

Nathan Uebelhoer

JOUR 132 Feature Story

Professor Farah

Source 1: Joe Patterson (916-774-4430)

Source 2: Christina Paxton (christina.paxton@asm.ca.gov)

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Joe Patterson is California-born and bred. He entered the State Assembly in 2022 with the clear goal of making a difference for his constituents in the suburbs of the state capital. He's not in politics to get involved with the partisan fights of the national party but wants to dig into what will help the voters who elected him.

"I wanted to make a difference," Patterson said. "I first got into elected politics because of a big issue that came up in my community. I felt like I could make a change, so I decided to run. That led me to where I am today."

Patterson, a Republican, represents the 5th district in the assembly which covers much of the Rocklin-Granite Bay area of Sacramento. He was born and raised in Napa, California but it was his move to Sacramento for college that began to shape his interest in politics. He's a Sacramento State alum.

"My parents are not political at all," Patterson said. "My mom is actually a Democrat. When I first got to Sac State I got involved with ASI, the College Republicans, and that's what really got me interested in politics."

Patterson served as president of the College Republicans, president of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, and director of government affairs for Associated Students Inc. at Sac State. He continues his close involvement with the school even writing a letter of recommendation for now President J. Luke Wood who was once roommates with Patterson during their time in college. He said his political differences with Wood didn't change the fact that Wood is a "really good guy."

Patterson entered the political world from the onset of his 2005 graduation working as an intern for Assemblyman Bill Maze and State Senator Tom McClintock who was Patterson's congressman during his time on the Rocklin City Council. Patterson's wife of 13 years, Colleen, has also worked in politics rising to deputy communications director under Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

It was a 2015 issue in Rocklin that made Patterson jump from consultant to politician. The Rocklin City Council was pushing the development of a full-lockdown psychiatric facility across the street from a high school. This was met with pushback from the community.

“The stats said only about three or four people escape each year,” Patterson said. “I don’t want to sound like a hater, but it was concerning for the community to have a facility like that built across the street from a high school.”

Patterson finished first in a race featuring three incumbents to take his seat on the Rocklin City Council in 2016. He served the 2019 year as the city’s mayor. He said it’s issues like these that make him want to be in the “crazy” world of politics. He’s focused much of his time on supporting victims of domestic abuse.

“About two-thirds of all mass shooters in this country have backgrounds in domestic violence,” Patterson said. “I put up a bill to make felony domestic violence a violent felony. That’s to upgrade it to where the felon has to serve at least 10 years in prison. There’s no early release.”

Patterson gave the example of a shooting that occurred a few years back in Sacramento where the shooter had been released five years into a 10-year sentence for domestic violence. He wants issues like mass shootings and domestic violence to be bipartisan. Patterson bemoaned being a Republican in the super majority California legislature.

He’s enjoyed his time in the assembly. Patterson has four kids, lives in Rocklin, and his office sits in a Raley’s shopping center parking lot in Granite Bay. He took the afternoon to go on a 4.5-mile run after not exercising for a few days. Time in the assembly and taking care of his children when his wife was away took up his time.

Even after taking back a couple of pills for headache relief, Patterson’s smile and humorous attitude are still at the center of his character. Staff in his office laud his patient personality even with so much going on. Senior assistant Christina Paxton explained how the chief of staff just left yesterday for maternity leave.

“He’s just so much fun to work for,” Paxton said. “He really cares about every single one of his constituents, taking time to meet with them to hear their concerns. Even during an insane time like this, he manages to laugh, smile, and have fun. It’s a really fun environment to work in.”

Patterson made the last-minute decision to run for assembly after the 2020 redistricting.

“I was told I had a week,” Patterson explained. “I made some calls to see who was running. I really enjoyed my time on the city council and didn’t want to leave. But then the day came and I jumped in.”

Politics can be crazy and Patterson is less than a year into his term in the assembly but he’s loving every minute.

“I’m having a pretty good time,” Patterson said.