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Candidates in California recall appear in first election debate

By Tom Chorreau
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WALNUT CREEK, Calif. — In a prelude to the first debate in the recall election, a relaxed Gov. Gray Davis said Wednesday that the effort to oust him had been an awakening and that he was now fighting hard to keep his job and repair the state's problems.

Davis said he had not acted soon enough to deal with the state's energy crisis and pledged to stay in better touch with voters.

"I understand people are angry. I understand that people's lives are not as good as they were two years ago," Davis said.

The first debate among the leading candidates to replace Davis put the spotlight on front-runners Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who wasn't participating. The two could easily become the target for others looking to improve their position in the race.

"I think Arnold is taking a huge risk," said Raphael Sonenshein, a political scientist at California State University, Fullerton. "If the other candidates are shrewd they can define his non-participation as a disqualifying issue."






Davis appeared for 30 minutes before a panel of journalists chosen by the organizers, followed by a 90-minute debate between the leading contenders to replace him.

The five participating candidates were Bustamante, the only prominent Democrat running as a replacement candidate; state Sen. Tom McClintock and former baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth, both Republicans; television personality Arianna

CALIFORNIA RECALL

Davis defends, candidates debate

In a two-part debate Wednesday night, California Gov. Gray Davis will be questioned about his record. In the second part, five leading candidates will field questions and debate among themselves. Arnold Schwarzenegger will not take part in the debate.

	Arnold Schwarzenegger Republican \$3.77 million	Money raised by candidates for the recall committees of Sept. 2
	Cruz Bustamante Democrat \$796,900	
	Tom McClintock Republican \$682,685	
	Arianna Huffington Independent \$429,394	
	Peter Ueberroth Republican \$110,000	

SOURCES: Associated Press; Recall Watch

Huffington, running as an independent; and Green Party candidate Peter Camejo.

Candidates qualified for the debate by receiving at least 4 percent support in either a recent poll or the last statewide vote.

Schwarzenegger opted out, choosing instead to deliver a speech before supporters and college students at California State University, Long Beach, telling them that he wants to give back to the state where he has earned millions of dollars.

Schwarzenegger has agreed to participate in only one debate, on Sept. 24. Questions for that debate will be provided ahead of time — unlike Wednesday's

debate. That decision has drawn criticism from Republicans and Democrats alike, who will capitalize on his absence Wednesday's forum.

During his brief question-and-answer session, Davis said he would rather have a referendum on taxes on the wealthy than have increased fees on students and he repeated that the recall was a right effort to rewrite history. Republicans lost the fall election last year.

"It's like the Oakland Raiders saying to Tampa Bay, 'We know you beat us, but we want to play the Super Bowl again,'" Davis said.

Schwarzenegger bows out of debate

By Erica Werner
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Arnold Schwarzenegger stayed away from the initial debate of California's recall election Wednesday and delivered what was billed as his first major campaign speech, getting pelted with an egg as he waded through a crowd at a college campus.

"You have such a fantastic life, Arnold, you make millions of dollars to do movies and all those kinds of things, why do you want to do this?" Schwarzenegger asked rhetorically in his address.

"And you know something, because everything that I've gotten — my career, my money, my family — everything that I've gotten and achieved is because of California," he said to cheers at California State University, Long Beach.

As Schwarzenegger worked the crowd, the egg splattered on the back of his left shoulder. An aide tried to wipe it off, but he simply peeled off his coat and went ahead with his speech.

Schwarzenegger has agreed to participate in only one debate, on Sept. 24, in which the questions will be provided to candidates in advance — unlike Wednesday's debate. That decision has drawn criticism from Republicans and Democrats alike.

Schwarzenegger's absence fit into his campaign strategy of appearing in public in controlled settings where he avoids protracted questioning from reporters, and critics have said he is not attending because he cannot see the questions in advance.

But Rep. David Dreier, co-chair of the recall campaign, asked the California Broadcasters Association on Wednesday to reconsider the decision to give candidates the questions prior to a second debate.

"We prefer a more traditional format where candidates hear the questions the first time at the debate," Dreier said.

Hundreds of students crashed the university quad for Schwarzenegger's speech in the hot afternoon sun. Some Young Republicans invited other schools, according to an actor's campaign.

Opponents from La Raza Social Association heckled him for his support of Proposition 187, which sought to deny services to immigrants. They held a sign saying "Hasta Siempre, Arnold, Arnold."

"Now, here is my plan: audit everything, the books, and then we end the crazy spending," he said.

"Everything that I've gotten... is because of California."

— Andrew Schwarzenegger
 California recall candidate

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- Sept 4, 8:30 - 10:30am SCC
- Sept 5, 10:30am - 12:30pm West Campus
- Sept 8, 9:00 - 11:00am Blocker
- Sept 9, 2:30 - 4:30pm West Campus
- Sept 9, 5:00 - 7:00pm SCC
- Sept 10, 1:30 - 3:30pm SCC

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