

California Congresswoman Vows to Stay in Reelection Race After Mild Stroke

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Rep. [Grace Napolitano](#) (D-Norwalk) had a stroke two weeks ago during a campaign stop in Los Angeles and was hospitalized for two nights. The nine-term congresswoman said she has been resting at home on doctor's orders since then and plans to return to Washington in mid-March.

The 79-year-old will not attend [the California Democratic Party convention here this weekend](#) but said in an interview with The Times that she is making a swift recovery and is still seeking reelection this year.

"My ability to do my job is not at risk," she said Friday.

Napolitano is facing a [challenge](#) from fellow Democrat [Roger Hernandez](#), an assemblyman from West Covina. Delegates will [decide](#) who to endorse in the race at the convention here Saturday.

She characterized the hemorrhagic stroke as "minor" and said that she is now able to walk and work around her home. A doctor five years ago warned her about elevated blood pressure, so she took up aerobic stretching and lost 10 pounds. She did not take any medication, she said. Napolitano has played in the annual Congressional Women's Softball Game in Washington.

Since the stroke, she has begun taking Lipitor and another drug to deal with her blood pressure, she said.

"Mr. [Reid](#) also had a minor stroke," she said, referring to Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid's 2005 [medical incident](#), separate from the exercise accident that put him in the hospital on New Year's Day in 2015. "That didn't stop him very long. I hope I can do the same. I am pretty confident."

Napolitano has been keeping up with business in Washington through daily calls with her staffers, said chief of staff Daniel Chao. The House was on recess last week.

News of the stroke surprised some of her colleagues, including Rep. [Juan Vargas](#), whose office is next door. Vargas, who has compared Napolitano to his grandmother, said he'll be praying for her.

The stroke happened while the veteran congresswoman was answering questions from members of the Los Angeles County Young Democrats club during an endorsement meeting Feb 13.

While answering a question, she said she "couldn't find enough words to finish sentences" and her campaign staff drove her to a hospital afterward. She stayed in the hospital for two nights for tests and observations, Chao said.

On Wednesday, the group endorsed Napolitano, according to club spokesman Jason Levin.

She won 62% of [local delegate votes](#) at a meeting of party activists last month, just short of the 70% supermajority required to win an early endorsement. Because she is an incumbent, she will need only 50% of votes from a 53-member endorsing caucus to lock up the endorsement Saturday.

Chao said Napolitano is still her energetic self. She even wanted to attend the convention this weekend.

"We had to talk her out of it," he said.