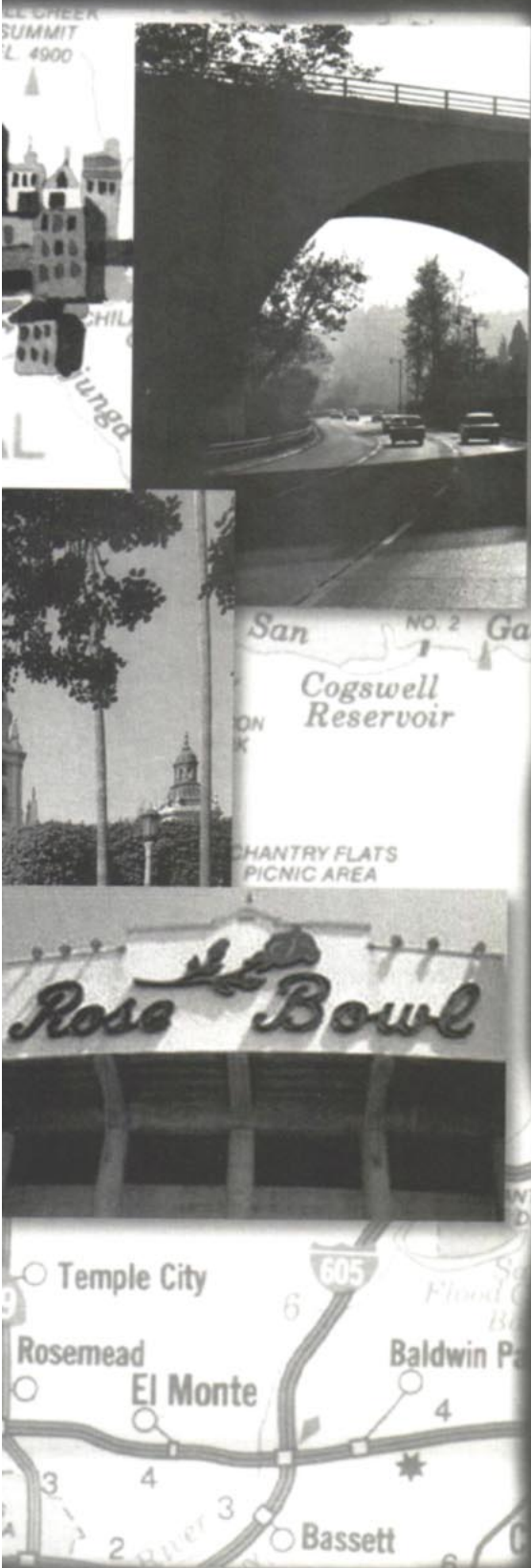


Back home, Rogan gets judged

When Republican James Rogan was a rookie California assemblyman winning accolades for his ability to bridge partisan gaps. (see CJ, February 1996) he wanted nothing more than to make it to Congress. But "Mr. Manager Goes to Washington" could hardly have been what he had in mind. Publicly, Rogan insists he has no regrets. Yet the bitter script he's been handed in Washington has not played well back home, leaving many of Rogan's constituents in Southern California trying to read meaning into his actions.

By Scott Memmer

Has James Rogan shot himself in the foot? While securing his place in history, has the sophomore congressman from the 27th Congressional District made short work of his political career? Has his position as a House manager done irreparable damage to his chances for re-election? This was the talk on the streets of Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena as Rogan pursued his role in the



impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton.

Already Democrats in Rogan's home turf are sharpening their political axes and preparing to regain the district in 2000, using Rogan's role as a House manager to pry him from his seat.

"It's very clear that Rogan was in the forefront of the prosecutorial effort," said Barry Gordon, his opponent in the last election. "He's lost his bipartisan veneer."

Gordon, who plans soon to announce whether he'll run again, added, "Rogan is simply not aligned with the district. During the last election, he was still able to paint himself as bipartisan. No longer."

The 27th Congressional District, with portions of Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena, bridges the gap be-

Or is there another agenda? Could he have his eyes on another prize?

"He feels it's his constitutional duty," said Bill Graham, a local Republican activist.

"He's not trying to win a popularity contest," said Tony Bell, spokesman for the California Republican Party in Burbank. "Jim Rogan's a guy who's willing to sacrifice his popularity because he's doing the right thing."

Mary Toman, newly elected chairwoman of the Los Angeles County Republican Party, said, "Jim Rogan is not a weathervane." Noting Rogan was the youngest sitting judge in the history of California, Toman added, "A judge needs to stand up for the rule of law. Our freedoms are based on the rule of law. At the end of the day, people will

**"He's 'outed' himself, in a sense, as a true conservative, not a moderate."
— Tim Wendler, local activist**

tween the western San Fernando Valley and the eastern San Gabriel Valley. It remains one of the most hotly contested congressional seats in Los Angeles County, if not the entire state. Surrounded by rolling foothills to the east and south, guarded by the San Gabriel Mountains to the north, the district presents a slippery slope to any politician attempting to stride its many complexities. It has grown increasingly Democratic in the last few years, due in large part to a heavy influx of Hispanics, and also from a steady flow of young, high-tech professionals drawn here by high-paying jobs in the entertainment industry.

All the more reason to remain cautious, it would seem.

So why would Rogan, who won by a mere 3 percentage points in the last election, take on such a prominent role in the president's prosecution? Why push such a staunch Republican agenda? In a district growing more liberal by the day, where registered Democrats outnumber registered Republicans 133,149 to 114,864, why would Rogan risk it all by playing so easily into the hands of his detractors? Rogan has been called a Boy Scout by some, but even a Boy Scout wouldn't walk a senior citizen across the street if he saw a big truck coming.

"Because he follows his principles, it gets him into trouble," said Pam Corradi, GOP chair of the 43rd Assembly District, which Rogan took over after Republican Pat Nolan was sentenced to federal prison.

But are principles really all that's behind Rogan's role as a House manager?

say [Rogan] was very courageous."

Courageous, perhaps. But also possibly naïve. One can almost hear the sabers rattling on the other side of the aisle as Rogan's opponents prepare for 2000. Rogan may win the battle but lose the war.

"People feel that he has a certain arrogance about him," said Tim Wendler, a local Democratic activist who vows to work hard against Rogan's re-election. "It's clear he's decided to support the Christian Coalition and not the constituents of his district."

Through his highly visible role as a House manager, Wendler said, "He's 'outed' himself, in a sense, as a true conservative, not a moderate."

Other prominent local Democrats, such as Lois Williams, president of the Verdugo Hills Democratic Club, and Leo Whitaker, a long-time party activist, have promised not only to remind voters of Rogan's role in the impeachment trial, but to get to the bottom of his financial support from conservative activists.

Still other questions remain about Rogan's ethics. If, as Republican Party leaders say, James Rogan is a man whose principles are above reproach, then why did the congressman resort to a direct-mail "smear piece," against Barry Gordon just days before the election, trashing his challenger's personal finances and, according to Gordon, grossly misrepresenting the facts? Of course the body politic is littered with the corpses of those like Gordon, who got caught flat-footed, but few expected such a piece from Rogan. The mailer drew heated letters in the local press.

Other issues remain in this diverse district: hillside development, Social Security, gun control, abortion rights, the Burbank Airport expansion, public schools vs. private. Is Rogan spending too much time chasing the president? The airport expansion plan, in particular, has drawn ire from Rogan's opponents, who accuse the congressman of



waffling or being a no-show for several important public forums. Add to this Rogan's highly visible role in one of the most unpopular trials of the century, one in which the polls continue to support the president's case by more than two-to-one, and it may be enough to tip the scale against him and usher him out of office. Which leads back to the question: Why?

It may be that, as some have suggested, Rogan and the Republican party have their eyes on bigger things for the second-term congressman. Seen in many circles as a rising star within the GOP, the impeachment trial affords Rogan the perfect opportunity for the sound bites and photo ops needed for career advancement in state and national politics.

"It's increased his name identification," agreed Mike Schroeder, outgoing chairman of the California Republican Party.

"His visibility has increased because of this," echoed Bell. "And I don't think it will be considered negative visibility when all is said and done."

"It's a great opportunity for him," said Theodore Garcia, a local Republican activist. "He stepped up to the plate and hit a home run."

Rogan's opponents speculate that he may indeed be positioning himself for higher office. "The rumors are he's looking at state attorney general, possibly senator," said Lyn Shaw, the Democrats' district chair of the 43rd Assem-

bly District.

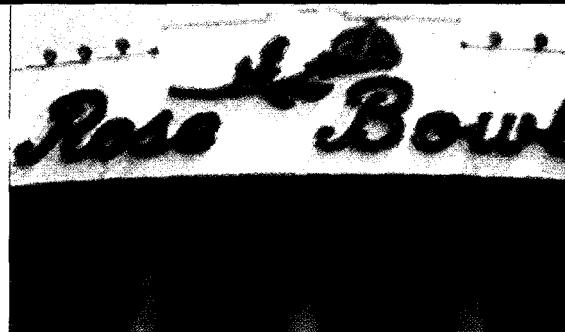
"He's always played political leap-frog," said Gordon. "He's never stayed anywhere for a long time."

With reapportionment coming in 2001, and the district moving away from Rogan demographically, there may be some of this in Rogan's actions. Then again, maybe not. Many of his supporters see Rogan a man who follows his gut instinct.

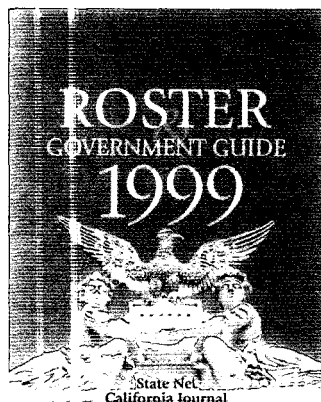
Rick Arthur, editor of the *Glendale News-Press*, observed, "As always, people love or hate Jim Rogan. People's feelings haven't changed; they've just been heightened. I don't think this guy is an act."

This was echoed almost identically by Steve Scauzillo, editor of the opinion pages at the *Pasadena Star-News*: "Jim Rogan is a passionate guy who believes in what he says. It's not politics for him. Even if it angers people in the district, he's going to continue doing what he's doing. That's the way this guy does everything." 🏠

Scott Memmer is a freelance writer in Southern California. Comments may be e-mailed to editor@statenet.com.

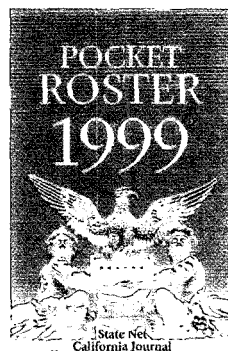


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Kim Alexander and the California Voter Foundation

By the time she and her future board chairman met for the first time, Kim Alexander had single-handedly thrown some bold new light into the darker corners of state politics and electioneering. David Jefferson concluded that here was a skilled Capitol operator, no doubt a veteran reformer from way back.

Alexander had taken the California Voter Foundation, a neglected stepchild of the California Secretary of State's office, and made it home base for delivering rafts of information by computer to the voting public on candidates running for statewide office in the 1994 general elections. Working almost solo, no employer, no fat bankroll, she built from the ground up

From humble beginnings, the California Voter Foundation has grown into an important political enterprise thanks to the drive and good-government instincts of its guiding spirit — a 33-year-old woman who already has spent more than 15 years in and around California politics.

By Max Vanzi

what would become California's first non-profit, non-partisan, handy-dandy Internet voter guide. It was a service that offered computer users from Eureka to San Diego the kind of basic political intelligence that seldom circulated outside Sacramento: candidate speeches, biographies, campaign promises, all unedited and unfiltered through intervening media. Since its maiden launch, the guide has expanded to new worlds of knowledge for the online voter, including the lowdown on political money. The mother's milk of politics, folks, at your fingertips.

Jefferson, a research engineer searching out new Internet applications for the Digital Equipment Corporation in Palo Alto, had been impressed with Alexander's 1994 online voter guide. Encouraged also by the savvy he was hearing as the two of them talked on the phone, he set up a meeting, and got a surprise.

"She was younger than I had thought," Jefferson said. "I had imagined her being, I don't know, maybe 40. She was under 30 at the time." Here, he observed, was this young but well-connected, obviously astute Capitol operator who could talk computers and politics with uncommon aplomb. "I was extremely impressed."