

Role profile for Lola Smallwood-Cuevas, CA State Senate District 28

Part 1 ... Individual/Organization Profile

- Legislator background

- Name: Lola Smallwood-Cuevas
- District: California State Senate District 28
- Party Affiliation: Democrat
- Age: 56 years old
- Gender: Female
- Race: Black
- Ethnicity: Non-Hispanic
- Marital status: Married to her husband, José
- Residence: View Park, CA (unincorporated Los Angeles County)
- Education: B.S. in Communications from CSU East Bay (then Cal State Hayward) in Hayward, California

- Career breakdown

- Non-political

Smallwood-Cuevas was raised in California by a single mother who is a veteran and working nurse. She grew up in poverty and experienced firsthand how tough it is for working people to pay the bills and stay afloat.

After graduating from Cal State Hayward, Smallwood-Cuevas worked as a journalist for the Oakland Tribune and joined her first union, organizing to prevent several layoffs. She later wrote for the Long Beach Press-Telegram and Chicago Tribune. After this she began work as a coordinator for SEIU USSW, serving as a lead organizer for the Justice for Janitors Campaign. Her success in securing large pay increases and health benefits during the campaign allowed her to move on to work for the UCLA Labor Center, where she founded the Center for the Advancement of Racial Equity at Work (CARE at Work). She also cofounded the Los Angeles Black Worker Center, which led to her recognition by President Barack Obama.

Smallwood-Cuevas became one of the leading experts in the state on racial equity in the workplace and has since held various positions, including as the Treasurer for the Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board and positions within the US Department of Labor and Los Angeles County Worker Center Network.

Smallwood-Cuevas' first run for office was in 2022 for the open 28th senate district. The district was being vacated by Sydney Kamlager-Dove, who was running for congress. She got 44.8% of the vote in the primary against 3 other democrats and 1 republican. In the general election, she got 59.9% of the vote against fellow democrat Cheryl Turner, and has served as the senator of the 28th district since. Smallwood-Cuevas

was widely considered the more progressive candidate, with endorsements from the Working Families Party and Sierra Club.

- Listed below is a collection of committees Smallwood-Cuevas is/was involved in:

- Chair of Labor, Public Employment, and Retirement
- Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
- Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee
- Governmental Organization Committee
- Rules Committee

- *Number of years in current role*

-3.5 yrs (since December 2022)

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

-She received 59.9% of the vote (117,315 votes) in the November 8th, 2022 election, though this was an intraparty race.

- *Issues the Senator is best known for*

- The most important issue for Senator Smallwood-Cuevas is racial inequity in labor, and criminal justice reform. She has introduced several bills relating to employment disparities among African-American residents of her district as well as overpolicing in predominantly African-American communities.

- *Prominent donors to Smallwood-Cuevas*

-Most of her top donors have been labor union PACs, including:

- California State Council of Laborers PAC
- California Professional Firefighters PAC
- California State Council of Service Employees
- California Nurses Association AC
- California Federation of Teachers
- California Teachers Association
- Service Employees International Union
- United Domestic Workers of America
- AFL-CIO

She has also received some donations from Tobacco companies (Altria and Philip-Morris), Hawaiian Gardens Casino, Fanduel, and rideshare services like Uber and Turo.

- *Ideology*

Smallwood-Cuevas is a progressive democrat, placing herself at the leftmost end of the Democratic caucus. She was endorsed by the Working Families Party and Sierra Club in her first run for office, and was recommended by the California Democratic Socialists of America in her 2026 run. In

2026 she endorsed Tom Steyer for Governor and Jane Kim for Insurance Commissioner.

- *Economic*: She supports a strong social safety net, collective bargaining rights, expanding workforce opportunities and fighting disparities in unemployment and underemployment in marginalized communities, and supports regulation on AI to protect workers. She opposes federal budget cuts to Medicaid (Medi-Cal) and supports allocating funds to defend immigrant communities being targeted by immigration services.

- *Social*: As a long-time labor organizer and civil rights activist, Senator Smallwood-Cuevas is strongly supportive of securing racial equity, worker protections, and criminal justice reform. She introduced a bill to explicitly recognize the concept of intersectionality in California's anti-discrimination laws. She believes that discrimination against people based on protected traits (race, gender, age, sexual orientation) should be viewed through an intersectional lens. She opposes mass surveillance and has pushed for more regulation and oversight over Flock cameras. She supports California's position as a sanctuary state and opposes ICE raids and mass deportations.

- *Environmental*: Lola Smallwood-Cuevas supports investment in green jobs and funding air quality monitoring. She believes the climate crisis disproportionately harms marginalized neighborhoods and supports investments towards mitigating this, like the Justice40 initiative and the Play Equity Fund to build new green spaces in historically marginalized communities in Los Angeles.

Part 2 ... Constituent Profile

-Geography

-*Area*: 72.1 square miles

-*Municipalities (population as of 2020)*

-Los Angeles (part) - 926,189 (94.0%)

-Culver City - 40,892 (4.15%)

-*Census Designated Places*

Ladera Heights - 6,673 (0.68%)

-*Unincorporated Communities*

View Park-Windsor Hills - 11,465 (1.2%)

Unincorporated Los Angeles County - 604 (0.06%)

The district includes the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Adams-Normandie, Arlington Heights, Baldwin Hills, Beverlywood, Carthay, Castle Heights, Central Alameda, Century City, Chesterfield Square, Cheviot Hills, Crenshaw, Del Rey, Downtown Los Angeles, Exposition Park, Fashion District, Financial District, Florence, Gramercy Park, Harvard Park, Hyde Park, Jefferson Park, Leimert Park, King Estates, Manchester Square, Mar Vista, Mid-Wilshire, Mid City, Nevin, Rancho Park, Reynier, Palms, Playa Vista, Pico-Robertson, Saint James Park, Skid Row, South Los Angeles, South Park, South Robertson, University Park, Vermont Knolls, Vermont-Slauson, Vermont Square, Victoria Park, Village Green, West Adams, Westchester, Westdale, and Westside Village

- Economics

- Prominent industries include healthcare, education, entertainment, and transportation.
 - Hospitals: Kaiser Permanente West Los Angeles Medical Center, Olympia Medical Center, Cedars-Sinai Marina Hospital, Kindred Hospital-Los Angeles
 - Universities: University of Southern California, Loyola Marymount University
 - Other landmarks: La Brea Tar Pits Museum, Sony Pictures Studio, Staples Center, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, the Financial District, Santee Alley, Los Angeles Convention Center, Jackie Robinson Stadium, and Expo Park.

- Income levels:

Median household income: \$79,986
% of residents making <\$50k: 34.8%
% of residents making \$50-\$100k: 24.1%
% of residents making \$100k-\$200k: 24.5%
% of residents making >\$200k: 16.6%

Median household size: 2.6

Poverty rate: 18.6%

Median value of occupied housing units: \$994,000

Median gross rent: \$2,038

% of Renters: 68%

% of Homeowners: 32%

Housing vacancy rate: 8.3%

Average year built: 1963

Blue collar % 63.0%

White collar %: 27.0%

Education:

Less than High School Diploma or Equivalent: 22.4%
High School Diploma or Equivalent: 17.0%
Some College or Associate's Degree: 22.2%
Bachelor's: 23.3%
Graduate Degree or greater: 15.1%

Mean commute time: 31.4 minutes

% commuting by car: 66.4%

% working from home: 19.7%

% commuting by public transit: 7.1%

% commuting by foot: 3.5%

- Demographics

- Population:

2000: 892,762

2010: 935,568

2020: 985,823

2024: 965,988

- *Population breakdown by ethnicity/race*

- *Not Hispanic or Latino* - 53.2% (513,906)

- White: 20.6% (198,994)

- Black: 18.0% (173,878)

- Asian: 9.1% (87,905)

- Native: 0.1% (966)

- Pacific Islander: 0.1% (966)

- *Hispanic or Latino* - 46.8% (452,082)

Hispanic/Latino of any race: 46.8% (452,082)

Ancestry

The top ancestries or ancestry groups within the district are

Mexican: 27.9%

Central American Hispanic: 15.1%

British: 4.4%

German: 4.0%

Irish: 3.6%

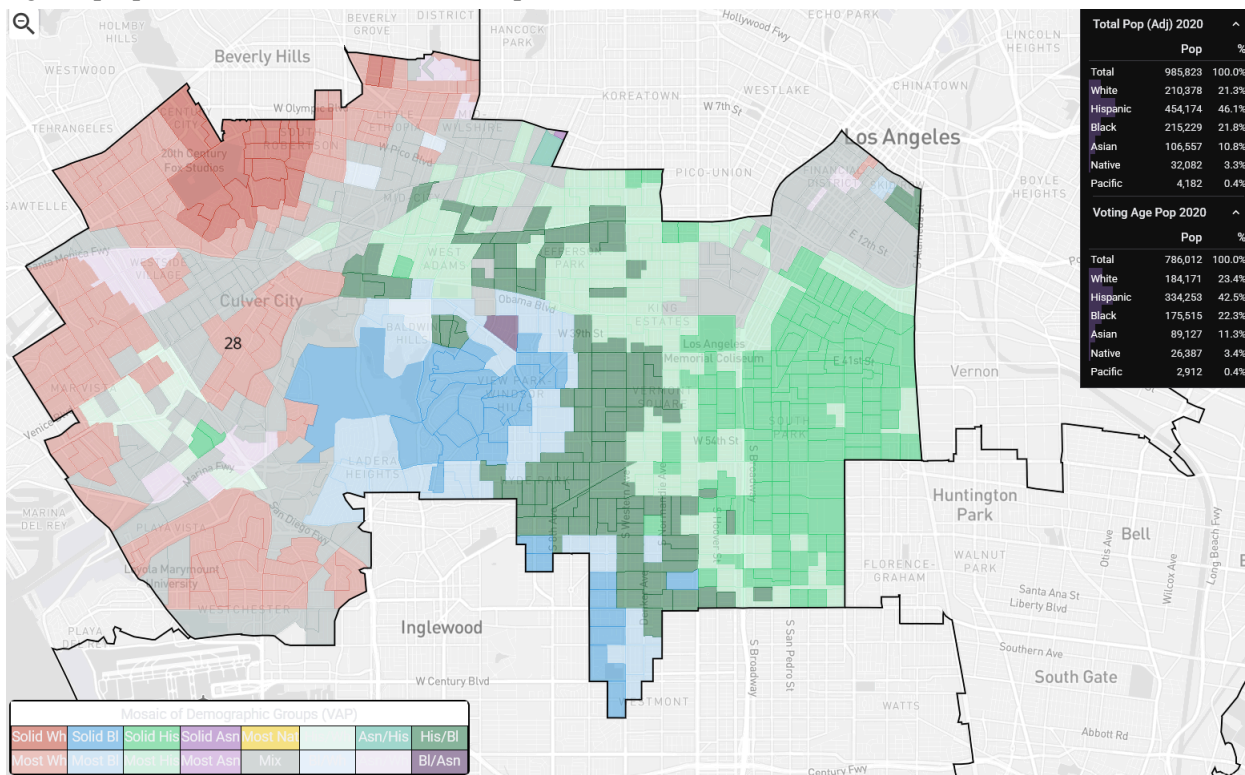
American: 3.6%

Chinese: 2.7%

Eastern European: 2.6%

The 28th district is one of the most diverse parts of the country and a historic immigration hub. The district has the 2nd highest proportion of Black residents of any state senate district, as well as the 2nd

highest proportion of Central American Hispanic residents.



Demographic mosaic of the 28th senate district

- Age

The median age of an individual in this district is 37.9

<18 - 19.9%

18-29 - 19.5%

30-44 - 24.1%

45-64 - 23.6%

>65 - 12.9%

The district has the highest proportion of people aged 18-29 out of any senate district in California, in part due to the large universities present in the district, like USC and LMU

- Urban/rural breakdown

The district is the densest in the legislature, with ~13,582 people per square mile. There are no tracts classified by the US Census Bureau as rural. It stretches from the urban core of Los Angeles to some of its historic western suburbs that were hubs for the Great Migration and the aerospace and manufacturing industry.

- Politics

- Partisan voter registration

→ As of September 5th, 2025, the number of voter registrations within the district is 554,673 individuals.

Democrats ... 61.92%
 Republicans ... 9.73%
 American Independent 3.09%
 Green... 0.50%

-Turnout

Over the past 3 presidential elections, voter turnout in the district has averaged at around 46.4% of the voting age population.

California's 28th Senate District Election Results Table

Year	Office	Democratic %	Republican %	Margin
2025	Proposition 50	87.0%	13.0%	Yes+74.0
2024	President	78.3%	18.6%	D+59.7
2022	Governor	82.7%	17.3%	D+65.4
2020	President	84.4%	13.7%	D+70.7
2018	Governor	86.1%	13.9%	D+72.2
2016	President	85.8%	9.5%	D+76.3
2014	Governor	83.7%	16.3%	D+67.4
2012	President	87.4%	12.6%	D+74.8
2010	Governor	80.7%	15.6%	D+65.1
2008	President	86.2%	13.5%	D+72.7

- 3 specific issues cared about by the constituents in the district

→ Polling in 2026 shows that the economy/cost of living is by far the most important issue among voters of all partisan affiliations. High gas prices impact this district where a high % of residents commute by car and have longer commute times.

Corruption is also a major issue, and voters want to see accountability and transparency in their elected officials.

Healthcare is also a key concern, being a major burden on working families in the district. Voters in the district have tended to support candidates in favor of universal healthcare and oppose cuts to Medi-Cal and social services.

- Constituents' general positions

Constituents in this district are strongly aligned with the Democratic party and support economic, social, and environmental policies generally associated with the left-of-center. The district has a history of being supportive of establishment democrats in primaries, like Karen Bass in 2026 and Hillary Clinton in

2016, as well as more progressive, anti-establishment candidates like Bernie Sanders in 2020, Tom Steyer in 2026, and Senator Smallwood-Cuevas herself. It is a diverse, working class that is struggling with the cost of living crisis, cuts to social services, immigration enforcement, AI job displacement, compounding discrimination, housing development, workers rights, and other issues.