Gotham Group's Ellen Goldsmith-Vein Offers Her L.A.-Area Voting Guide

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Body

Manager and producer Ellen Goldsmith-Vein, founder of The Gotham Group management group, is one of the Democratic Party's top fundraisers, alongside her husband, entrepreneur Jon Vein. An early backer of Kamala Harris for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, she now serves on the Biden Harris national finance committee, of Harris' selection as Biden's running mate and the ticket's chances on Election Day, "Kamala is not only an incredible human being but very, very smart and was the right choice. All I can say is we have our votive candles lit and hope people will go to the polls to vote. We are bullish."

Last April, the philanthropically active Gotham Group CEO debuted Gotham Reads, a YouTube channel which features children's authors reading beloved books, launched in partnership with a variety of child-focused nonprofits including three where she sits on the advisory board or leadership council: literacy group 826LA, arts education organization P.S. Arts, and writing-focused group Young Storytellers.

The Hollywood Reporter asked Goldsmith-Vein for her take on some of the 12 hotly contested California propositions on the ballot this year - spending for and against this year's state propositions has reached - as well as on some local measures and candidates in Los Angeles. Actor and activist Kendrick Sampson, the founder of BLD PWR, previously with *THR*. (*The Hollywood Reporter* in recent weeks has reached out to a number of celebrities known for their conservative political beliefs to share their take on the California ballot, but received either no response or they declined to participate.)

PROPOSITION 15 It would make commercial landlords, with an exemption for small businesses, face regular property tax assessments. Goldsmith-Vein, who is voting yes, says "The proposition addresses the historic financial crisis that the L.A. Unified School District has been suffering from since the late '70s when the Proposition 13 tax cut took billions of dollars out of the school system. L.A. went from being seventh in the nation to being 39th. So I feel like we've got to figure out how to do something about this. This is one of the reasons why we started

Gotham Reads. There are so many under-served public schools in Los Angeles and now particularly because of the pandemic."

PROPOSITION 16 It would allow diversity to be used as a factor in public employment, education and contracting decisions. Goldsmith-Vein is voting yes. "It allows people who are currently being discriminated against to have equal opportunities for jobs and pay and education. It's essentially equal access," she says.

PROPOSITION 18 It would permit 17-year-olds to vote in primary and special elections if they will turn 18 by the next general election and would otherwise be eligible to vote. "I feel like teenagers and young adults are so much more engaged right now in the political conversation," says Goldsmith-Vein. "I have a son who's 16 and a daughter who is 20, and they are already involved in all kinds of organizations that are about rallying younger kids to get them out to the polls to vote. I think that teenagers are such an important demographic, particularly this election cycle."

PROPOSITION 19 It would afford new property tax breaks to people 55 and older when buying a new home, while upping property taxes on people inheriting property from their parents. Goldsmith-Vein is voting no. "It does nothing to address California's real issue which is the inability of many people in the states to afford housing or the housing crisis in California."

PROPOSITION 20 The initiative would increase penalties for certain property crimes and repeated parole violations. Goldsmith-Vein gives a thumbs down. "It would put more Californians in prison and keep them there for longer. It's an attempt to go back to the tough-on-crime policies that led to prison overcrowding and that have disproportionately affected people of color."

PROPOSITION 24 It would create new protections for consumers' data privacy, including ways for consumers to direct businesses not to share their personal data. "I think we definitely need stronger data privacy laws. I don't know if Prop. 24 necessarily is the ultimate answer but this is an incredibly important issue. The people who I trust on this issue believe that it provides basic privacy: it allows you to discover who has your data and to decide if you want them to use your data."

L.A. COUNTY MEASURE J The proposal would have L.A. County set aside 10 percent of the locally generated unrestricted funds in its annual budget to spend on alternatives to incarceration, such as job training, affordable housing, mental health services, counseling, substance abuse treatment and youth development programs. Goldsmith-Vein gives a thumbs up. "It allows for community investments in alternatives to incarceration and it doesn't cost taxpayers anything."

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT MEASURE RR It would authorize LAUSD to issue $7 billion in bonds allowing it to make updates to facilities and technology. Goldsmith-Vein is voting yes. "It authorizes the sales of bonds without increasing the tax rate. Obviously repairing and renovating the L.A. Unified School District schools and updating technology are necessary and important."

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL RACE, DISTRICT 4 Goldsmith-Vein supports incumbent David Ryu in a run-off race against challenger Nithya Raman. Says Goldsmith-Vein of Ryu, "He's passionate about what he does and he works really closely with his constituents and community leaders around housing and homelessness. He's a thoughtful guy, he listens to people and I think he's done a good job."

Link to Image

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