

Gubernatorial Candidate John Cox Rallies With Bear in San Diego, Drawing Criticism

Cox was asked about the bear several times during his campaign stop at Shelter Island and admitted it was done to get attention

By **Lauren Coronado** and **City News Service** • Published May 11, 2021 • Updated on May 11, 2021 at 2:33 pm



Rancho Santa Fe-based businessman John Cox was in San Diego Tuesday again using a controversial tactic at his latest campaign rally for California Governor.

The Republican candidate held his campaign even in San Diego's Shelter Island with Tag, the Kodiak bear seen in his campaign ad comparing himself as "the beast" to Newsom, "the beauty" and an out-of-touch politician [who is facing a recall election](#).

The two ran against each other once before, in 2018, and Newsom beat out Cox by nearly 3 million votes.

Cox's campaign promises include cutting taxes, addressing homelessness, and lowering the cost of energy, but [his website does not yet have details](#) on how he plans to achieve these goals. He said, if elected, his first task would be to address affordable housing.

"California doesn't have to be prohibitively expensive. California can have electricity. We can have water when we need it. We can douse fires before they become an inferno. We can cure homelessness," Cox said alongside Tag.

Cox's idea to use a 1,000-pound animal for his campaign drew criticism from animal rights groups, like San Diego County's Lions, Tigers and Bears animal sanctuary, which had members nearby protesting on Monday.

"It's sad and I just don't think it's the way to win a political campaign," said Lions, Tigers and Bears owner Bobbi Brink. "So, [we're] just out here nicely trying to give our opinion and help the bear."

Anthony Ramirez, Cox's press secretary defended the campaign's stunt.

"The bear represents the beastly changes that John Cox would make to save California," Anthony Ramirez, Cox's press secretary said. "Every care was taken to ensure Tag's comfort and safety with the approval of several government agencies. California needs beastly change and that may ruffle some feathers of left wing activists."

Tag, who has appeared on TV shows, comes from Working Wildlife in Frazier Park, a business that rents out wild animals for entertainment purposes, according to the Desert Sun.

Cox was asked about the bear several times during his campaign stop and admitted it was done to get attention.

"We made sure that everything about this bear is taken care of in the utmost," Cox said. "It was done to get attention, I'm going to be honest about that, but it also was done to show the seriousness of a beast. We've got to tackle these problems," Cox added.

Last week, Sen. Ben Hueso, D-San Diego, said he was "disappointed and appalled to see gubernatorial hopeful John Cox parade a live bear to his press conference in Sacramento.

"Two years ago I introduced SB 313, which was signed into law and bans the use of wild animals in circuses. While the letter of the law pertained to circuses, the spirit of the law protected animals, such as Kodiak bears, from being used in events as props, such as Mr. Cox's publicity stunt," Hueso continued.

The field of Republican challengers includes former San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer, reality TV star and Olympic decathlete Caitlyn Jenner and former Rep. Doug Ose.

Newsom has criticized the need for a special recall election, calling it a "waste of time" and money because the 2022 gubernatorial primary will be a few months later.

Newsom and his allies have tried to link recall supporters to former President Donald Trump, who is extremely unpopular in California.