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## Times endorsements

L.A. TIMES ARCHIVES

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California voters go to the polls today to select their party nominees for seven of eight statewide offices, to select finalists — and perhaps an outright winner — for the nonpartisan state superintendent of public instruction, and to decide the fate of five crucial ballot measures. Locally, voters will choose nominees for the Assembly and state Senate, and for congressional seats, but most districts are so heavily tilted toward one party or another that today's election will in effect determine who will take office at the end of the year. In many of those races, the November general election has become little more than a formality.

In Los Angeles County, Sheriff Lee Baca is on the ballot, as are Supervisors Gloria Molina and Zev Yaroslavsky, but they have no challengers so their reelection for another four-year term is assured. But voters will make a decision in the important, although low-profile, race for county assessor, and in races for six Los Angeles Superior Court seats. The Times editorial page studies those candidates with special care, knowing that there are few other sources for information or recommendations.

Voters within the boundaries of the Los Angeles Unified School District also will vote on a parcel tax proposal.

After months of campaign ads and assertions, and especially after the traditional final weekend of campaign material stuffing mailboxes and e-mail inboxes, voting day comes as something of a relief. No more campaigning — at least for a few days, before the next flurry of messaging and sloganeering geared toward the Nov. 2 election.

But we'll allow ourselves a few final words about those ballot measures before reiterating our election recommendations. One, Proposition 13, merely updates the law to ensure that property owners may seismically upgrade their buildings without fear of a tax reassessment. It's a good and noncontroversial measure.

There has been a lot more talk about the other four. Democrats and Republicans have joined forces to try to get voters to reject Proposition 14, a measure that would replace the current partisan primary system with one in which all candidates run regardless of party affiliation and then the top two vote-getters face each other in the general election. Democratic Party leaders are warning their members that if the measure passes, they might have to choose between two Republicans; GOP leaders are offering similar warnings about the peril of having to pick between two Democrats. What they leave out is that under the top two primary, candidates would have to appeal from the beginning to a broad swath of the electorate instead of just their parties' hardliners. It's a route to more pragmatic officeholders and

elections controlled more by voters than by political parties — which is why the Democratic and Republican parties both oppose it so adamantly, and why it would be a positive move for California.

Proposition 15 would put in place a pilot project for voluntary full public financing for two elections for secretary of state. This modest experiment also is calculated toward loosening the grip of the political establishment on the election process, and also merits support.

On the other side of the equation are Propositions 16 and 17, measures sponsored by corporations to secure changes beneficial to their own bottom lines. If either or both succeed, expect more private companies to enter the initiative market, turning the process once meant to block special interests into a tool for those very same interests.

Proposition 16 is Pacific Gas & Electric's bid to allow a minority of voters to block public utility projects meant to lower the cost of electric power. The last-minute advertisements for Proposition 17, which were financed largely by Mercury Insurance, claim the measure would save consumers up to \$250 a year and tout the support of three obscure consumer groups. The groups are all [run by lobbyists or marketers](#), The San Diego Union-Tribune found, and the \$250 figure is fanciful too. No one knows yet which insurers will offer the discount or how large it might be. The one sure thing in the near term is that consumers as a whole won't save money. People who've been continuously insured may pay less when they switch insurers, while new customers and those who've allowed their coverage to lapse for any reason will pay more. In short, rates under Proposition 17 would have less to do with a person's abilities as a driver than they do today, and that's a turn in the wrong direction.

The previously published full versions of our endorsements can be viewed at latimes.com/endorsements; click on the office or the ballot measure. Los Angeles County residents can find their polling places at lavote.net/locator/ or by calling 1-800-815-2666.

**State offices**

Governor: No endorsement

Lieutenant governor, Democratic Party: Gavin Newsom

Lieutenant governor, Republican Party: Abel Maldonado

Attorney general, Democratic Party: Kamala Harris

Attorney general, Republican Party: Steve Cooley

Insurance commissioner, Democratic Party: Dave Jones

Insurance commissioner, Republican Party: Mike Villines

Superintendent of public instruction (nonpartisan): Larry Aceves

**Judicial — L.A. County Superior Court**

Office No. 28: Randy Hammock

Office No. 35: Soussan (Suzanne) Bruguera

Office No. 73: Laura A. Matz

Office No. 107: Tony de los Reyes

Office No. 117: Alan Schneider

Office No. 131: Maren Elizabeth Nelson

### **State measures**

Proposition 13 — Property tax protections for seismic upgrades: Yes

Proposition 14 — Runoffs of the top two vote-getters instead of party primaries: Yes

Proposition 15 — Voluntary full public financing for secretary of state races: Yes

Proposition 16 — New two-thirds vote requirement for municipal utilities: No

Proposition 17 — Exception to limitations on auto insurance companies: No

### **Los Angeles Unified School District**

Measure E: No

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