

The Highlander Newspaper California proposition guide

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This November, California voters will decide on 12 statewide ballot propositions ranging from changes to the criminal justice system and property tax rules to the reinstatement of affirmative action. In the midst of a global pandemic and a national reckoning over race and policing, the fate of some of these ballot propositions are in the hands of young voters. For college students, this presidential election is pivotal, as it is the first where Millennials and Gen Z outnumber Baby Boomers as America's largest generations. Some UCR students have already expressed their confidence and apprehensions with presidential candidates Joe Biden and Donald Trump, and groups on campus, such as the Civic Engagement Coalition, have been working to increase their visibility to students and spread the importance of civic engagement.

Here's a look at the 12 statewide ballot propositions and the key issues behind each one:

Proposition 14

Increased stem cell research funding

Proposition 14 would continue funding stem cell research in California by borrowing up to \$5.5 billion for the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine . For context, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine was created in a 2004 voter-approved measure and given \$3 billion to support scientific research surrounding Alzheimer's, heart disease, Parkinson's and paralysis, amongst other things. As of June 2020, that funding has run low; without the extra funding, the CIRM would cease to exist. This measure would dedicate \$1.5 billion for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, stroke, epilepsy and other brain and central nervous system disease research, excluding heart disease; the rest of the money would be used to fund research for other illnesses, medical training, new research facilities and expanding treatment centers.

Supporters say that stem cell research is valuable in finding treatments that affect millions of people in California. Without passing Proposition 14, those efforts would be halted, and treatments and cures would take longer to find. Supporters include the UC Board of Regents because the primary beneficiaries of CIRM's grants are UC labs and hospitals

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Opponents say that CIRM has not made progress in finding treatments and life-saving cures like they promised in 2004. In California, the previous ban on federal funding has been lifted, which was one of the reasons for CIRM's creation in the first place. Other opponents claim that Proposition 14 does not address shortcomings in the previous Proposition 14 measure, including having no legislative oversight for an effort that is publicly funded and failing to address possible conflicts of interest between the institute's leaders and the projects they choose to fund.

Proposition 15

Raising commercial property tax

Proposition 15 would raise the property tax of businesses with over \$3 million in California property. Now, owners pay property taxes based on the original price of that commercial real estate; it would leave the existing rules for residential property taxes in place. Homeowners will not be affected by this proposition. Proposition 15 taxes commercial properties based on current market value, instead of purchase price, which in turn would provide \$6.5 billion to \$11.5 billion in new funding to local governments and schools. Proposition 15 attempts to roll back the property tax rules that were passed under Proposition 13 in 1978, which currently allows homeowners and commercial real estate owners to pay property taxes based on the original value. This has caused huge savings for businesses but has caused the funding for local governments to plummet.

Supporters say that this funding would make up for all that was lost for local governments since Proposition 13 was passed in 1978. California has historically lacked in per-pupil spending compared to other major states, and Proposition 15 would bring more funding to K-12 schools and community colleges. Supporters also say that this change would only affect wealthy business owners and landlords, closing the large wealth gap that Proposition 13 helped to extend.

Opponents say that Proposition 15 would backfire and be a detriment to commercial property renters and consumers alike. They say that while small businesses are exempt from the rule, commercial property owners and landlords may end up funneling the costs to their consumers by raising rent. Also, Proposition 15 may leave farm owners vulnerable to this rule; although they are technically exempt, farm fixtures - such as barns, dairies, fruit tree establishments and more - are not.

Proposition 16

Restoring affirmative action

Proposition 16 would allow for the reinstatement of affirmative action programs in California. Since Proposition 209 was passed in 1996, California has been prohibited from making decisions in the government employment and public education process based off of race, sex, ethnicity or national origin. Proposition 16 aims to increase diversity in the work force and in colleges and universities. These institutions would be prohibited, under federal law, to use quotas or race-based point systems. For example, since affirmative action was banned, the number of Black and Latino students admitted into the UC system has significantly increased. However, in 2019, Black and Latino students made up 60% of the state's high school enrollment, but only 28% of UC Freshmen enrollment.

Supporters say that the reinstatement of affirmative action would increase diversity in government employment and public institutions, closing the inequality gaps that have primarily affected Women and racial minorities in these spaces. They argue that Proposition 16 would bring equity into these spaces and would allow them to consider how race plays a role in one's life story and defeat structural racism. 42 U.S. states currently allow affirmative action and California would be in line with most of the country. One of proposition supporters includes the UC Board of Regents, former University of California President Janet Napolitano has stated, "It makes little sense to exclude any consideration of race in admissions when the aim of the University's holistic process is to fully understand and evaluate each applicant through multiple dimensions. Proposition 209 has forced California public institutions to try to address racial inequality without factoring in race."

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Opponents say that Proposition 16 allows for discrimination in the work place and in the public education system, stating that it would further divide the state and fall back on equality. They argue that the remedy for equal opportunity is to strengthen the education system to give all students access to a quality education, thus giving opportunity to students who are economically disadvantaged in the process.

Proposition 17

Voting rights for felons on parole

Proposition 17 restores voting rights for convicted felons who are out on parole. Currently, the voting rights for felons convicted of a crime are not restored until the parole period has been completed, which lasts about three years on average. The annual county costs would likely be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars statewide, for voter registration and ballot materials and the one-time state costs would likely be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, for voter registration cards and systems. Proposition 17, however, would allow for around 40,000 more Californians to vote.

Supporters say Proposition 17 would allow for the proper reintegration of former felons into society, alluding to the true purpose of parole. They say civic engagement will lead to fewer parolees committing crimes, and if they are already granted the right to have jobs and pay taxes, they should be allowed to vote as well.

Opponents say that parole is an opportunity for felons to prove that they have been rehabilitated and can properly integrate into society. They do not believe that the right to vote should be restored until the parole period has been completed.

Proposition 18

Voting at age 17

Proposition 18 would allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary and special elections if they will be 18 and eligible to vote in the next general election in November. Currently, 18 other states and the District of Columbia allow for 17-year-olds to vote in the state primaries.

Supporters say that allowing 17-year-olds to vote in primary and special elections will allow for them to clearly shape their views and be more prepared to vote in the general election. They argue that while they are not legally adults, they still participate in adult activities, such as being in the workforce, paying taxes and are eligible to enlist in the military.

Opponents say that 17-year-olds are still children and are not mature enough to vote. Since they are not allowed to sign contracts and need parent permission for certain activities, they should not be given the right to vote. Opponents also argue that 17-year-olds could easily be influenced by teachers and school biases. They argue that they do not have real world experiences like buying a house, paying bills or having a stable job.

Proposition 19

Changes to property tax breaks

Proposition 19 contains two parts: one for individuals 55 or older who are buying new homes and those who have received inherited homes from their parents. Current property tax rules passed under Proposition 13 allow homeowners to stick to their property taxes based on the value of their house when they first bought it. Typically, when Californians purchase a new home, their property taxes increase dramatically because it reflects the current market value of the house. Proposition 19 allows homeowners who are over 55, disabled or those who have been affected by a wildfire or natural disaster to transfer their current property taxes onto any residence they move into. Proposition 19 would also limit savings on inherited homes by requiring the heirs to actually live in the home, meaning they would no longer be able to rent out their homes as vacation homes and have to continue paying the same property tax that their parents paid when the property was purchased.

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Supporters say that, under Proposition 19, closing the inheritance tax break could potentially generate billions for schools, local governments and specifically state firefighting efforts at a time where the pandemic is taking a toll economically. They also claim that Proposition 19 will incentivize seniors to downsize their homes and free up the real estate in California.

Opponents say that heirs of their parents' homes should be allowed to do with a property what they so wish without facing any tax burdens. They say that expanding tax savings for one group and stripping them from another only increases inequality. They argue that if older homeowners actually took advantage of tax breaks under Proposition 19, the state would end up losing revenue.

Proposition 20

Increases criminal consequences

Proposition 20 increases penalties for certain property crimes and repeated parole violations - and makes it more difficult for them to qualify for early parole or release from prison. It gives prosecutors the ability to charge property crimes over \$250, such as repeated shoplifting and car theft as felonies rather than misdemeanors. Formal felons who violate the terms of their parole more than three times would be subject to jail or prison time. Proposition 20 limits access to parole programs established for non-violent offenders who have completed the full term of their primary offense by eliminating eligibility for certain offenses. It would likely increase state and local correctional, court and law enforcement costs by tens of millions of dollars annually.

Supporters say that approving Proposition 19 would correct the mistake of minimizing certain property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors, which has caused an increase in car thefts and shoplifting in California. Supporters also argue that Proposition 20 would specify certain offenses as "violent felonies," adding things such as child abuse, domestic violence and hate crimes to that list, which are currently classified as non-violent offenders.

Opponents say that Proposition 20 would only worsen mass incarceration in a system that disproportionately affects Black and Latino men. It would increase the state's prisons budget drastically, and instead, they say that funding should go towards pushing to keep communities safe and crime rates low.

Proposition 21

City based rent control policies

If passed, Proposition 21 would give individual cities the ability to implement new and stricter rent control policies if they choose to do so. The policies would only be eligible for homes that are at least 15 years old and would exempt single-family homes, unless the family owns more than two properties. According to an analysis by the Legislative Analyst's office, the measure could cause cities and states to lose tens and millions of dollars per year.

Supporters say that California needs to expand protections for tenants to avoid eviction and homelessness in the state. It gives local governments the opportunity to mandate their own rent control policies based on the need of the city and address issues of homelessness and gentrification. Supporters of the proposition claim that at a time where Americans are being financially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, this could give tenants the relief they need.

Opponents say that Proposition 21 would make it less profitable for builders to construct more housing, increasing California's massive housing shortage. The loss in revenue would greatly affect the economy of the state during the pandemic and since a similar proposition was rejected in 2018, opponents do not see the need for a new one.

Proposition 22

Gig worker benefits

Proposition 22 would exempt gig economies like Uber and Lyft from a new state law requiring them to treat workers as employees and classify them as independent contractors instead. According to AB5, which was passed last year, workers that are essential to a company's operations - like a driver for Postmates - would be required to be

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classified as an employee. This would guarantee them basic labor rights, such as overtime pay, health care, paid sick leave, unemployment insurance and workers' compensation. If Proposition 22 passes, companies that employ drivers through apps would continue to classify their workers as contractors and offer them narrower benefits like health care subsidies and accident insurance.

Supporters say that it is necessary for gig economies to continue offering flexible schedules to drivers and cheap rides for consumers. Uber has stated that up to 76% or 209,000 drivers in California could be cut if the measure passes and the price for rides would increase anywhere from 25% to 111%.

Opponents say that gig companies are constantly undermining the work put in by their drivers, and their efforts are essential to the survival of the business. Opponents say that the pandemic has made it clear that gig workers need the protections that will be provided to them under stricter state laws like AB5. Opponents think this would ensure more stability than having to rely on government programs, such as the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program made available to drivers.

Proposition 23

Kidney dialysis clinic rules

Proposition 23 would require kidney dialysis clinics to have at least one physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant on site at all times. It would prohibit dialysis clinics from reducing state approval and refusing to treat payments based on their patients payment source. Over 80,000 Californians depend on dialysis treatment. Proposition 23 would target dialysis companies to provide quality care to all patients.

Supporters say that dialysis patients deserve better treatments from clinics than they are currently receiving, and the multi-million dollar companies running the dialysis industry have not invested enough in patient safety. Having a physician on site at all times would ensure that a medical professional will be able to respond to emergencies.

Opponents say that having a physician present at all times is unnecessary, would increase health care costs and keep physicians away from hospitals. They argue that Proposition 23 is simply a union ploy to organize dialysis clinics and pressure clinics to listen.

Proposition 24

Increased data privacy

Proposition 24 would add new provisions to California's current privacy law, which gives people more privacy over their digital data by allowing them to know what personal information businesses are collecting from them. It also requires businesses to refrain from selling information if the consumer denies. The 52-page text includes allowing individuals to tell businesses to limit the use of sensitive information, such as location, health information, race and religion. It prohibits businesses from holding on to individuals' data, allows the government to fine companies up to \$7,500 for violating child privacy laws and creates a new state agency to enforce the privacy law, investigate violations and assess penalties. Proposition 23 would reduce the number of businesses that would need to comply under this rule; it would only apply to companies that buy or sell data of at least 100,000 households per year.

Supporters say that the provision would add specificity to the existing privacy law and enforce it further. It would give consumers more control over their personal data, allow them to hide sensitive information, such as location tracking, and give consumers the ability to sue companies if their emails and passwords are stolen or hacked.

Opponents say that since California privacy only went into effect this year, more time should pass before making decisions to change it. They argue that the new changes are too mixed and would give companies the ability to withhold discounts from consumers unless they allow the business to collect and share their information - also known as a "pay for privacy" scheme.

Proposition 25

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Removing cash bail

Proposition 25 is a referendum asking voters to reject or accept a 2018 law abolishing cash bail in California. This ballot measure would be the first state to replace cash bail with a system based on an algorithm that would assess an individual's risk of not appearing at trial.

Supporters say that bail is a classist system that allows wealthy people to pay to avoid jail time while awaiting trial. Poorer people cannot pay their way out of jail, and Proposition 25 would put all classes on the same playing field. They argue that keeping people in jail while they await trial will save taxpayers money.

Opponents are divided on this issue. On one hand, opponents argue that the bail industry is costly and switching the system would not improve it. Other opponents, like civil rights advocates, argue that the measure gives too much power to judges and that the algorithm based system would still lead to people of color being held at disproportionate rates.

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