

BREAKING NEWS:

San Francisco Supervisor endorses a YES on the Recall of DA Chesa Boudin.

Tuesday, May 10, 2022

District Two Supervisor Catherine Stefani became the first San Francisco elected official to publicly support the removal of District Attorney Chesa Boudin, a progressive prosecutor facing a highly contentious recall election on June 7.

The recall endorsement from Stefani, a moderate Democrat who is considered a potential contender for Boudin's seat if he's voted out of office, stands alone among her colleagues on the Board of Supervisors, most of whom have supported Boudin. Three others have not taken a public position on the recall.

In an exclusive interview with The Chronicle, Stefani said she believed Boudin was failing to achieve the types of meaningful reforms he promised and failing to keep the city safe.

"I think San Franciscans are just tired of all the nonsense," Stefani said. "We're tired of asking for progress and results and getting excuses and slogans. People have had enough, including me."

Stefani's sentiments echo those of the recall campaign, which insists Boudin's policies intended to prioritize diversion and rehabilitation over jail time for low-level offenders fails to hold criminals accountable, and has made San Francisco a more dangerous place to live and work.

Boudin's supporters point to data that show no meaningful changes in most crime rates in San Francisco since Boudin took office, and say his detractors are seeking a return to tough-on-crime policies that overcrowded prisons and disproportionately punished Black and brown people.

Stefani is widely believed to be a on the short list to get Boudin's job if he's recalled. She's a former prosecutor in Contra Costa County and is aligned on many issues with Mayor London Breed, who would choose Boudin's replacement if he's voted out.

Breed's pick may be a placeholder, since voters will also decide whether the mayor's replacement is allowed to run for that office.

Julie Edwards, a spokesperson for Boudin's anti-recall campaign, said if Stefani wanted to put her record against Boudin's she's "welcome to do it in 2023," when Boudin would be up for reelection.

"But there's something profoundly disturbing about endorsing a recall because she's hoping to be appointed to the job without facing voters," Edwards said.

Stefani declined to comment on whether she'd seek the role, adding that she's "laser-focused" on the June election.

In addition to Boudin's recall, voters will decide whether to enact a ballot measure proposed by Stefani that would create a new city office for victims' services.

"There is no vacancy at the moment, and I am not going to discuss that until there is," Stefani said.

San Francisco supervisors Hillary Ronen, Connie Chan, Gordon Mar, Aaron Peskin, Dean Preston, Shamann Walton and Myrna Melgar have supported Boudin, while Rafael Mandelman, Ahsha Safaí and newly appointed supervisor Matt Dorsey have not taken an official stance.

Matt Haney, who recently vacated his District Six seat after being elected to the state Assembly, endorsed Boudin.

In her interview, Stefani took aim at Boudin's track record on domestic violence, drugs and gun crimes, alleging that he regularly undercharges or dismisses cases altogether. She said his prioritization on "kilos, not crumbs" for drug cases misses the mark in a city that's experienced more than 1,300 overdose deaths in the last two years alone, and called drug prosecutions a "catch-and-release program."

Stefani pointed to figures that showed police had made 131 arrests for domestic violence cases in the last three months of 2020 and that Boudin's office had dismissed 113 of them.

In a particularly tragic case, a 7-month-old boy was allegedly killed by a man who had been arrested twice in recent months on charges of felony domestic violence, and who was released without charges.

"No intervention was made, Chesa just let the person go," Stefani said. "And then he blamed the woman in that case for being unwilling to testify against her abuser."

Edwards, Boudin's spokesperson, said that the figures cited by Stefani were "cherry-picked" and "wrong."

Boudin's filing rate of domestic violence charges in 2021 was 37% and so far in 2022 has been 46%, compared to the average of 32% in the nine years preceding Boudin's time in office, Edwards said.

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