



santa clara county ★★  
**DEMOCRATIC PARTY**  
the democratic party of silicon valley

## The fight for affordable housing



Photo credit: [Tierra Mallorca](#)

Dear Democrat,

The debt limit has been raised by Congress 78 times since 1960, ensuring that our nation pays the debts that are already on our books.

Sadly, we are now seeing the GOP threaten to destroy our economy by using the debt limit as a club.

The GOP refuses to raise the limit unless there are [draconian cuts in "discretionary spending."](#) These cuts would repeal energy tax credits, and gouge deeply into programs that benefit veterans, women with children, and much more.

Get ready for an interesting June – and for an object lesson in why we are Democrats.

### **Two Dems fight for affordable housing**

What brought Elysa Gurman and Shalini Venkatesh together was a vacant piece of land and a furor.

The land, owned by the county, sits at the corner of Lawrence Expressway and Benton Street in Santa Clara. The furor arose over a proposal to develop it into transitional housing for homeless families.

At a community meeting in March, opponents

showed up en masse, toting signs, shouting angrily, and heckling those who disagreed with them. At the end of the meeting, Gurman, Venkatesh and some of the few others who supported the project found each other and agreed they had to do something.

"Housing is such a basic human right," said Venkatesh, a long-time member of the Silicon Valley Democratic Club.

And that's how [Santa Clara Housing Advocates](#) was born. The group set up a website, grew their email list, papered the neighborhood with flyers, and won a long list of allies, including SCCDP.

On May 2, their work paid off: in a close vote, the Santa Clara City Council approved partnering with the county and the nonprofit LifeMoves on the project. To Gurman, who was recently elected to the board of the Jewish Democratic Club, that's the beauty of being involved in local politics: being able to have an immediate impact.

Now SCHA is lobbying the county to join LifeMoves in co-sponsoring a crucial funding application. Please consider [emailing your county supervisor](#) to urge them to sign on as co-sponsors!



## Every housing unit built makes a difference

Advocating for affordable housing is a key part of SCCDP's platform.

This year, we passed a resolution supporting [taxes on empty homes](#), to feed a fund that could be used to build more housing.

We adopted a resolution calling on local governments to make it easier for [non-profit housing developers](#) to buy properties.

And we endorsed a bill by Assemblymember Alex Lee to [develop social housing](#), which would be built, owned and operated by the local government and rented to residents at a range of income levels.

No one bill or policy will magically solve the problem, but every housing unit built or preserved can help prevent a family or community member from becoming or remaining homeless.

## Running for local office: a rude awakening



Democrat Raena Lari knew that political campaigns were absurdly expensive, but she thought that was just on the state or national level.

Her rude awakening came when she decided to run for a seat on the Santa Clara County Board of Education. She won the seat this November, taking down a MAGA candidate, but the campaign cost \$43,000 and left her with a sizable debt.

Last week, SCCDP Chair Bill James co-hosted a double-duty event: a celebration of Lari's win and a campaign fundraiser. Nearly \$4,800 was raised, but an \$18,000 debt remains. If you missed the fundraiser, you can still make a campaign donation [here](#).

Lari's path to elected office began in 2015, when a family member came down with Lyme Disease. It was a harrowing experience that inspired her to run for

elected office, so she could advocate on health issues.

In 2019, she joined the county's Health Advisory Commission, and in 2022, she became Congressman Jimmy Panetta's alternate on SCCDP's Central Committee. Also in 2022, she participated in EMERGE, a national program that trains Democratic women to run for elected office.

Her plan had been to run for office in 2024. But she sped up her timeline when she learned that a MAGA candidate was running for the trustee seat in the board of education's Area 7, which sprawls from Evergreen in San Jose to San Martin and Gilroy.

On the board, she wants to promote two things: first, ensuring that all students feel they belong, and second, that they know how to live in a healthy manner.

"If you're not healthy, you can't focus on school work," Lari said.

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