney worked as an engineer and consultant in the energy and clean energy sector for more than 20 years before eventually being elected to office. He worked on wind turbines and wind technologies.
- Political career: McNerney served 16 years in the U.S. House of Representatives before leaving Congress in January 2023.
- He served on committees including Veterans Affairs, Science, Space and Technology, and Energy and Commerce, and he represented portions of the San Joaquin Valley and East Bay. He was sworn in on December 2, 2024, after winning a seat in the California State Senate in November 2024.
- Current committee work: Chair of the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee; Chair of the Select Committee on the Nonprofit Sector; and a member of committees on a variety of topics, including budget,

energy and utilities, agriculture, veterans and military affairs, privacy and digital technologies, and more.

Time in current Role and Election

- Number of years in current role: As of September 2026, nearly one year and nine months. In December 2024, he started his term in the State Senate.
- Last general election: In the general election on November 5, 2024, McNerney got 189,668 votes, or 52.9%. 169,136 votes, or 47.1%, were cast for Republican Jim Shoemaker.

Three Issues McNerney is Best Known For

- Clean energy and climate policy: McNerney has a solid background in renewable energy and has worked on policies related to solar energy, green hydrogen, clean energy, fusion energy, and grid modernization.
- Water and the Delta: He focused primarily on levees, water quality, water supply, Delta protection, and alternatives to the planned Delta tunnel.
- Technology and artificial intelligence: McNerney has been involved in AI policy for several years. In the State Senate, he has advocated for AI safety, regulations on automated decision-making systems, and measures aimed at safeguarding consumers while maintaining California's technological competitiveness.

Prominent Campaign Donors / Support

- Key supporters noted for McNerney's 2024 State Senate campaign committee included Raise the Wage California, the California Nurses Association PAC, and a committee backed by the California Faculty Association.
- An independent-expenditure committee backing McNerney in the 2024 primary has obtained significant donations from SEIU California State Council, Consumer Attorneys of California PAC, Opportunity

PAC, SEIU United Healthcare Workers West, and various labor/education organizations

- Note: Contributions made directly to a candidate committee and independent spending in support of a candidate are legally distinct forms of campaign expenditure.

Economic, Social, and Environmental Positions

- Economic: McNerney has backed tax incentives for strategic industries such as fusion energy, quantum technology, semiconductors, batteries, and zero-emission vehicles. He has also supported measures aimed at keeping utility costs from being shifted onto ordinary ratepayers.
- Social: His history encompasses efforts in veterans' services, civil rights, consumer protection, school nutrition, and regulations related to AI and automated decision-making systems.
- Environmental: He advocates for increased clean-energy initiatives and has engaged in efforts regarding water quality, Delta preservation, renewable energy, and climate-focused policies. He has additionally resisted the rapid advancement of the Delta tunnel and has advocated for options that safeguard the Delta and water resources.

Part 2 - Constituent Profile

District Overview

- Senate District 5 currently encompasses all of San Joaquin County along with the Tri-Valley areas in Alameda County, which include Dublin, Pleasanton, Livermore, and Sunol.
- Population: Approximately 1,035,110 inhabitants according to the 2020-2024 American Community Survey 5-year estimate.
- Size and population density: Approximately 1,806 square miles, housing around 573 individuals per square mile.
- Urban/rural profile: The area comprises large and medium-sized cities, suburban communities in the Tri-Valley, farming regions, and unincorporated/rural territories. It is more accurately characterized as

a combined urban-suburban-agricultural area instead of being strictly urban or strictly rural.

Economics

- Key sectors: Transportation and logistics, agriculture and food production, healthcare, manufacturing, technology, renewable energy, and professional/business services play vital roles in the district's economy. San Joaquin County serves as a significant logistics center, while the Tri-Valley has a more prominent tech and professional services industry.
- Median household earnings: Approximately \$107,782.
- Income per individual: Approximately \$47,575.
- Poverty rate: Approximately 10.7% of the population lives under the poverty line.
- Unemployment: The State Senate district lacks a monthly EDD unemployment series, making county figures the most current comparison. In July 2026, the unemployment rate stood at 6.4% in San Joaquin County and 4.6% in Alameda County.

Demographics

- Average age: 36.7 years.
- Age distribution: 61% of residents fall within the 18-64 age range; the district also contains significant populations of children and older adults.
- Ethnicity/race (ACS 2020-2024):
- Any race of Hispanic or Latino origin: approximately 36.3%.
- Non-Hispanic white: approximately 29.6%.
- Asian, not Hispanic: approximately 22.5%.
- Non-Hispanic Black: approximately 5.6%.
- Two or more races, non-Hispanic: approximately 4.9%.
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic: approximately 0.5%; American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic: roughly 0.2%; other race, non-Hispanic: around 0.4%.
- Distribution of household income: Approximately 23% of households earn less than \$50,000; 24% earn between \$50,000 and \$100,000;

31% earn between \$100,000 and \$200,000; and 23% earn over \$200,000.

- Population born abroad: Approximately 26.6% of residents are immigrants.
- Education: Approximately 84.4% of individuals aged 25 and older possess at least a high school diploma, while around 32.7% hold a bachelor's degree or above.

Politics

- Voter registration by party (Dec. 30, 2025): total of 553,568 registered voters; 231,631 Democrats (approximately 41.8%) and 155,134 Republicans (roughly 28.0%). The remainder are No Party Preference or individuals affiliated with different parties.
- General-election outcomes for Historical State Senate District 5:
- 2020: Democratic nominee Susan Talamantes Eggman 54.9%; Republican Jim Ridenour 45.1%.
- 2016: Democratic contender Cathleen Galgiani 56.7%; Republican Alan Nakanishi 43.3%.
- 2012: Democratic contender Cathleen Galgiani 50.5%; Republican Bill Berryhill 49.5%.
- Significant redistricting reminder: The limits of Senate District 5 were altered following the 2020 Census. The results from 2012, 2016, and 2020 pertain to district '5' during those years, which does not precisely match the geographic population McNerney represents now.

Three Important Issues for Constituents

- Housing and living expenses: Surveys conducted in the San Joaquin Valley have revealed significant worries regarding the affordability of housing and overall living costs. The Tri-Valley additionally experiences pressures from housing costs.
- Transit and travel: The area features significant commuter pathways like the Altamont Pass. Transportation planning, traffic management, public transit systems, and the suggested Valley Link rail connection are significant issues for the region.

- Water, development, and environmental standards: Water reliability and Delta challenges are pivotal in San Joaquin County, whereas a 2026 Tri-Valley survey indicated significant backing for maintaining open areas, farming, and wildlife habitats.

General Constituent Positions

- Economic: The district enjoys a Democratic registration lead, yet it is politically diverse, comprising both affluent Tri-Valley areas and the more working-class/agricultural regions of San Joaquin County. Consequently, housing expenses, employment opportunities, logistics, farming, and infrastructure can have varying significance throughout the district.
- Social: The area is ethnically varied and features significant Hispanic/Latino and Asian communities. Election outcomes and voter registration indicate a general Democratic inclination, yet the 2024 State Senate contest was closely contested at 52.9%-47.1%, meaning the district should not be regarded as politically homogeneous.
- Environmental: Issues such as water reliability, Delta conservation, clean energy, preservation of open spaces, agriculture, air quality, and resilience to climate change frequently arise in the region. Perspectives may differ between the more suburban Tri-Valley area and the agricultural/logistics-focused San Joaquin County side of the district.