

Our View: Judy Chu is clear choice

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MID-JULY is an odd time for an election.

And that's easy for us to observe. Imagine being a candidate in an important congressional race trying to whip up interest smack in the middle of the dog days of summer.

But that is the task given to those running to represent California's 32nd Congressional District. The odd timing is a function of the former longtime incumbent Hilda Solis being appointed as President Obama's secretary of labor, and of the multi-candidate May primary election making it almost impossible for a single person to take over 50 percent of the vote.

So now the voters - or the voters with gumption - of the district that sprawls from East Los Angeles through the southern San Gabriel Valley cities of Monterey Park,

Rosemead, South El Monte, El Monte and Baldwin Park up into West Covina, Covina, Azusa and Duarte have a run-off next Tuesday, July 14, that will decide who represents them in the House.

The correct answer to the question of who that should be couldn't be clearer - it's Judy Chu. A public servant in the district for decades and formerly a respected community college teacher here, Chu served on the Monterey Park City Council for 13 years before being elected to the California Assembly. She currently serves on the powerful tax-setting Board of Equalization in Sacramento.

She has the backing of virtually every other city council member in the diverse district in part because of her obviously solid credentials and in great part because her local service ensures that she understands the crucial needs of our cities. And before that, equally importantly, she served on the Garvey School Board.

In the highly Democratic district, it wasn't a surprise that it was a Democrat - Judy Chu - who took the highest plurality of votes in May. But political observers did watch with interest to see how much mere ethnicity seemed to matter in the 32nd, which is 51 percent Latino, and 30 percent primarily Spanish-speaking. About

7 percent is Chinese surnamed, with another 7 percent Vietnamese surnamed, and something on the order of 5 percent Filipino.

Three of the major primary candidates were Latino, but clearly many voters paid more attention to other factors than a person's race - and that's a great sign for electoral politics in America.

Chu, an undergraduate math major at UCLA who went on to take a doctorate in psychology, has long been a Solis ally. She'll hardly be a newcomer to Washington, D.C. - she knows many of the players, and knows how to bring dollars and clout back to her district. Sophisticated, extremely smart, affable yet tough, she's just the kind of representative the district needs, and we're pleased to give her our strong endorsement in next Tuesday's election.

A footnote, and yet an important one: the (newly) Republican opponent, married to a cousin of Chu's, is Betty Tom Chu, who now calls herself Betty Chu for the purposes of the campaign. Voters should not buy into the confusion. She's a loose cannon of a candidate with little in the way of a coherent platform. Betty Chu's campaign has a propensity for doctoring photographs of opponents in its mailers, adding facial moles and bad dentistry, as she did to Monterey Park council candidate David Lau and to Judy Chu in May. The Valley deserves better politics than that.