

Darien's Guide to the California Ballot Propositions: November 2024 Elections

I provide this guide earlier than usual, knowing that we have entered a new era of voting early. However, while voting somewhat early is often a good idea, please, beware of “rushing to judgment”. It is nothing unusual for more (and verified) info to come out closer to the elections. Take the time you need to inform yourself. (See the **end** of my guide for helpful voter resources.)

Please do vote, especially on the important "down ticket" – local and state – races and issues. Since there are fewer voters for those, your vote is worth proportionately more. Also, you often have better access to or knowledge of local issues. If you don't vote, your voice goes unheard.

What is **important now** is to **confirm that you are registered to vote!** You can check at <https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>. (You *can* register later, even on the day of the elections, to cast a provisional ballot – which may or may not be counted.)

In California, we are fortunate to have both *early voting* options (in person!) as well as ballot drop off locations (find full lists of both online at your county's elections office). So you don't have to rely on the (currently, not so reliable) US Postal Service – tho' they have promised to give mail-in ballots priority. A 15-day advance mailing should be *extremely* secure. If you *do* mail in your vote, be sure to read and follow the directions carefully; many mail-in votes are discarded for basic errors.

The Short Version (My “Bare” Recommendations – all yeses but for the last three!)

- **Prop. 2** – Public Schools & Community College Bonds – Yes
- **Prop. 3** – A Calif. Constitutional Amendment to Establish a Right to Marry – Yes
- **Prop. 4** – Bonds for Drinking Water, Environmental, and Climate Projects – Yes
- **Prop. 5** – *Lowers % to Pass Local Measures for Housing and Infrastructure* – Yes
- **Prop. 6** – No More Slavery in Our Prisons – Yes
- **Prop. 32** – No More Near Slavery: Minimum Wage Increase – Yes
- **Prop. 33** – Empowering Local *Broad* Residential Rent Control – Yes
- **Prop. 34*** – Only *Barely* about Health Care: Abuses Voters – No
- **Prop. 35*** – Channels Existing Special Tax \$\$\$ to Fund Only *Some* Medi-Cal Services – No
- **Prop. 36** – More Felonies, Longer Sentences, More Prisons Costs – No

***As I've written previously**, I'm concerned about the increase in what I believe are *inappropriate* propositions being offered to the voters – inappropriate due to the complexity and/or *obscurity* of the issue and/or the particular prop. I believe that measures with the complexities of props. 34 and 35 *should go instead* to the Legislature, which is designed for vetting the nuances of a proposal through committees. The Leg. has staffers, who work full time to assist their bosses to understand the implications and consequences of bills. You have only me – and whatever other resources you may devote energy to finding.

This situation is due to prop. campaigns driven by *narrow* motives and *big* money. I urge voters to repudiate such money-driven “initiatives” that undermine the informed agency of voters.

Abbreviations Used for Organizational Endorsements Listed in the Proposition Info Below

(When any of these groups is *not* listed in the yes or no under a prop., it did not take a position.)

CA Chamber of Commerce	CofC	Sierra Club (CA)	Sra
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assoc.	Jarv	CA Labor Federation	Lbr
CA Teachers Association	CTA	Peace and Freedom Party	P&F
CA Nurses Association	CNA	Republican Party (CA)	Rep
Friends Comm. on Legislation (CA)*	FCL	Green Party (CA)	Gm
League of Women Voters of CA	Lge	Democratic Party (CA)	Dem
CA State Parent Teacher Assoc.	PTA	ACLU (Northern CA)	ACLU

* You may notice I often agree with FCL's analysis. See more at <http://fclca.org/> (scroll down to find a link to their Ballot Propositions page, for their positions and their brief explanations as to *why*).

Proposition Analyses, Descriptions, and Recommendations

• **Prop. 2 – Public Schools & Community College Bonds – Yes** (This is number 2 because – remember? – we had number 1 this spring.) We’ve all seen these kinds of bond measures before. But the one in 2020 *failed*. Generally, school repair money comes entirely from state and local bonds. So, since 2016 when one last passed, most school repairs haven’t happened – especially not in lower-income / lower property tax-revenues districts. That last is one crux of contention about this prop., and I’ll return to it.

This bond authorizes \$10 billion in general obligation bonds, mostly for the state's TK (the newish “transitional kindergarten” for four-year-olds) through 12th schools and 15% for California Community Colleges facilities. (If the state could implement a further progressive income tax, to bring in that money through equitable taxes, we might not need this bond. But upper-income interests aren’t supporting that. Compare this to the Prop. 35 entry, about the role of money in politics.) At the same time, the COVID pandemic highlighted the critical need for improved ventilation – along with other basic building repairs and upgrades.

California school financing – which is based on primarily property taxes – is inherently unfair, as well as complicated. Yet the wide range of supporters for #2 shows the great need for this bond. However, as some opponents note, the Center for Cities + Schools at the Institute of Urban + Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley has pointed out the gross inequities of the state’s current system for allocating school bond funds. As the title of one of the Center’s 2021 blogs said (in part), “School Facility Funding is the Most Inequitable Aspect of California Education Finance”.

Since that 2021 fairly technical blog – after the defeat of the 2020 bond – the legislature has done very little to improve the situation. Some small yet inadequate improvements were in the legislation that set the amount of this proposed bond. Still, the basic reason that the funds are *so much needed* is that most school districts just don’t have the money to maintain and improve their school facilities. Yet, to access the bond money, districts must match it with local funds. Sadly, poor districts

– especially those that do not have extensive or high property values to tax – have a hard time managing that. And that – as this clear [PPIC report](#) elaborates – is only the start of the hurdles poorer districts face when competing for state bond funds!

It's long past time for the state to make substantial reforms in the bond rules, but schools need upgrading *now*; children are at risk from hazards. And – even at this time when so many issues are at a crisis point – our attention is demanded for the kaleidoscope of public school and school board issues.

Yes – CTA, PTA, Dem, Rep, Lbr, FCL, CofC, Lge, Grn,

No – P&F, Jarv

• **Prop. 3 – A Calif. Constitutional Amendment to Establish a Right to Marry – Yes** Remember Prop. 8 of years back, forbidding any marriage except man to woman? This measure repeals 8 and secures the right to marry – even if a federal Supreme Court ruling overturns the prior ruling that overturned Calif. Prop. 8. Prop. 3 is an affirmation and protection of the Right to Marry.

I believe, by now, most people in California see that love, and marriage, don't depend on gender identity – and loving same sex marriage helps build healthy communities, families, and kids – much as “Prop. 8 style” marriage. This is an important vote!

Yes – P&F, PTA, Dem, Lge, Grn, Lbr, CNA, CTA, CofC, FCL, ACLU,

No – Calif. Family Council, The American Council of Evangelicals

• **Prop. 4 – Bonds for Drinking Water, Environmental, and Climate Projects– Yes** Yes, another \$10 billion in bonds to fund lots of worthwhile projects – parks, environmental protection, water, infrastructure, energy, and flood protection.

Aside from the usual opposition to the costs of bond funding (see shortly below), you might ask *why else* anyone would oppose funding this assortment of greatly needed projects, many of which are connected to safe drinking water and climate crisis responses. The arguments I've seen include predictable (nearly inevitable) issues like \$\$ going to large-scale electricity projects and technologies. Another claim says that these projects are not prioritized and coordinated.

Certainly, it would be good to have a thought out and integrated plan. But, in this time of crisis (with the next bond vote two years away) – when we are running out of time to meaningfully respond to climate change – who would/could prioritize all the projects in this longest bond title of 2024?

The largest share of this bond goes to drinking water projects. *Water* – one of the most conflicted issues in California! I *hope*, in 50 years, we'll have prioritized and coordinated water projects. Like Prop. 2, this bond *starts* to address pressing needs *now*.

Maybe you wonder: Why is the (Lefty) Peace and Freedom Party aligned with the (conservative) Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assoc. in opposition to Props. 2, 4 & 5? The Jarvis Assoc. opposes, generally, anything that would increase taxes. P&F has a different angle. On this and all other bonds, P&F calls for a *no* vote, “because bonds benefit wealthy investors at the expense of working-class people” and “The use of government bonds for any purpose, no matter how important or necessary, is essentially a transfer of wealth from working taxpayers [via untaxed interest] to the

already wealthy.... “ (More about P&F’s bond concerns at – <https://peaceandfreedom.us/index.php/news/elections-campaigns/why-peace-and-freedom-party-opposes-bond-measures>)

Yes – *Lge, PTA, Dem, Lbr, CTA, FCL, ACLU, Clean Water Action, Nat’l Wildlife Fed., The Nature Conservancy.*

No – *P&F, Rep, Jarv*

• **Prop. 5 – Lowers % to Pass Local Measures for Housing and Infrastructure – Yes** – We’re in trouble with housing, so any path to increase it looks attractive. But sometimes the costs involved are too high for a program that is too loose.

The costs in this case are at least two big ones:

- The basic costs of *future* bonds, that could *pass* with the reduced vote threshold, *and*
- The loss of an affordability option, cut off by a [new constraint, lobbied in](#) by The California Association of Realtors: Prop. 5 adds a ban on local governments buying existing single-family and small multi-unit homes, to (tear down and) convert into affordable units.

But, yes, we’re dealing with *Realpolitik* here: What *works* rather than what one ideally wants.

In our times of stark political divisions, lowering the local bond passage requirement to 55% support – from the current two-thirds (66.6%) – is *necessary*. Getting to 2/3 is extremely hard!

We *hope* voters will be thoughtful, to protect home owners – and future property owners, for decades to come – from undue property tax increases. (After all, whose interests are we protecting, *small* property owners or *large* – and how? What *should* property taxes pay for? (And *other* taxes?) Hmm... and what does land *ownership* mean in the age of forever chemicals?) In any case, making it easier for communities to fund housing will increase available housing, and thereby reduce the cost of living. Esp. climate-related infrastructure development must begin (and be voted for) *now*.

In Calif., property taxes (as high as they are) are lower than in some other states. And local governments don’t have many options for funding local projects. Sales tax is regressive, and the state hands out only *some* income tax receipts to localities. So *how will* local governments raise the money they need to match the state bond funds in Prop. 4 when they undertake projects that address water quality or sea level rise?

This one was a bit tough for me. After all, in Prop. 5, the definition of “moderate-income households” for affordable housing goes up to about \$150,000/year. Well... for four people’s expenses, plus house payments on *big* loans, child care ... these days, maybe that *is* reasonably moderate-income.

Yes – *PTA, Dem, Lge, Lbr, CTA, FCL, ACLU, Grn, CNA*

No – *P&F, Rep, Jarv, CofC*

• **Prop. 6 – No More Slavery in Our Prisons – Yes** – Under this California Constitutional amendment, involuntary servitude ends in California – including in its only legal form: as punishment for a crime.

I can hardly write further on this. Those incarcerated may, indeed, benefit from the structure and experience of working. Also, they have violated laws, leading to their being a burden on the state.

But slavery (or involuntary servitude) ... well, like many negative social practices, it dehumanizes. And so does incarceration. We want to enforce the societal rules *and* still have human beings, ready to return to society, having had a useful learning experience.

Not in the U.S., not in China, not in global agricultural fields: No more slavery in my name.

Yes – P&F, Dem, Lbr, CTA, CNA, Grn, Lge, FCL, ACLU, PTA

No – Rep, Jarv

• **Prop. 32 – No More Near Slavery: Minimum Wage Increase** – **Yes** – What is it, this minimum wage increase to \$17 – and then \$18 an hour? Wasn't it already higher?

\$18? That seems so high – and yet so insufficient? What is the minimum wage a minimum *for*, anyway? Not to get by! \$37,440 is what \$18/hr. adds up to, full-time, no holidays. Try supporting yourself (and your health care) on that – and your child. Real work deserves real pay.

Yes, some jobs will be lost, yet most will continue. And the new pay will be a monetary boon to the local economy, likely creating jobs. I find it very sad that this prop. is sometimes presented as the opposition between the needs of low-income workers and those of small businesses – who, it is claimed, will be disproportionately affected by Prop. 32. Neither of them should be sacrificed! Yet businesses may have federal and state support options unavailable to individual workers. As a society, I believe we should pay a fair wage for work, and this minimum is a fair wage.

Yes – P&F, Dem, Lbr, CNA, CTA, Grn, FCL, ACLU, Lge, PTA

No – Rep, Jarv

• **Prop. 33 – Empowering Local Broad Residential Rent Control** – **Yes** – What a long time it's taken to *approach*, **again**, repealing the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act (C-H) of 1995. And the stage is set by the opening sentence of background on 33 in the state's Voter Info Guide, "Renters in California typically pay about 50 percent more for housing than renters in other states." *50% more!*

This is my longest discussion, because I'm so tired of C-H repeals being defeated by big \$\$\$. In case you don't want to read this full entry, this measure does nothing more than eliminating C-H so *that* cities – through *local* voters' and officials' decision making – can enact *local* rent control, *including* on **single-family homes** and housing built after 2/1/95. *That's it.* (In recent years, particularly, corporate and private equity investors have purchased a high proportion of the available single-family homes, leading to higher housing costs for *both* home buyers and tenants. – more below.)

Further **against** claims are at best very exaggerated and at worst lies – very well funded lies! That's over \$108 million against, with almost \$55 *million* from the California Apartment Association Issues Committee and \$22 *million* from the California Association of Realtors. Don't be fooled: Renters and home buyers alike will benefit when Prop. 33 passes! More details below.

I suppose I shouldn't be shocked at the disinformation in the arguments **against** Prop. 33. Yes, this *single* change will overturn *anti-rent control* laws. However – like the *other* specious claims in the **against** arguments in the Voter Info Guide – there's only a tautly stretched bit of truth here. Prop. 33 protects affordable housing for the [44% of Calif. households who rent](#) (nationally, 35%).

Further stretches are the extensive **against** attacks on the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF). AHF is presented as some *evil force*, harming low-income renters. However (per Wikipedia's [AHF entry](#) – esp. scroll down, down, down to the Housing section), in fact (as the Wikipedia article says) AHF created the Healthy Housing Foundation, “which has been creating housing for homeless and low-income individuals”; AHF recognizes that affordable housing is part of health! Yes, AHF has opposed housing developments – *luxury* developments that would have demolished *low-income* housing. See the Housing part of the link above for further info about **against** distortions.

Why the attacks on AHF? Because – in this measure, with **the against spending outnumbering the for spending about 3 to 1!** – AHF is *the top for* contributor, at over \$37 million. AHF seeks low-cost housing for those with AIDS, and Prop. 33 could make a huge difference.

Nonetheless, it is true that this prop. would cause reductions in the value of property – esp. property being rented out at “improperly” high rates. That’s most often the case for properties owned by corporations and private equity funds, since they’re seeking to *maximize their profits*. No continued big profits? Prices (land values) – esp. single-family home prices – could begin to be affordable.

To see more on these housing market changes, there’s a 2019 [Atlantic article](#). Or – more accessible (no “sign in”) – see the 2019 paper on the effects on the single-family home market by the [Fed. Reserve Bank of Philly](#) and a 2023 blog, covering a full range of “investor” effects in the single-family home rental market by a [Harvard U. housing Center](#). Neither devotes much space to the rental and purchase cost increases, yet both reference that reality. (Both also identify some positive effects.)

All that is my background on why this prop. is particularly important now. Prop. 33 allows – for the first time in Calif. since 1995 – rent control on single-family rentals and post-1995 buildings. The Harvard piece above reports on the nation-wide 20-year % increase in single-family home renters, from a little below 30% in 2001 to above 38% in 2016 (dropping to nearly 37% in 2021, possibly pandemic-related). In other words, with well over a third of renters in single-family units and (same article) *investors* buying up these homes, the need for renter protections moves to the fore.

Yes – P&F, Dem, CNA, FCL, Grn, ACLU,

No – Rep, Jarv, CofC

• **Prop. 34 – Only Barely about Health Care: Abuses Voters – No** – OK, just above I told you more about the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) and I mentioned their *big* financial opponent, the California Apartment Association (the CAA Issues Committee \$30 million into this one). This prop. is really an attack by the latter against AHF, because AHF seeks to protect low-income renters. (and, yes, uses some of their drug revenues for non-health care activities, *such as low-income housing activism*). AHF understands that *health* is about more than just health care.

I believe that looking at my info for Prop. 33 can give you enough background to recognize the importance and validity of the argument I made against Props. 34 and 35 above, in **The Short Version**: Props. like these are driven not only by narrow motives and big money (*not* a rare combo in propositions!), but also these props. deal with extremely complicated and intricate matters that should go instead to the Legislature, which is designed for vetting nuances of a proposal through committees.

Complicated? The usually brief overview in the state's Voter Info Guide goes on for four pages for Prop. 34. That's about twice the length of any other propositions except Props. 35 and the big bond measures, 2 and 4.

The Legislature isn't perfect: There's lots of lobbying and bias, but there's also discussion of understanding at greater depth. The public is *dis-served* by measures like this making it to the ballot. Don't sign initiative petitions you don't understand at least some, and vote against such abusive props.

No – *P&F, FCL, Grn, The AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Nat'l Org. for Women, Consumer Watchdog*

Yes – *Rep, Jarv, CofC, CA Apartment Assoc.*

• **Prop. 35 – Channels Existing Special Tax \$\$\$ to Fund Only Some Medi-Cal Services – No** – This prop. “permanently” (until a stronger prop.) allocates funds from a special Calif. tax on managed care organizations to *certain* Medi-Cal programs. In general, nearly everyone is *for* this current special tax, which brings in federal matching funds – combining to add up to billions of dollars. This prop. won't change that amount of money (tho' action by the feds might); it changes who gets it. The prop. is an end-run around the political/organizational in-fighting in the Calif. legislature.

Yes, this prop. would *secure* funds for Medi-Cal access to health care, but only for *some* service. Some call it a straightforward measure; to me, it's an overly complicated measure which is a funding grab by some, leaving others out. *Complicated?* Again – the Voter Info Guide goes on for four pages to explain about Prop. 35

I agree that the providers – *all* of them – *should* get a more reasonable level of compensation than Medi-Cal provides. However, unsurprisingly, the only providers benefitting under 35 are those who banded together to fund the campaign to put this prop. on the ballot. We all know that money plays too great a role in politics; this prop. is another example of that.

With no opposition argument in the state's voter guide, this measure may pass. But perhaps voters will realize that *locking in* how tax funds are used takes away needed flexibility from the state lawmakers – in the face of wide fluctuations, year to year, in state revenues.

No – *FCL, Lge, CA Pan-Ethnic Health Network, The Children's Partnership, CA Alliance for Retired Americans, Courage CA*

Yes – *P&F, Dem, Rep, Grn, the Planned Parenthood Affiliates of CA and the four other medical-related associations that benefit from the funding under Prop. 35.*

• **Prop. 36 – More Felonies, Longer Sentences, More Prisons Costs – No** – Here's an unneeded and **extreme** measure to increase prison costs and cut *millions* of \$\$ in funding for other vital state services.

Why unneeded? On the one hand, the Legislature has passed assorted new and stronger laws on theft- and fentanyl-related crimes like those this prop. addresses. On the other hand, in general, crimes like these are going down. To quote the [2023 California report on crime](#), “From 2018 to 2023, the property crime rate decreased 3.8%,” and in 2023 alone, it decreased 1.8%. “The total felony drug offense arrest rate decreased 1.0% in 2023.... Dangerous drugs and marijuana arrest rates decreased 5.3% and 22.7%, respectively, in 2023.” (All these are in comparison with 2022.) That's not to say

that *all* crime went down: “The 2023 total arrest rate of 2,611.2 is 3.0% higher than the 2022 total arrest rate of 2,535.2.”

For certain new “treatment-mandated felonies”, this prop. also would implement drug courts (with their mandatory treatment as an alternative to a felony conviction). While drug courts can have benefits, compulsory treatment is of questionable effectiveness. A review (on the Nat’l Inst. of Health website) of 430 studies [that assessed involuntary drug treatment outcomes](#) found little reliable research and concluded that, overall, such treatment led to little or no improvement – with *harm* in some cases. [Another study](#) also found very equivocal results. In contrast, a guide published by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (referenced [here](#)) states otherwise.

Despite these mixed results, researchers generally agree that the quality, appropriateness, and duration of substance use treatment are all crucial factors for effectiveness. Will the court-based treatment address those factors? Also, substance use disorder (“addiction”) is a chronic disease, so that, even after successful treatment, repeat treatment is usually necessary. Currently, good treatment is costly and hard to access; **Prop. 36 does not provide any funding for treatment, courts, or prisons.**

Addicts rarely consider criminal penalties, so making possession of certain drugs a *felony* is likely only to make convicts’ future employment and housing rentals very difficult – *leading to crime and homelessness* – and substance use. I could go on! A [2018 analysis](#) by the Pew Charitable Trust found states’ drug imprisonment rates were unrelated to the drug problems in states.

These measures – with commitment of more funds to imprisonment (rather than more and better treatment) may feel satisfying to some. Sadly and more likely, in the age of fentanyl, they’ll lead only to more overdose deaths – in prisons and out.

No – P&F, Dem, CNA, Grn, CTA, Lge, FCL, ACLU, PTA

Yes – Rep, Jarv, CofC

Voter Resources

IGS Library Ballot Proposition Guide – <https://igs.berkeley.edu/library/california-ballot-proposition-guides/> – Pros & cons, links to info & resources, lists of endorsements

California Choices – <https://www.californiachoices.org/> – State-wide and local measures; lists of endorsements

Cal Matters – <https://calmatters.org/california-voter-guide-2024/> – Scroll down for state-wide props. and races; helpful info including issues, money, and main & media endorsers/opponents

Progressive Voters Guide – <https://progressivevotersguide.com/california> – Good partisan info by Courage California: down-ballot, multi-issue guide detailing recommendations

Friends Committee on Legislation of California – <https://fclca.org/> – Scroll down to find the link to their state ballot propositions page; brief analyses

Ballotpedia – <https://ballotpedia.org/> – Very helpful; lots of background *plus* **local** races info.

Thank you to GW for skilled proof reading and helpful formatting input!