

The Race for Congress

In Reagan's Home District, a Referendum of Sorts

By ROBERT REINHOLD

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SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — Probably no race for Congress carries more symbolism than the one being fought here to house, mailbox to mailbox, in the rolling avocado ranchland and suburban reaches of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties on California's lush central coast.

Here President Reagan's own Congressman, Robert J. Lagomarsino, a conservative Republican who has represented the 19th Congressional District with little challenge for 14 years, is locked in a tough race with a popular liberal Democrat, State Senator Gary K. Hart, who stands for almost everything the incumbent does not.

The national Democratic Party, labor unions and environmentalists have made a special target of Mr. Lagomarsino. "This could be considered a referendum on the Reagan years," said Peggy Connolly, spokesman for the Democratic Congress-

sional Campaign Committee in Washington. "We want Ronald Reagan to retire to his ranch represented by a Democrat who will best protect his Social Security."

Help From the President

The Republicans are pulling out all stops to save the seat of the Congressman, a 62-year-old lawyer. The President himself has been host at a number of fund raisers for him, and the National Republican Congressional Committee has kicked in cash and services totalling \$50,000, the maximum that Federal law allows the committee to contribute in any House race. "It's no surprise this would be a very competitive race," said Steven L. Lotterer, spokesman for the committee. "We were going to do everything we could."

The national Democrats have given almost as much to the 45-year-old Senator Hart (no relation to the former United States Senator from Colorado), who has served in the State Legislature 14 years and whom party

leaders see as one of their emerging stars.

A poll of 400 probable voters taken by The Santa Barbara News-Press on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 found Mr. Lagomarsino leading by 51.5 to 44.5 percent, with 4 percent undecided. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus five percentage points.

Some Sharp Contrasts

Few races in the country provide such sharp contrasts. For instance, Mr. Lagomarsino opposes abortion and backs military aid for the Nicaraguan rebels, the MX missile program, the Reagan Administration's program of space-based missile defense and the death penalty for murderers. On each of those issues, Mr. Hart, a onetime teacher who was an activist against the Vietnam War, takes the contrary position.

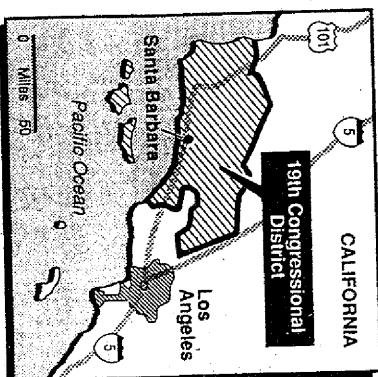
But probably no issue is more potent than the environment here, where memories of a calamitous oil-well blowout in the Santa Barbara Channel two decades ago are still

vivid. Mr. Hart has been endorsed by the Sierra Club, Environmental Action and the League of Conservation Voters. "If Hart wins, it will send a message nationally on Reagan's environmental priorities," said the league's political director, Martin Hamburger.

Mr. Lagomarsino admits to no slouching on the environment. He cites his role in creating the Channel Islands National Park, his opposition to more offshore oil drilling, at least off his district, and support for more Federal parkland.

Mr. Lagomarsino has earned a reputation for excellent constituent service, and says his consistent support for military spending has greatly aided the district, which includes Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Mr. Hart, as chairman of the State Senate Education Committee, has drawn wide attention as author of bills to bolster and revamp public education in California. He has also championed numerous environmen-



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Republican incumbent faces stiff challenge in 19th District.

tal and health bills, including one that require warnings on alcoholic beverages that drinking can cause birth defects.

Mr. Lagomarsino says he would be happy to have Mr. Hart continue to represent him in the State Senate.