

Big money flows into key state races

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Body

Oct 28, 2020(CalMatters: <https://calmatters.org> Delivered by Newstex) ;;; Good morning, California. It's Wednesday, September 28. Four main groupsImage via iStock In less than a week, Election Day will be upon us — wrapping up one of the most expensive campaign cycles in California history. Beyond the nearly \$740 million[1] pumped into the campaigns for and against the 12 statewide propositions — a state record[2] — special interest groups have funneled more than \$31 million into key state Assembly[3] and Senate races[4]. Though state law caps the amount of money donors can give to a campaign, there's no limit on how much special interests can spend on their own campaigns praising or trashing a particular candidate, CalMatters' Ben Christopher and Laurel Rosenhall report[5]. Here's a look[6] at four key groups pouring millions into these 'independent expenditure committees' — and what they're hoping to accomplish in the Capitol. The oil and gas industry, more than \$7 million: Oil and gas companies' priorities include blocking a potential fracking ban[7], hindering Gov.

Gavin Newsom's ban on gas-powered cars[8] and fighting efforts to mandate buffer zones around oil wells. Prison guards, nearly \$4 million: The influential union's priorities include obtaining better working conditions and fighting certain criminal justice reforms and prison closures[9]. Teachers, around \$2.5 million: California's powerful teachers unions want more money for public education[10] and to eliminate certain testing requirements for new teachers. Realtors, around \$2.3 million: The realtors want pro-housing policy. They also want to block new rent control measures and eviction moratoria. Big Tech, health care industry groups and other unions are also spending millions on independent expenditure committees. To see where the money is flowing, check out Ben and Laurel's report[11]. Meanwhile, the most expensive ballot campaign in state history is in for a cutthroat final week, CalMatters' Lauren Hepler writes[12]. Uber, Lyft and other gig-economy companies have spent nearly \$220 million[13] supporting Prop. 22[14], compared to the \$19 million[15] raised by unions in opposition. But labor groups are fighting back in other ways, including two lawsuits[16] filed in the last week alone. Finally, here's a look at the propositions most likely to impact higher education and young people[17], from CalMatters' Ethan Edward Coston.

_____The coronavirus bottom line:As of 9 p.m. Tuesday night, California had904,198 confirmed coronavirus casesand17,400 deathsfrom the virus, according toaCalMatters tracker[18].Also:CalMatters regularly updates this pandemic timeline tracking thestate's daily actions[19]. And we'retracking the state's coronavirus hospitalizations by county[20].With potential postal delays and an eyebrow-raising Supreme Court decision, is it too late for Californians to vote by mail? CalMatters' Ben Christopher chimes in: No[21].Advertisement<https://mattressrecyclingcouncil.org/programs/california/> Other stories you should know 1. Fire risk remains high Firefighters are enveloped in smoke from the Blue Ridge Fire in Yorba Linda on Oct. 26, 2020. Photo by Leonard Ortiz, Orange County Register/SCNG The worst of the season's most dangerous fire weather[22] appears to have passed as gusty winds subside — but rain isn't in the forecast, meaning fire risk remains high. Daniel Swain, a UCLA climate scientist[23]: 'There is really no relief on the horizon. I see no rain or mountain snow

looking as far out as mid-November. The question is, are we still going to be talking about wildfires on Thanksgiving this year?' Newsom said Tuesday that 42 new wildfires ignited Monday amid 'hurricane-level winds,' though firefighters were able to fully contain all but three[24]. Two of those — the Silverado Fire and the Blue Ridge Fire — blazed through Orange County[25], charring some 27,000 acres, spurring close to 100,000 evacuations and contributing to Southern California notching the worst air quality in the nation[26] Tuesday. Around 15,000 Southern California Edison customers[27] and 117,000 PG&E customers[28] remained without power Tuesday. 2. Coronavirus cases tick up People wait in line at a COVID-19 testing facility in Oakland on July 7, 2020. Photo by Jane Tyska, Bay Area News Group Seven counties moved into less restrictive reopening tiers[29] Tuesday, even as Newsom warned that coronavirus case numbers, positivity rates[30], hospitalizations and intensive-care admissions[31] are inching upward after months of decline. Also Tuesday, Newsom said the state launched over the weekend a new coronavirus data reporting system first announced in September[32] after glitches in the old system resulted in a backlog of hundreds of thousands of lab results[33]. Last week, another glitch-induced backlog caused Los Angeles' coronavirus positivity rate to swell significantly[34] — but the state's top health official, Dr. Mark Ghaly, said Tuesday the backlog was resolved and didn't affect the county's tier status. The governor on Tuesday said that Washington, Oregon and Nevada have joined California's working group[35] tasked with reviewing any FDA-approved coronavirus vaccine[36] before distribution. Newsom[37]: 'It will not cause any delays. In fact, we would argue quite the contrary. It's going to increase transparency and trust that I think we are looking for to make sure that we're not doing anything to meet an arbitrary deadline or a political deadline.' 3. Auditor slams California's Exide cleanup View of Vernon, the site of the shuttered Exide plant. Photo by downtowngal via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0) On top of the \$251 million already paid by taxpayers, California will need to spend at least another \$390 million to clean up thousands of properties contaminated by lead and other toxic pollutants from Exide's shuttered battery-recycling plant in Los Angeles, according to a scathing report released Tuesday by the state auditor[38]. The report also paints an unflattering portrait of the Department of Toxic Substances Control, which began cleanup efforts in 2015. Not only has the department failed to clean 31 of the 50 properties where lead contamination poses a particularly high risk to children, it's also cleaned only one of those properties in the last two years. It's also 'significantly behind schedule' and unlikely to meet its goal of cleaning the 3,200 most contaminated properties by June 2021. In addition, the department lacks a strategy for cleaning the remaining 4,600 properties — something it attributed to a lack of funding[39]. After a federal judge approved Exide's bankruptcy plan[40] last week, DTSC agreed to allow a court-approved trustee[41] to take over the contaminated site — though it will maintain an oversight role. Advertisement <https://www.chcf.org/collection/modernizing-payment-californias-community-health-centers/> CalMatters columnist Dan Walters[42]: Prop. 16 is trailing in the polls — and proponents are once again playing the Ku Klux Klan card. An electric-car future: The state and private industry are ramping up infrastructure to make the change as painless as possible, argues California State Treasurer Fiona Ma[43]. Equity for women: A new report shows California women face persistent barriers in accessing economic security, physical and mental health care, and representation in elected positions, write Kristin Schumacher of the California Budget and Policy Center and Jacqueline Martinez Garcel of the Latino Community Foundation[44]. Other things worth your time Tell us about your voting experience. // CalMatters[45] Biden headed for historic margin in California, poll shows. // Los Angeles Times[46] Concerned about election unrest, Beverly Hills will close Rodeo Drive. // Los Angeles Times[47] Texas overtakes California in total coronavirus cases amid nationwide surge. // Mercury News[48] California restaurants seek refund for liquor, health permits. // Associated Press[49] For some working Bay Area parents, only one solution to virtual school: drop their job. // CalMatters[50] Trade groups sue California to stop western Joshua tree's endangered species listing. // Palm Springs Desert Sun[51] California billionaire accused of blasting 'Gilligan's Island' theme song on repeat to annoy neighbor. // Mercury News[52] See you tomorrow. Tips, insight or feedback? Email emily@calmatters.org [53].; Follow me on Twitter: [@emily_hoeven](https://twitter.com/emily_hoeven) [54] Subscribe to CalMatters newsletters [here](#) [55]. Follow CalMatters on Facebook [56] and Twitter [57]. CalMatters is now available in Spanish on Twitter [58], Facebook [59] and RSS [60]. 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