

The UCSD Guardian's Guide to Voting in San Diego: California State Propositions & Measures Part I

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Body

This article is part of a new UCSD Guardian series on the 2020 United States elections. We will be discussing registration, state propositions and various elections from the local to federal level. Tune in every Tuesday on Facebook or Instagram to see the latest article. The propositions and measures article has been divided into two parts. This article will cover Propositions 14-20.

On the ballot for the 2020 United States elections, 25 propositions will be presented to voters in the state of California. Propositions are initiatives to change California law codes, modify articles of the California Constitution or change other laws by adding or removing statutes. In addition, San Diego residents will also have the opportunity to vote on five measures for the city of San Diego that can similarly alter laws or the city charter.

Proposition 14 -Stem Cell Research Institute Bonds

Proposition 14 aims to increase stem-cell medical research by investing \$5.5 billion from bond sales. Stem-cells can be manipulated to become any chosen type of cell, such as heart or kidney tissue cells, and are valuable in treating diseases such as Cancer, Alzheimer's, kidney disease and heart disease.

Bonds will be sold by the government to investors, and paid back with interest from the General Fund, which is generated by tax revenue. These bonds will not be paid until five years after the proposition passes. \$1.5 billion will be specifically allocated to brain-related research.

According to the campaign website in favor of the measure, Prop 14 aims to continue the work of Proposition 71 which was approved by California voters in 2004. Proponents argue that the initiative funded over 90 clinical trials and close to 3,000 published medical discoveries since then.

The opposition argues that the real cost of the proposition will be close to \$8 billion, which would strain an already suffering government budget during the pandemic.

"[Prop. 14] funds a state agency with management challenges and poor results after \$3 billion already spent. Servicing debt of Prop. 14 could increase pressure for higher taxes or layoffs of nurses, first responders and other public employees," named opponent in the California Voter Information Guide John Seiler wrote.

Proposition 15 - Change Tax Assessment of Commercial and Industrial to Increase Education and Local Government Funding

The UCSD Guardian's Guide to Voting in San Diego: California State Propositions & Measures Part I

Proposition 13 proposes that commercial properties worth more than \$3 million be taxed at the current market rate, resulting in approximately \$2.6 billion in overall revenue for the state, and a calculated \$675 million for San Diego County. Current commercial properties are taxed at the rate of the time of purchase which neglects any rise in market value due to the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978.

Advocates for the measure hope to raise money primarily to provide further funding to public education and local governments, specifically citing increases for health care services, cleaner drinking water, preparation for natural disasters and combating homelessness. The Yes campaign argues that Prop 13 would protect small businesses by exempting properties valued under \$3 million and businesses ran from home.

"This measure will close an egregious loophole and begin to restore basic fairness in our tax system. Corporations in California have been using loopholes to avoid paying their fair share for far too long while our schools and communities have suffered as a result. This funding will go a long way in ensuring that our communities have what they need to thrive," San Diego County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher said in a statement. "Reclaiming this funding will have a positive impact across San Diego - and California - into perpetuity without raising taxes while protecting homeowners."

The opponents of Prop 13 argue that the measure will harm minority businesses the most by increasing rent and causing closures in the midst of a global pandemic and economic recession. Concerns have been raised about transparency, with some opponents claiming that the raised revenue will go to funding bureaucratic systems before it goes to education and other areas.

Proposition 16 - Constitutional Amendment to Allow Race to be Considered as a factor in Public Employment, Education, and Contracting Decisions.

Proposition 16 calls for a repeal of Proposition 209, a measure approved by California voters in 1996 that prevents the state government from considering factors such as race, sex, and national origin in public education, employment, and contracting. By repealing Proposition 209, state institutions such as the University of California would be allowed to consider these factors in hiring and admissions and could adopt affirmative action, taking measures to encourage greater representation of minority groups.

The campaign supporting Prop 16 states that passing the ballot initiative would help "level the field" for large numbers of African Americans, Latinos and women in California by giving them more access to jobs and education. Advocates also argue that Prop 209 was not effective in fighting discrimination due to a lack of accountability for institutions pledging to promote diversity.

The campaign presents statistics demonstrating that businesses owned by women and people of color have lost \$1.1 billion annually in government contracts since affirmative actions were banned due to Proposition 209. Additionally, admissions for Latino and Black students at University of California schools has dropped by 26 percent since 1996.

"In states that allow affirmative action, women and people of color compete on equal footing for state contracts. But right now, California is one of just nine states that bans affirmative action," the campaign website states. "Proposition 16 is our chance to change that. It gives us the tools to fight discrimination, without quotas, so we can take a step towards equal opportunity for all families in California."

"It eliminates a ban, allowing governments to act responsibly to address college admissions inequities, to hire people from teachers to police officers that better reflect their communities and to better ensure equal opportunity contracts, The San Diego Union Tribune Editorial Board added in an article endorsing the measure. "And it does so directly while acknowledging that considering race to address discrimination is not the same thing as considering race to discriminate."

The campaign opposing the measure, "Californians for Equal Rights," argues that reinstating affirmative action would not fight discrimination, but rather "make it legal." They claim that affirmative action would permit institutions

The UCSD Guardian's Guide to Voting in San Diego: California State Propositions & Measures Part I

to decline employment or admission to individuals of one race in order to fill a quota for individuals of another despite merit and qualifications.

The use of racial quotas in university admissions was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *University of California v. Bakke* in 1978, but also ruled that affirmative action programs to increase the acceptance of minority applicants was constitutional in some circumstances.

The No campaign provides statistics that claim that UC schools have tripled the admission of Black and Hispanic students and increased underrepresented minority graduation rates by 78 percent since the passage of Prop 209.

In an interview with The UCSD Guardian, Volunteer Co-Chair of Orange County against Prop 16 Stephen Miller stated that the UC system already practices affirmative action in the form of outreach and support programs which he says have been beneficial in ensuring minority representation.

"I just want to emphasize that Prop 209 did not ban all affirmative action" Under current law, we still have affirmative action in outreach and tutoring programs, and various things. The UCs have the largest affirmative action program program ever," Miller said. "That's why you see the number of Hispanic students has quadrupled since Prop 209 and the number of Black students has tripled, it's been increasing the Black and Hispanic populations. So Black and Hispanic students are better represented now than before Prop 209 passed."

Proposition 17 - Restore Right to Vote After Completion of Prison Term

Proposition 17 would grant voting rights to individuals who have completed a prison sentence and are on state parole. Currently, such individuals are not allowed to vote until they complete their parole sentence after release.

The campaign for Prop 17 claims that reinstating voting rights for the 50,000 individuals in California who are unable to vote due to their parole status would allow them to transition fully into society by granting them a say in the country's democracy.

The campaign website raises concerns of racial and ethnic biases in the prison system and argues that it is a method of voter suppression.

"Biases in the criminal justice system mean that poor people and people of color are more likely than others to be convicted of crimes and to lose their voting rights, while wealthy people can always afford the best lawyers," the campaign argued on its website. . "Stripping the right to vote from formerly incarcerated people is a form of voter suppression that is deeply out of step with our values."

The opposition raises a concern that Proposition 17 would strip victims justice by allowing their offenders to vote, and allowing individuals who have committed crimes such as murder and rape to vote with an incomplete "debt to society."

"While on parole, a former criminal's liberties, such as movement, association, activities and even ownership of certain items are still heavily restricted and regularly monitored by the system," the Election Integrity Project California stated in opposition to the initiative. "Any misstep results in immediate re-incarceration. In other words, an individual on parole has not regained the full trust of the society at large, nor the privilege to participate as a full member of that society."

Proposition 18 - Primary Voting for 17-Year-Olds Constitutional Amendment

The constitutionally provided legal voting age is 18, which restricts 17-year-olds who turn 18 before the general election from voting in the primary and special elections leading up to the November election. Prop 18 seeks to modify this restriction to grant voting rights to 17-year-olds in the primary and special elections as long as they meet the requirement that they will be 18 by the time of the general election.

Advocates for the proposition contend that passing Prop 18 would grant first-time voters the ability to fully participate in a complete election cycle, regardless of where their 18th birthday lands in an election year.

The UCSD Guardian's Guide to Voting in San Diego: California State Propositions & Measures Part I

"Young people are those most affected by election issues such as climate change, gun laws, student debt, healthcare, and the economy," the campaign website states. "They deserve the right to vote in primaries because they are the generation most impacted by election outcomes."

Supporters argue that young individuals will be able to work, pay taxes and enlist in the military, and thus should also be allowed to vote in the complete cycle. Additionally, advocates affirm that voting is habit-forming, meaning that they would continue to do so in future elections and contribute to the democratic process.

The opposition argues that 17-year-olds are still under certain restrictions, such as extra restrictions on their ability to drive, because they are still legally children. There should be no exceptions in the voting process, they argue.

"[Seventeen year-olds] are almost all still living at home and under the strong influence of their parents.," the Election Integrity Project California stated. "This is not conducive to independent thought and voting without undue pressure from their immediate superiors." "17-year-olds will almost always still be in high school, and under the strong influence of their teachers. This again makes it less likely that they would be expressing their own, independently thought-out choices were they to be allowed to vote."

Proposition 19 - Changes to Property Tax Rules

Proposition 19 promotes the protection of disabled residents, individuals over the age of 55, and wildfire-victim homeowners from high rises in their property taxes when they move houses. When homeowners move to a new property, they pay the market-rate property tax for the new property, which can usually result in a sharp hike from the purchase value taxes of their former residency.

The Yes campaign supports the idea that the proposition would make it easier for the disabled and elderly to move closer to family or medical resources. Additionally, in the instance that homeowners are forced to move due to wildfires, Prop 19 hopes to ease the property tax financial burden on these families.

The advocates say that the increased revenue from closing inheritance tax "loopholes" can be used to provide further government funding for education and local services.

"By closing unfair loopholes on inherited property that have resulted in billions in lost revenue for schools and local governments, Prop 19 will deliver needed funding for cities, counties, and school districts when they need it most," the campaign page states. "Prop. 19 will generate hundreds of millions in annual revenue for fire protection, affordable housing, homeless programs, safe drinking water, and other local services and dedicated revenue for fire districts in rural and urban communities to fix inequities that threaten life-saving response times to wildfires and medical emergencies."

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association is one of the major groups in opposition of Prop 19 and has raised concerns about the impact on children who inherit their family properties. While currently those who inherit residencies continue to pay taxes at the purchase price, taxes would rise to the market value at the time of inheritance under Prop 19.

"Proposition 19 is a billion-dollar tax increase on families," the HJTA wrote. "It takes away one of the best tools parents have to help their children - the right, enshrined in California's Constitution since 1986, to pass their home and other property on without any increase in property taxes."

Proposition 20- Criminal Sentencing, Parole and DNA Collection

Proposition 20 hopes to amend several laws dealing in the areas of criminal sentencing and DNA database collections. These proposed changes can be summarized in the following four points.

- Prop 20 seeks to increase the jail time for individuals who commit theft-related crimes, such as shoplifting or petty theft.
- It expands the list of violent crimes for which early release from prison is not available, such as rape of an unconscious person, trafficking of a child for sex, felony domestic violence and "other similiar crimes."

The UCSD Guardian's Guide to Voting in San Diego: California State Propositions & Measures Part I

- The proposition would also seek out changes to parole, including the requirement of parole committees to consider an individual's entire criminal history, rather than just the recent offenses when determining a parole sentence.
- Lastly, Prop 19 promotes the reinstatement of required DNA sample collection for crimes that currently do not require them due to their misdemeanor status.

The campaign for Prop 20 looks to create a "safer California" by approving these changes to the current justice system.

"Proposition 20 closes a loophole in the law that now allows convicted child molesters, sexual predators and others convicted of violent crimes to be released from prison early," the argument in favor of the measure on the California Voter Information Guide states. "Proposition 20 also expands DNA collection to help solve rapes, murders and other serious crimes, and strengthens sanctions against habitual thieves who steal repeatedly."

Opponents of the proposition claim that "Proposition 20 will roll back effective criminal justice reforms and waste tens of millions of taxpayer dollars on prisons." Additionally, the proposed changes to theft sentences are labeled by the opposition as "extreme." They argue that taxpayer dollars would be redirected to spend on supporting more inmates, causing cuts to rehabilitation programs, mental health programs, education, housing and victim support.

"Prop. 20 means petty theft - stealing a bike -could be charged as a serious felony," the campaign website states. "That's extreme, out of line with other states, and means more teenagers and people of color could be locked up for years for low-level, non-violent crimes."

For more information on Propositions 21-25 and Measures A-E, please visit this [article](#).

Artwork courtesy of Yui Kita for The UCSD Guardian.

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