

April 14, 2026

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Impact Research

Re: **Polling Shows Matt Mahan Growing With Clear Path to Runoff**

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Recent polling conducted among likely June 2026 primary voters in California shows a wide-open gubernatorial race with significant growth potential for San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan. With Swalwell out of the race, Mahan has moved within striking distance of Porter and Steyer. Voters respond to his background and record as Mayor and move toward him after messaging.

- **Mahan is growing his vote share and is in third place among the Democratic candidates.** Accounting for Swalwell's exit from the race and where his voters migrate, the current vote stands at 25% Hilton, 16% Steyer, 14% Porter, 10% Bianco, 8% Mahan, 7% Becerra, 5% other, and 9% undecided.<sup>1</sup> Mahan's position has roughly doubled from where public polls had him prior to Swalwell suspending his campaign.
- **Porter and Steyer have less potential for growth.** Voters open to supporting a Democrat are already familiar with both Steyer (80% name ID) and Porter (84%). On the other hand, Mahan still has considerable room for introduction with just 37% of voters already familiar with him.
- **When voters hear biographical information about Mahan, including growing up living paycheck-to-paycheck and teaching middle school in a working-class neighborhood, Mahan jumps to first place among the Democratic candidates.** After voters hear his biography, Mahan leads both Steyer and Porter by 5 points: 25% Hilton, 16% Mahan, 11% Steyer, 11% Porter, 8% Bianco, 6% Becerra, 5% other, 11% undecided.<sup>2</sup> Voters move toward him in even larger numbers after hearing positive messaging that incorporates biographical elements. After messaging, Mahan is the clear leading Democrat with 20% of the vote, twice the vote share of Steyer or Porter.

Effective messaging on Mahan highlights the following:

**Matt Mahan grew up living paycheck to paycheck. His Dad was a mailman, and he followed in his mom's footsteps as a middle-school teacher. He's seen first-hand how California families are struggling.** As Mayor of San Jose, he delivered solutions. He reduced the city's homeless population by a third, made San Jose the safest big city in America, and has broken ground on thousands of new housing units all while balancing the city budget without raising taxes.

Findings and recommendations are based on the results of a live phone and text-to-web survey conducted by Impact Research from April 8-12, 2026, among N=900 likely 2026 primary election voters in California, including N=100 Republican voters and N=800 voters open to Democratic candidates. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.3\%$  for the full sample.

[1] Swalwell voters allocated to candidates based on their second-choice vote; Swalwell voters who did not have a second-choice candidate remain unallocated

[2] Republican-leaning voters are allocated from the current vote.