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Former L.A. controller Laura Chick blasts candidate Kenneth Mejia as an ‘extremist’



Laura Chick, who served as L.A. city controller from 2001 to 2009, issued a broadside against Kenneth Mejia, who’s running for her old job, calling him “erratic” and “extreme.” (Care Udell)

BY DAVID ZAHNISER | STAFF WRITER

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Former Los Angeles City Controller Laura Chick waded into the Nov. 8 race for her old job on Tuesday, issuing an open letter that accused candidate Kenneth Mejia of being an extremist who is “unfit for public office.”

Chick, who served as controller from 2001 to 2009 and built a reputation as a fierce critic of the City Hall establishment, called Mejia “erratic” and “extreme,” highlighting his past statements on social media and some of the activities of his campaign workers.

Chick pointed to tweets posted by Mejia in 2020 that [called President Biden](#) a rapist and a racist. She said Mejia, a onetime supporter of Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein, “played into the hands of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign” in 2016 by tweeting a [photo](#) of himself holding a poster of Hillary Clinton photoshopped to appear behind jail bars in an orange prison jumpsuit.

“The controller has to be all about finding ways to make the city serve the public better ... not tear it apart and blow it up!” Chick said. “Mr. Mejia must not be the next city controller.”

Chick’s letter makes her the fourth L.A. city controller, both current and former, to endorse Mejia’s general election opponent, Councilman Paul Koretz, who trailed Mejia [by nearly 20 points](#) in the June 7 primary. Unlike the other three — Rick Tuttle, Wendy Greuel and the current office holder, Ron Galperin — Chick focused most of her endorsement message on Mejia, an accountant and activist who has galvanized younger voters and is a frequent presence on social media.

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Mejia quickly fired back, saying on Twitter that Koretz had “enlisted another career politician (who last served in office in 2009) to recycle the same desperate lies/exaggerated attacks that didn’t work in the primary against us.”

“Rather than address his record, qualifications or plans, he’s relying on smears,” Mejia said in a [tweet thread](#), which also announced that he had received the endorsement of Stephanie Clements, one of his opponents in the June 7 primary.

“Our opponent wants the status quo to continue & we’re not going to let that happen,” he wrote.

Chick said she was not enlisted by Koretz’s campaign and is “not a mouthpiece for anyone.” In an interview, she noted that Mejia has run for Congress multiple times.

“He’s a career candidate,” she said. “Definitely not a career CPA, but a career candidate.”

Parke Skelton, a campaign strategist for Koretz, called Chick’s letter “powerful.”

“There are not too many people in the world who know more about what are the outstanding qualifications to be city controller,” he said. “And she clearly believes Kenneth Mejia would be a disaster.”

Mejia did not respond to interview requests. But last week, while receiving the endorsement of the Jane Fonda Climate PAC, he said his prior statements about the president — calling Biden a racist and warning voters in 2020 that a vote for him would be “wasted” — was something he “shouldn’t have said.”

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On the campaign trail, Mejia has billed himself as the more qualified of the two candidates, posting maps of [affordable housing](#), [anti-encampment zones](#) and [dog parks](#) on his website. He has used billboards to show that the Los Angeles Police Department receives considerably more taxpayer money than other city agencies.

Mejia called on the council last year to cut the LAPD’s budget and shift the proceeds elsewhere. In 2018, he [wrote](#) on Twitter that he is “not a fan of police,” arguing that they are “the one thing stopping many revolutionary uprisings in America.”

Mejia has picked up his own set of high-level endorsements, including Councilman Mike Bonin and State Assemblyman Isaac Bryan. He has also relied on the enthusiasm and campaign work of some of the city’s younger progressive activists, who are also a presence at protests over the city’s homelessness policies and other issues.

In her letter, Chick highlighted some of those activists as reasons for opposing Mejia. She pointed to a [report](#) in L.A. Magazine that found that Mejia campaign workers were among the protesters who helped [shut down](#) a mayoral debate at a synagogue in the San Fernando Valley — behavior that Chick called “unacceptable.”

Chick was first elected to office in 1993, representing part of the San Fernando Valley on the city council. While serving as controller, she repeatedly criticized city departments over their decisions, assailing the [airport](#), harbor, the [Department of Water and Power](#) and other agencies.

At one point during her tenure, she [said](#) that arrogance in city government was so thick “you could cut it with a knife.”

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