**Darien’s Ballot Guide, for the March 3, 2020 California Primary Elections**

Welcome back to this progressive guide to the California ballot propositions. Here, I express (somewhat) short analyses and key info about each proposition's content, offer my own position on each prop., and list the positions of a number of other groups and organizations.

I also recommend for your consideration the helpful election and candidate information sites, such as [https://ballotpedia.org](https://ballotpedia.org/) , <http://votersedge.org/ca> , and the ever-helpful League at [https://lwvc.org](https://lwvc.org/). I also value Friends Committee on Legislation of California's good proposition analyses, at <http://fclca.org/>.

There is only one proposition on the ballot in this primary election. Consequently, I’ve given you more information than usual on this proposition, which is much more than just a school bond.

Proposition 13: Authorizes $15 **billion** in state general obligation bonds for construction and modernization of public education facilities. **Yes.**

**YES -** [League of Women Voters of CA](https://votersedge.org/en/ca/ballot/election/2020-03-03/measure/proposition-13), [CA Chamber of Commerce](https://votersedge.org/en/ca/ballot/election/2020-03-03/measure/proposition-13), [CA Democratic Party](https://votersedge.org/en/ca/ballot/election/2020-03-03/measure/proposition-13), [CA Federation of Teachers](https://votersedge.org/en/ca/ballot/election/2020-03-03/measure/proposition-13), [CA Labor Federation](https://votersedge.org/en/ca/ballot/election/2020-03-03/measure/proposition-13), Friends Committee on Legislation of CA.

No - [Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association](https://votersedge.org/en/ca/ballot/election/2020-03-03/measure/proposition-13), [Peace and Freedom Party](https://votersedge.org/en/ca/ballot/election/2020-03-03/measure/proposition-13)

(I was unable to find the endorsements, if any, of the California Green and Republican parties.)

This measure looks to me like a good one. Not only does it fund the renovation, especially for safety changes, and construction of every level of public educational facilities, it also makes a number of other important changes in the school bond process:

1. It replaces the local school district's “share of project costs” requirement with a sliding scale. That sliding scale provides a higher state share (up to 5% more of total cost) for poorer districts.

2. Instead of the current existing first-come, first-served approach for reviewing applications – which could give an unreasonable advantage to well funded districts that could whip out an application – this prop. sets forth new prioritization categories. The highest priority would be health and life-safety projects, followed by applications from districts that have difficulty raising their local share (that is, poor districts) – among other categories.

3. District planning is required! District have to submit a five-year facility master plan as a condition of receiving bond funding.

In addition to these changes, the measure also makes changes in other state laws on school bonds. It increases slightly the percents of local indebtedness allowed for these bonds, allowing more bonds. It also reduces developer fees – *prohibiting* those on multifamily residential developments (such as apartment complexes) located within a half-mile of a major transit stop. This change can support reductions to climate change by encouraging more transit-friendly housing. Also, for all other multifamily residential developments, developer fees are reduced by 20%. That encourages possibly lower cost housing and more compact development – rather than sprawl. However, both of these changes are a mix of good and bad, as I touch on below.

To me, the combination of a good purpose (furthering safe and good school facilities) and the positive changes makes for a worthwhile bond.

The lack of significant opposition to this bond is reflected in the California Fair Political Practices Commission’s statement on Prop. 13: No committee opposing this ballot measure raised enough money to reach the reporting threshold for this list. (The supporters are mostly parties interested in construction, along with education interests and the Democratic Party.)

Downside Discussion

The biggest *downside* is the increasing debt load of the state. That *is* a real issue, and that’s why the Peace and Freedom Party opposes 13. However, I see such construction bonds as comparable to home loans: It costs more to buy a house via a loan (due to interest), but this is an investment in a long-lasting asset you need *now.*

Another concern, as the *San Jose Mercury* points out, is that the reduction in developer fees means that current and new home owners will, in most cases, end up paying a greater share of school costs. Also, the bump up on permitted district indebtedness can also lead to increased property tax-related costs to home owners.

The real problem here is the whole idea that funding for school plants should depend on property taxes, leading to poorly funded schools in more impoverished areas. However, also, note that the Prop. 13 increase in the state share of costs will lead to poorer communities having a somewhat *reduced* local cost for school repairs and construction.

I believe it’s a real gain thattransit-friendly and multi-unit housing will be encouraged. These changes are just one way we can begin to address housing needs, especially for those who can’t afford their own home. The cut in developer fees is part of the political trade offs. Itappear to be a gift – or call it an *incentive –* to developers, to get the kinds of housing we desperately need but which usually don’t yield the profits of single-family home construction. Moreover, these fees come up *only* for the costs for construction of new schools. (Only about 1/5 of the $15 billion in this measure goes to construct new K-12 facilities.)

**Standard Background Blurb and Disclaimer**

This ballot guide is a summary and analysis of the statewide ballot measures with a listing of supporting and opposing organizations plus my recommendations. I independently research and produce this Guide as a volunteer service to the thinking, caring community. I read positions on both sides as well as “nonpartisan” reports. I have a college degree and am active on progressive political matters; this combination gives me the background and skills to assess political arguments and information. I have been writing the my ballot guide for over 25 years.

“Darien's Ballot Guide” endorses or opposes issues, not candidates.

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