



Ballot Recommendations

for the November 4, 2008

California General Election

PROPOSITION 1A. *(Proposition 1 has been replaced by 1A)*
Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act.

IMPACT Recommendation: NO POSITION.

PRO: This \$9.5 billion historical infrastructure bond would provide high-speed electric rail service between San Francisco and Los Angeles. At 220-mph, the train is projected to take 2Ω hours from city to city with feeder lines serving other regions. It is projected to divert 117 million passengers annually, will carry light freight, be self-supporting financially, and thus will save millions of pounds of greenhouse gas emissions as well as gasoline. The overall cost of \$40 billion will include this proposed bond of \$9.5 billion plus projected revenues from federal and private sources. The bond act incorporates environmental, accounting, management, and development safeguards it is hoped will assure a successful outcome. No less historic than the original railroads, this bond act could be a major benefit to California's environment, transportation needs, and economic self-sufficiency.

CON: Projections for spending the \$9.5 billion bond are flimsy. No commitments from either the private sector or the federal government have been made. It is not clear whether the goal of relieving our highways of 117 million passengers annually is realistic or that the savings in greenhouse gases will not be replaced by pollutants from new electric-generating plants including the specter of nuclear power fraught with its own pollution problems. At this time in our state's embattled budget history, the principle and interest serve to add more burden to the tiny portion of the budget that is not locked in place, thereby eroding money for health care, child care, higher education, and other human services. Until the budget crisis is fixed, this is too large a debt for us to handle without serious impacts on people in need.

PROPOSITION 2.
Standards for Confining Farm Animals. Initiative Statute.

IMPACT Recommendation: SUPPORT.

This initiative proposes what many livestock producer associations are already planning – introducing humane treatment of farm animals. The exception is poultry. The law does not require 'cage free' poultry raising but does implement adequate cage size. The economic impact on eggs in other states with similar laws and by projection in California is about 1 cent per egg. Taking care of those in food insecurity is essential. Care for God's creation, including animals, is equally an important aspect of a humane society.

PROPOSITION 3.
Children's Hospital Bond Act. Grant Program. Initiative Statute.

IMPACT Recommendation: OPPOSE.

This grant program is for bricks and mortar only. With children's eligibility to use these facilities being substantially cut from a shrinking General Fund, paying to expand hospital size from the state budget is irresponsible. Several of the projects are already being done, even without these funds. Save the money to fund actual health care for children, not buildings.

PROPOSITION 4.
Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of Minor's Pregnancy. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

IMPACT Recommendation: OPPOSE.

Proponents for the third version of parental notification this time have further endangered teens by demanding that any girl arriving without a parent will trigger an immediate Child Protective Service investigation. That will further imperil those with dangerous home lives. Teens who can talk with their parents will do so. Those who cannot should not be endangered by either CPS intervention or fear of reporting that could lead them to finding unsafe abortions. The state cannot mandate family communication, and such actions are dangerous to young girls' lives.

PROPOSITION 5.
Nonviolent Drug Offenses. Sentencing, Parole and Rehabilitation. Initiative Statute.

IMPACT Recommendation: SUPPORT.

As a step forward to restorative justice, Proposition 5 is solid. This measure is meant to divert truly non-violent offenders and find ways to keep them out of the prison system. Offenders both inside and outside the prisons are directed to effective rehabilitation programs, and those with non-violent drug offenses as defined by existing law are diverted to drug rehab programs. With the vast escalation in California's prison population and the loss of productive human beings, it is essential that we begin to reclaim those lives.

PROPOSITION 6.
Police and Law Enforcement Funding. Criminal Penalties and Laws. Initiative Statute.

IMPACT Recommendation: OPPOSE.

This proposition is the opposite of Proposition 5. It would increase penalties and incarcerations for non-violent drug possession, for youth crimes, and for anything deemed "gang related." It would dehumanize the poor by insisting on background checks for those in public housing. It would over-ride constitutional rights for undocumented immigrants charged with a crime. The 'war on drugs' and that on gangs has been highly ineffective. We cannot keep doing what does not work. We must begin investing in our youth, finding real diversions from crime, and improving job opportunities, not increasing the 'lock them up and throw away the key' tactics based on fear. Crime is not on the rise, and the creation of safe communities demands community residents' involvement, not more unworkable, punitive laws such as this.

PROPOSITION 7.
Renewable Energy Generation. Initiative Statute.

IMPACT Recommendation: OPPOSE.

IMPACT was a strong voice in the creation of the current renewable energy standards. This proposition, however, requires all utilities, investor-owned and public, to generate 50 percent of their power from renewable sources by 2025, well beyond the state's current standards from landmark legislation, AB 32. This proposition is unworkable and is so poorly drafted that it could disrupt the progress already being made in developing renewable energy resources, especially from smaller producers. Such pressure could easily cause a spurt in energy prices, which would be a boon for large-scale interests controlling resources such as natural gas but a disaster for California households and small businesses.

PROPOSITION 8.
Eliminates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

IMPACT Recommendation: OPPOSE.

Marriage throughout history has undergone massive transformations. While contemporary churches and religious institutions may still be wrestling with the religious issues around marriage equality, we can still support secular civil rights. No church is or should be forced to sanctify any union it does not approve. IMPACT strongly supports the full inclusion of all adults in the right to marry. This moral commitment to equality is consistent with the findings of the California State Supreme Court. The only threat to conventional marriage comes from within a marital union – divorce, infidelity, disloyalty – not from without. Committed, fully-equal relationships between consenting adults strengthen our society. They do not undermine it.

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PROPOSITION 9.

Criminal Justice System. Victims’ Rights. Parole. Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute.

IMPACT Recommendation: OPPOSE

This proposition attempts to express support for victims of crime and their families. Most of these rights are already protected under existing statutes. IMPACT has long been a supporter of victims’ rights, but this draconian proposition seeks “remedies” for victims that would undermine the rights of prisoners and parolees and therefore reduce or eliminate the possibility of restorative justice. For example, by elongating the time between parole hearings to 15 years, it has the potential to convert some sentences into life incarceration beyond the scope of the original law. It is a remedy without necessity, and it is entirely punitive without justification.

PROPOSITION 10.

Alternative Fuel Vehicles and Renewable Energy. Bonds. Initiative Statute.

IMPACT Recommendation: OPPOSE

This measure would authorize the sale of \$5 Billion in general obligation bonds to offer rebates to purchasers of energy efficient vehicles as well as to fund incentives for technology development. Traditionally bonds are for permanent projects with broad societal benefit. In this case, rebates could be as high as \$55,000 per purchase, forcing all taxpayers to support bond repayment in order to give rebates to the wealthy. Rebates also reward those who are doing what they would already do even without the subsidy and is an inappropriate use of bond revenue.

PROPOSITION 11.

Redistricting. Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute.

IMPACT Recommendation: SUPPORT.

Every ten years following a federal census, California must redistrict for the state legislative and Board of Equalization districts. Historically redistricting has been done either by sitting legislatures or judges, neither of which has produced satisfactory results. This proposition calls on a 14-member, fully-independent multi-cultural commission of citizens without any political ties to create new district lines. It calls for clear standards on how boundaries will be drawn using the Voting Rights Act as the first consideration to protect citizens in areas with changing demographics. Redistricting will be fully-transparent with notice of public hearings and no covert communication. This measure can help more fully represent the citizens within new districts, can improve competitiveness among candidates, and can make legislators far more responsive to their constituents.

PROPOSITION 12. Veterans’ Bond Act of 2008.

IMPACT Recommendation: SUPPORT.

Since 1921 the state of California has offered \$8.4 billion of general obligation bonds to lend to veterans for farms, homes, and mobile home purchases through the existing Cal-Vet program. There is \$108 million left in the existing reserve. This proposition authorizes the state to sell an additional \$900 million in general obligation bonds that will be paid back with interest entirely from monthly payments made by the veterans who have borrowed them. The bond increase would extend credit to an additional 3600 veterans thereby including returning vets from the nation’s more recent military service. Although the bonds are technically covered by ‘the full faith and credit’ of the state, in the 87-year history of Cal-Vet, there has never been a bond default or a single penny of cost to the taxpayer. The loans have greatly aided returning service people to rebuild their lives in peacetime, an essential aspect of care for those who have sacrificed for our nation.

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