

## Voters have a opportunity to move the needle on these three crises

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### Body

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Oct 10, 2020( CalMatters: <https://calmatters.org> Delivered by Newstex) ;; In summary Three ballot measures significantly impact the state's ability to address the coronavirus and the related economic inequality. By Tom Epstein, Special to CalMatters Tom Epstein is president of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, [epsteintom@yahoo.com](mailto:epsteintom@yahoo.com) [1].;As usual, Californians will face an array of weighty ballot measures in November.

With the triple trauma of COVID-19, an economic collapse exacerbating the state's obscene wealth inequality and searing examples of racial injustice, voters have a timely opportunity to move the needle on these three crises.As president of the California Community Colleges, I'm acutely aware of the dire conditions facing low-income, mostly non-white students who are often essential workers supporting families on the edge of poverty. They are at high risk for contracting the coronavirus, losing their jobs, and needing physical and mental health care. They are also deeply disturbed by the graphic violence against people of color that has exploded into public view, which has inspired an uprising against racism.Three ballot measures significantly impact the state's ability to address the coronavirus and the related economic inequality.Proposition 14[2] would authorize \$5.5 billion in general obligation bonds to support stem cell research, \$7.8 billion including interest. It builds on Prop. 71, a \$3 billion bond passed in 2004 for similar purposes.Prop. 71 promised California would become a world leader in research leading to cures for dreaded diseases. After 15 years, however, no cures have been approved and the state has recovered just \$350,000 from its \$6 billion investment, including interest. Nonetheless, sponsors of the original measure are asking taxpayers to double down.Our underfunded public health systems are overwhelmed by the coronavirus and further jeopardized by the state budget shortfall. Now is not the time for California to spend billions more for research that will bleed the state's general fund for three decades. We should instead invest in programs that prevent disease, strengthen community resilience and serve every resident who needs basic physical and mental care. Vote no.Proposition 15[3] would tax commercial and industrial property at its market value, exempting agriculture and small businesses.It revises 1978's Prop. 13, which capped property tax increases at 2% annually unless the property changed hands. By requiring large commercial property owners to be taxed at the current value of their holdings rather than an artificially lower price, Prop. 15 would increase fairness in tax assessments while raising billions of dollars for vital public services.With public schools and community colleges facing enormous challenges adapting to COVID-19 mandates and a significant decline in revenue for local governments, these new funds are essential to meet the needs of the millions of Californians who rely on public services, especially those on the edge of poverty. Vote yes.Proposition 22[4] would gut AB 5, state legislation that requires gig worker companies such as Uber and Lyft to treat their drivers as employees rather than contractors.While AB 5 is not a perfect law, it was revised this month to correct some inequities while protecting low-paid contractors from being exploited by tech entrepreneurs who reap billions from their work. Gig companies are spending nearly \$200 million on this measure to protect their

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unfair business model. Instead, they should work with the legislature on other changes that meet the needs of their drivers and share the enormous wealth created by their labor. Vote no. Three other ballot measures address racial inequity. Proposition 16[5] eliminates a prohibition on affirmative action established by Prop 209 in 1996. State and local governments would be free to grant preferences based on race, sex, color, ethnicity and national origin in public employment, public education and public contracting. With our legacy of racial disparities and discrimination more obvious than ever in 2020, vote yes. Proposition 20[6] would increase criminal penalties and limit parole for certain offenses, undermining two recent ballot measures that reformed sentencing. As we confront increasing evidence of police racial bias and prisoners at great risk for COVID-19, there has rarely been a more misguided policy initiative than this one. Vote no. Proposition 25[7] would overturn a bill passed last year to eliminate cash bail for most offenses, replaced by a nonmonetary assessment evaluating the risk of releasing the suspect. Sponsored by the bail bond industry, this initiative would further criminalize poverty. Like Prop. 20, the substance and timing of this measure couldn't be worse. Vote yes to preserve existing law limiting cash bail. \_\_\_\_\_ Tom Epstein has also written about online higher education in California[8]. Support in-depth reporting that matters As a nonprofit newsroom, we rely on the generosity of Californians like you to cover the issues that matter. If you value our reporting, support our journalism with a donation. [ 1]: epsteintom@yahoo.com [ 2]: [https://ballotpedia.org/California\\_Proposition\\_14,\\_Stem\\_Cell\\_Research\\_Institute\\_Bond\\_Initiative\\_\(2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_14,_Stem_Cell_Research_Institute_Bond_Initiative_(2020)) [ 3]: [https://ballotpedia.org/California\\_Proposition\\_15,\\_Tax\\_on\\_Commercial\\_and\\_Industrial\\_Properties\\_for\\_Education\\_and\\_Local\\_Government\\_Funding\\_Initiative\\_\(2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_15,_Tax_on_Commercial_and_Industrial_Properties_for_Education_and_Local_Government_Funding_Initiative_(2020)) [ 4]: [https://ballotpedia.org/California\\_Proposition\\_22,\\_App-Based\\_Drivers\\_as\\_Contractors\\_and\\_Labor\\_Policies\\_Initiative\\_\(2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_22,_App-Based_Drivers_as_Contractors_and_Labor_Policies_Initiative_(2020)) [ 5]: [https://ballotpedia.org/California\\_Proposition\\_16,\\_Repeal\\_Proposition\\_209\\_Affirmative\\_Action\\_Amendment\\_\(2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_16,_Repeal_Proposition_209_Affirmative_Action_Amendment_(2020)) [ 6]: [https://ballotpedia.org/California\\_Proposition\\_20,\\_Criminal\\_Sentencing,\\_Parole,\\_and\\_DNA\\_Collection\\_Initiative\\_\(2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_20,_Criminal_Sentencing,_Parole,_and_DNA_Collection_Initiative_(2020)) [ 7]: [https://ballotpedia.org/California\\_Proposition\\_25,\\_Replace\\_Cash\\_Bail\\_with\\_Risk\\_Assessments\\_Referendum\\_\(2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_25,_Replace_Cash_Bail_with_Risk_Assessments_Referendum_(2020)) [ 8]: <https://calmatters.org/commentary/california-must-seize-the-opportunity-to-become-a-pioneer-in-online-higher-education/>

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