

Daily Trojan Editorial Board endorsements for California elections

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Body

Ahead of the Nov. 3 election, the Daily Trojan Editorial Board has compiled a list of the state measures, constitutional amendments and some of the candidates for state officers that Californians will be voting on. Here are our recommendations for how voters should cast their ballots on Tuesday.

Proposition 14: YES

Funding for State Stem Cell Research

Touting possible cures for diseases from Parkinson's to paralysis, Californians in 2004 opted to fill the federal void in research funding by borrowing \$3 billion to create California's own stem cell agency (to the dismay of anti-abortion advocates, who likened stem cell research to abortion). Now, that money is drying up. Without a fresh infusion, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine will cease to exist. The institute's stem cell research has led to clinical trials, biotech jobs and research toward treatments or cures for ailments affecting half of Californian families.

Proposition 15: YES

Undo Limits on Commercial Property Taxes

Under the current law, if a corporation purchased, for example, a commercial property worth \$15 million in 1985 and the property is now worth \$95 million, the corporation would still pay property taxes based on the property's original value. This is an enormous tax break to some of the largest businesses in California, and they should be taxed based on their current, fair market value instead of their purchase price. By ending this tax break, \$6.5 million to \$11.5 billion can be raised to better fund schools and local services, helping the state and hard-hit communities to effectively rebuild themselves after the coronavirus pandemic.

Proposition 16: YES

Restore Affirmative Action

In 1996, Proposition 209 banned the use of affirmative action in California. In the wake of this year's national reckoning on racial inequities and the coronavirus pandemic, Californians must recognize the urgency of combating systemic and structural racism in our state by passing this measure. We must promote educational and economic diversity and help address widening disparities and setbacks for Black and Latinx Californians.

Proposition 17: YES

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Voting Rights Restoration for Persons on Parole

Currently, the California Constitution prohibits felons from voting until their parole or prison sentences are completed. The current statute does not function to serve any legitimate governmental interest - rather, the statute stands to further disenfranchise already marginalized members of our society. Restoration of voting rights enables a person to reenter society with dignity by giving them control over their civil rights.

Proposition 18: YES

Primary Voting for 17-Year-Olds

This amendment would allow 17-year-olds who will be 18 at the next general election to vote in primary and special elections for California. Eighteen states and Washington D.C. currently have such legislation in place. The ballot measure received bipartisan support in the California legislature and provides young people with the opportunity to amplify their voices and participate in civic engagement. Young people are underrepresented in electoral processes but are still affected by the decisions made by elected officials.

Proposition 19: NO

Property Tax Transfers

This measure allows eligible members to transfer their original tax assessments to any property within a state, with an upward adjustment on expensive properties, as opposed to only to homes of equal or lesser value. Extending these tax breaks so far out would ultimately hurt the average taxpayer who does not benefit from the measure. It is mostly realtors who stand to gain in the form of added commission. Moreover, it would unnecessarily add a crushing tax burden to children inheriting properties.

Proposition 20: NO

Criminal Sentencing, Parole and DNA Collection Initiative

Proposition 20 calls for a series of amendments that further perpetuate California's mass incarceration rate: It would raise the classification of misdemeanors (theft-related crime) to a wobbler, increase sentencing penalties, require people who committed misdemeanors such as shoplifting, drug possession and prostitution to submit their DNA to the state and federal databases and classify more crimes as violent so fewer convicts are eligible for parole. Most, if not all, of these amendments use taxpayer dollars to keep people in jail for petty crimes and cut funding for mental health, school, housing, homelessness and public safety programs.

Proposition 21: YES

Rent Control

Endorsed by Sen. Bernie Sanders and the California Democratic Party, Proposition 21 would allow California cities to limit rent increases if a property is more than 15 years old. Property owners who own no more than two housing units, such as condos or single-family homes, will be exempt from rent control. Dubbed the "Rent Affordability Act," Proposition 21 would help lower-income and working class families avoid being evicted due to skyrocketing rent prices.

Proposition 22: NO

App-based drivers as independent contractors

Proposition 22 is the most expensive ballot measure in U.S. history. It is written and financed by Uber, Lyft, Doordash and Instacart to deny basic protections - a minimum wage, paid sick leave, safety protections - to workers. We have labor laws for a reason and app-based driving should not be allowed a special exemption. Do not allow big corporations to buy new laws for themselves - vote NO on Proposition 22.

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Proposition 23: NO

Kidney Dialysis Clinic Rules

The proposition, which would place more requirements on dialysis clinics such as mandating the presence of one licensed physician at clinics while patients are being treated, reporting data on dialysis-related infections to state and federal health departments and obtaining consent from the state health department before closing a clinic, is unnecessary. There is little substantive evidence that the proposition would protect the health and safety of dialysis patients. At its core, this proposition appears to be a union ploy to pressure clinics and organize dialysis workers.

Proposition 24: YES

Data Protection

This is a data privacy measure that would restrict businesses from being able to harvest various forms of users' data without permissions on behalf of users. Moreover, it would establish a new state agency, The Privacy Protection Agency, to enforce the proposition. The importance of data protection for users and the need to restrict the power of unelected tech giants cannot be understated in the age of technology.

Proposition 25: YES

End Cash Bail

Cash bail is a classist structure that keeps lower-income and working class individuals in jail as they await their trial; this is inherently unfair as those with generational wealth are in a position to easily absorb the cost. Proposition 25 would replace cash bail with a risk assessment that gauges whether the person is a flight risk and/or a threat to public safety.

L.A. County District Attorney

Daily Trojan Endorses George Gascón

Incumbent Jackie Lacey has served as L.A. district attorney for two terms and is widely regarded as a punishment-first prosecutor. A majority of her backing has come from the law enforcement community, and she has been the recipient of critique most recently due to her failure to reform the law enforcement system in the city and hold officers accountable for use of unwarranted, deadly force. Under her leadership, Los Angeles has led the United States in law enforcement-related shooting deaths. Meanwhile, her competitor George Gascón, a former San Francisco District Attorney and assistant chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, is leading the path toward progressive prosecution. Gascón is a Cuban refugee and military and law enforcement veteran. Favoring mental health treatment for incarcerated persons, the elimination of cash bail and ensurance of resolution parity for undocumented members of the community, Gascón is the clear choice for those looking to ameliorate the broken criminal justice system in Los Angeles. The Daily Trojan Editorial Board joins Gov. Gavin Newsom, Sens. Bernie Sanders, Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren and Mayor Eric Garcetti in endorsing George Gascón.

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