

# California 2020 Proposition guide

Information provided by CalMatters

## Proposition 14: Stem cell research

### The basics

#### What would Proposition 14 do?

Have California continue funding stem cell research, by borrowing up to \$5.5 billion.

Prop. 14 would generate the money to keep open the state's own stem cell agency, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, and expand its research capacity. That would include dedicating \$1.5 billion for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, stroke, epilepsy, and other brain and central nervous system diseases. The rest of the money would go for other research, medical training, building new research facilities and expanding treatment access.

The state would sell investors bonds worth \$5.5 billion, and taxpayers would then pay back that money, with interest, over the next 30 years. Estimated cost: **\$7.8 billion**.

#### Why am I voting on this?

It may seem like eons ago in political years, but in the early 2000s a political war had erupted over embryonic stem cell research.

Think of the stem cells that make up human embryos are blank slates — uniquely useful to researchers, they haven't yet differentiated to form vastly different parts of the body. To maintain a cell supply, scientists must destroy lab-created human embryos, typically produced for in-vitro fertilization. Pro-life advocates likened this to abortion, leading then-President George W. Bush to ban federal funding for research using new embryonic stem cells.

Touting possible cures for diseases from Parkinson's to paralysis, Californians

opted in 2004 to fill the federal void by borrowing \$3 billion to create California's own stem cell agency. Now that money is drying up. Without a fresh infusion, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine will cease to exist.

#### Supporters say

The institute's stem cell research has led to clinical trials, biotech jobs, and research toward treatments or cures for ailments affecting half of California families. The primary beneficiaries of the institute's grants are University of California labs and hospitals. The state also has collected royalties on successful stem-cell developments, and would continue to do so on future breakthroughs.

#### Opponents say

We gave it a try, but funding stem cell research didn't lead to the kind of life-saving cures voters hoped for in 2004. The federal government no longer bans federal dollars from supporting embryonic stem cell research, which was the reason California got involved in the first place. Plus the institute, one of the few state agencies not overseen by the Legislature, has had issues in the past with conflict of interest.

#### Who's for it:

- University of California Board of Regents
- The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
- The Latino Cancer Institute
- Sickle Cell Disease Foundation of California
- Gov. Gavin Newsom
- California Institute for Regenerate Medicine Board of Directors

#### Who's against it:

- Jeff Sheehy, board member of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine

## Proposition 15: Business property taxes

### The basics

#### What would Proposition 15 do?

Hike property taxes on big businesses, raising billions for schools and local governments.

Now, owners pay property taxes based on the price they originally paid for that real estate — typically a lot less than what it's worth today. If this measure passes, property taxes for many large businesses would be elevated to the property's current, probably higher, market value. That would net \$6.5 to \$11.5 billion — 60% for cities, counties and special districts, and 40% for schools and community colleges.

Not (directly) affected: homeowners, and businesses with under \$3 million in California property. Farm land would be exempt. An analysis by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office wasn't able to determine whether the buildings and other improvements on that land would be too.

#### Why am I voting on this?

Back in 1978, California voters famously passed Proposition 13 — a huge permanent tax cut for landowners. It amended the state constitution to reset property taxes based on the purchase price of a

home or business, and capped how much the tax could increase each year after that.

To strip businesses of this protection, a majority of voters must approve Prop. 15 — amending the constitution again.

#### Supporters say

Prop. 13 has provided a massive break to some of the state's larger businesses. If this passes, a small fraction of those would pay the vast majority of the higher taxes. All that money would go to cities, counties and school districts — and these days, they could really use it.

#### Opponents say

It would be senseless to pass one of the biggest tax increases in California history in the middle of a cataclysmically bad recession. And while small businesses are technically exempt, large landlords may end up passing the costs to some of their tenants and customers.

#### Who's for it:

- Joe Biden and Gov. Gavin Newsom
- California Teachers Association
- California Democratic Party
- Mark Zuckerberg

#### Who's against it:

- California Chamber of Commerce
- California Retailers Association
- Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association
- California NAACP

## Proposition 16: Restoring affirmative action

### The basics

#### What would Proposition 16 do?

Restore affirmative action in California — meaning universities and government offices could factor in someone's race, gender or ethnicity in making hiring, spending and admissions decisions.

The practice has been illegal in California since 1996, when voters approved another proposition that banned affirmative action. Prop. 16 would reverse that vote.

An example of how Prop. 16 might work: Back when California did allow affirmative action, state offices set goals for how many contracts they awarded to women-owned and minority-owned businesses.

What it wouldn't do: create racial quotas in university admissions. The U.S. Supreme Court banned those in 1978.

#### Why am I voting on this?

More than two-thirds of state lawmakers — motivated by racial inequities highlighted by the police killing of George Floyd, a black man in Minneapolis — voted to put this measure on the November ballot.

Essential to the argument of reinstating affirmative action is the concern that Black, Latino and Native American Students have seen their access to the University of California harmed. The data on the matter is complex, giving fodder to both opponents and backers of Prop 16 to select the data that best fits their arguments.

Since affirmative action was banned, the sheer number of Black and Latino students admitted as freshmen to the UC has quadrupled. But while Black and Latino students make up 60% of California's high school enrollment, they comprise just 28% of UC freshmen admits in 2019.

Getting into a UC has gotten tougher for all applicants, but Black, Latino and Native American students have seen their admissions rates plunge more than white

and Asian American applicants. Some advocates warn that reinstating affirmative action invariably would mean a decline in Asian American enrollment.

#### Supporters say

What's past shouldn't be prologue. California is far more diverse than it was in the mid-1990s, when a Republican governor backed propositions to banish affirmative action and deny undocumented immigrants access to public services. Structural racism exists and to preach a color-blind philosophy is to be blind to the impacts of racism. Instead, for example, principals should be able to specifically seek to employ qualified Latino teachers in a school where most teachers are white but most students are Latino. Public universities should be able to consider a student's race as one of numerous admissions factors, including grades and school work. As for the growth in Latino admissions at the UCs, that's good news, but affirmative action could have led to those increases much sooner.

#### Opponents say

Allowing schools and government offices to make decisions based on race, ethnicity or sex is its own kind of prejudice. Equal rights mean everyone is treated equally. The claim that America is systemically racist is a false narrative that “fuels racial paranoia, division and hatred.” The state already has made strides in diversity. And it's legal now to give preference to students who really need it — those who grew up in low-income families. As for who gets into the public universities, the fault lies with inadequate K-12 schooling.

#### Who's for it:

- California Community Colleges and the California State University
- Gov. Gavin Newsom
- University of California
- Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

#### Who's against it:

- Californians for Equal Rights
- Chinese American Civic Alliance
- Students for Fair Admissions
- California Republican Party

## Proposition 17: Letting parolees vote

### The basics

#### What would Proposition 17 do?

Allow people on parole in California to vote.

The prop also would allow parolees to run for office if they're registered to vote and haven't been convicted of perjury or bribery.

California now prohibits state prisoners and parolees from voting. People serving their sentences in county jails can vote, unless they're transferring to a state or federal prison, or they're serving time for a parole violation. Sixteen other states and the District of Columbia allow people to vote once they've finished their prison sentences. Vermont and Maine let people vote while still in prison.

#### Why am I voting on this?

The Legislature, by a two-thirds vote, approved placing this amendment to the state constitution on your ballot.

## Proposition 18: Voting at age 17

### The basics

#### What would Proposition 18 do?

Allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary and special elections if they will be 18 and eligible by the next general election.

Currently, voters must be 18 to participate in any local, state or federal election. This constitutional amendment would also pave the way for 17-year-olds who qualify to vote under this proposition to seek office, because the law says only registered voters can run for elected positions. Estimated cost: Between \$200,000 and \$1 million at the county level every two years. Statewide one-time costs are expected to be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

#### Why am I voting on this?

The Legislature, by a two-thirds vote, placed this constitutional amendment on your ballot. It was the sixth time state lawmakers had considered the idea, but the first time it has reached voters. Nationwide, at least 19 states and Washington D.C. allow 17-year-olds who would be eligible for the next general election to vote early.

## Proposition 19: Portable property tax break

### The basics

#### What would Proposition 19 do?

Give Californians 55 or older a big property tax break when buying a new home. To fund that new tax break, it would curtail a separate tax break Californians may receive on homes inherited from parents and grandparents.

Typically when Californians buy a new home, their property taxes shoot way up. That's because property taxes here are based mostly on the value of your home when you bought it — not its current market value. Baby Boomers who bought that bungalow down the street right after Woodstock are paying way less in property taxes than the tech yuppies who bought an identical bungalow last year.

This prop would allow the Boomer couple to buy a new house anywhere in the state and retain relatively low property taxes.

Also under current law, a Californian who inherits a Malibu estate can rent it out on Airbnb yet still pay property tax locked in at the parents' rates. Under this prop? If adult heirs want to keep their artificially low property tax bill, they'll need to live in their inherited digs.

New revenue from closing the inheritance tax break could generate billions for schools, local governments and the state. A big chunk would go to firefighters.

#### Why am I voting on this?

Because Realtors really, really, really want you to pass it. They floated a very similar initiative two years ago, which California

### Supporters say

Civic engagement will lead to fewer parolees committing other crimes; it allows them to help remove the stigma of their past. People who complete their prison sentences deserve the right to participate in a democracy.

### Opponents say

Parole is an opportunity for violent offenders to prove they've been rehabilitated. Voting is a right that offenders should receive once they demonstrate they have been rehabilitated; not before.

#### Who's for it:

- League of Women Voters in California
- Gov. Gavin Newsom
- Californians for Safety and Justice
- Democratic Assemblymember Kevin McCarty of Sacramento, who introduced the constitutional amendment

#### Who's against it:

- Crime Victims United of California
- Election Integrity Project California

### Supporters say

Allowing teens who would be first time voters in an election cycle to participate from the beginning could increase interest and voter participation among youth. It's a simple way to raise the voices of young voters. Many of them already work and pay taxes and they are allowed to join the military so voting if they are eligible makes sense.

### Opponents say

Seventeen-year-olds are still kids. Biologically their brains are not yet fully developed, they can't enter into legal contracts, and they still need parent permission for certain activities. These high schoolers may be unduly influenced by teachers or school positions on issues, and many have no real world experience with paying bills, renting or buying a house, or holding down a job.

#### Who's for it:

- California Association of Student Councils
- Gov. Gavin Newsom and Secretary of State Alex Padilla
- California League of Conservation Voters
- California School Boards Association

#### Who's against it:

- Election Integrity Project California
- Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

voters rejected overwhelmingly. But that initiative didn't close the inheritance tax break, so according to a nonpartisan analysis, it would have cost local governments billions.

In the broader sense, you're voting on this because almost any change to property taxes in California has to come through a constitutional amendment, which requires a ballot measure. The Realtors and firefighters' union, two powerful state interest groups, convinced lawmakers to put this one on the 2020 ballot.

### Supporters say

Prop. 19 will incentivize seniors stuck in oversized homes to downsize, freeing up inventory in the state's ridiculously expensive housing market. Closing the inheritance tax break will provide a budget boost to local governments and state firefighting efforts, at a time when the coronavirus pandemic has depleted public coffers.

### Opponents say

This is a giveaway to Realtors, who are twisting public policy to boost their commissions. Plus, adult children should have the right to do whatever they want with the property they inherited — without facing a crushing tax burden.

#### Who's for it:

- California Association of Realtors
- California Professional Firefighters
- Gov. Gavin Newsom and the California Democratic Party
- California Nurses Association

#### Who's against it:

- Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association
- Sen. Patricia Bates (R-Laguna Hills)



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