State Senate leader Atkins announces run for governor

State Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins launches a run for governor with an event at the San Diego Air & Space Museum on Friday.

On Thursday, Atkins filed with the Secretary of State Shirley Weber's office her campaign paperwork, making her the first candidate to file for the California governor’s race in 2022.

“I need someone to fight for the values — that are not just heard in a book but learned in the field. I need someone who understands, and has lived, the challenges facing Californians and stands what it was to be poor and work to get ahead,” Atkins said on Friday. “I have the opportunity to elect a governor who understands, and has lived, the challenges facing California struggling to get by and trying to get ahead.”

“Toni Atkins is the right choice for California. She is the only woman and first person in her branch of government — the only woman and first person in the California Legislature.”

Atkins was elected to the state Senate in 2016, and has served the California Legislature this year. She is the state Senate President Pro Tem since 2018. Atkins said on Friday, “I still have more to do. I need someone who understands, and has lived, the challenges facing Californians, and stands what it was to be poor and work to get ahead.”

The Pro Tem will term out of the Legislature this year. She is funding her own Senate leadership role to Sen. Mike McGuire, D-Healdsburg, on a scholarship. Whose parents "learned in a book but learned in the field. I need someone who understands, and has lived, the challenges facing Californians and stands what it was to be poor and work to get ahead,” Atkins said. "Some- one who get free breakfast at school and went to church camp on a scholarship. Whose parents never had time off and always had a doctor’s bill written." Atkins will join Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis and State Superintendent of Instruction Tony Thurmond in the campaign to replace Gov. Gavin Newsom, who is serving his second and final term. Attorney General Rob Bonta has also said he’s considering a gubernatorial bid.

"In 2026, we have the opportunity to elect a governor who understands, and has lived, the challenges facing California struggling to get by and trying to get ahead," Atkins said.

"I am ready to be governor," Atkins said on Friday. "I have made my eyes to rise with two governor- as a leader of a co-equal branch of government — the only woman and first person in 210 years to lead both houses of the California Legislature."

Secretary of State Shirley Weber introduced Atkins at her announcement, citing the Pro Tem’s background in the basis for her support.

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