

My name is Patricia C. Bates, but I am better known as “Pat.” It is an honor to serve as the senator for the 36th District in the California State Senate since December 1, 2014, representing nearly 1 million people living in South Orange and North San Diego counties.

Elected public service was not something I sought growing up. It came gradually when I became a wife, mother, and community volunteer. After graduating from Occidental College with a degree in psychology, I took a job as a social worker for Los Angeles County, where I helped some of our most vulnerable neighbors get back on their feet.

What I learned as a social worker was that government must not rob people of their self-esteem and initiative. Government has an important role in protecting public safety and health, but it must act within the limits placed upon it by the people. My view is that government exists to serve the people, not the other way around.

In the Senate, my focus is to solve problems for Californians in a way that will preserve a high quality of life, protect taxpayers, and restore fiscal common sense to government. That is what I did as the driving force behind Laguna Niguel’s campaign for cityhood and when I became its first mayor upon the city’s incorporation in 1989. I served four terms as mayor and then continued serving as a city council member until my election to the State Assembly in 1998, earning the trust of a large majority of voters in Orange and San Diego counties.

When I was in the Assembly, I served as vice chair of the Assembly Appropriations and Assembly Health Committees and was the founding chair of the Republican Women’s Caucus to ensure that women from across the political spectrum were fully represented. While serving in the Assembly, I was appointed to the prestigious Little Hoover Commission to serve as an independent voice for government reform, and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed me to serve on his historic California Performance Review Commission – responsible for providing recommendations on reforming state government and its operations.

On January 9, 2007, I was sworn-in as an Orange County supervisor by former California Education Secretary and Senator Marian Bergeson. As only the fourth woman ever elected to the Board of Supervisors, I worked diligently to protect taxpayers and improve the county’s fiscal outlook; create business friendly policies to attract jobs; maintain high levels of public safety; shorten the timeline for delivery of transportation projects; implement pension and retiree medical liability reforms; and protect our coastal environment.

In the Senate, I championed taxpayers by defending Proposition 13 (which limits property tax increases) from efforts to gut it and helping lead the opposition against the massive gas and car tax increase. Pro-taxpayer groups have consistently given me high marks for my record to defend Californians from numerous attempts to raise unnecessary taxes and fees.

I have authored several measures to make every community safer, such as SB 722 (2015) that would crack down on sex offenders who willfully remove or disable their global positioning system (GPS) tracking devices; SB 1323 (2016) that would enhance criminal penalties for illegal distributors of fentanyl, which has been linked to numerous deaths in California; and SB 1283 (2016) that would address the growing concern over the presence and proliferation of sober living homes in residential neighborhoods.

In partnership with San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan, I authored SB 1109 (2018) that was signed into law. SB 1109 educates the public, especially those who are involved with youth, by explaining to them the risk of addiction and overdose from prescription opioids.

To help improve our schools, I authored SB 1249 (2016) to restore the full ability of school districts to save money for a rainy day, and urged the Governor to expedite the distribution of voter-approved school construction and modernization funds.

Even though I am a Republican in a Democratic-controlled Legislature, I have worked with Democrats to advance common goals. For example, I jointly authored SB 197 (2017) with Senator Toni Atkins and SB 1007 (2018) with Senator Robert Hertzberg to lower the cost of building needed medical facilities that would serve veterans and military personnel afflicted with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related conditions.

Protecting our environment in a fiscally responsible manner is important to our district, which is why I supported measures to address ocean acidification (AB 2139, 2016), integrate scientific data concerning the impact of climate change into state infrastructure engineering (AB 2800, 2016), and reinforce opposition to new oil leases off of our coast (SR 35, 2017 and SR 73, 2018). I also authored SJR 23 urging Congress to move San Onofre's nuclear waste to a safer location away from our coast, a goal that I continue to advocate to this day.

In addition to my work representing the 36th Senate District, I also serve as the Senate Republican Leader Emeritus, where I work with Senate leadership to help the institution run smoothly. I had the honor of serving as the Senate Republican Leader from April 12, 2017, to March 1, 2019, becoming only the second woman to lead a party caucus in the Senate's history – Democrat or Republican. As Leader, I ensured that all voices across the political spectrum were heard in the Senate and worked with Senate President pro Tem Toni Atkins to address institutional challenges such as improving the process to report sexual harassment and holding those responsible to account.

I am a proud native of Southern California, growing up in Long Beach and moving to South Orange County four decades ago. My husband John is an accomplished architect, and we are proud to have two adult children and four grandchildren.