

## California Initiative Editorial Scorecard

September 2020 (2020-2)

[California Strategies](#) and [Forward Observer](#) are pleased to present the California Initiative Editorial Scorecard.

For this 2020 edition of the scorecard, we track editorials on the 12 ballot measures that California voters will decide on Tuesday, November 3.

This year's editorial scorecard is based on circulation data from the Alliance for Audited Media for 22 newspaper outlets:

2020 California Initiative Editorial Endorsement Scorecard		
Rank	Paper	Circulation
1	Los Angeles Times	653,868
2	San Jose Mercury News	527,568
3	Sacramento Bee	279,032
4	Orange County Register	250,724
5	East Bay Times	168,362
6	San Francisco Chronicle	164,820
7	Fresno Bee	157,546
8	San Diego Union-Tribune	121,321
9	La Opinion	116,256
10	The Press-Enterprise	92,697
11	The Record - Stockton	58,888
12	San Gabriel Valley Tribune	57,558
13	The Daily Breeze	57,185
14	Modesto Bee	56,723
15	Los Angeles Daily News	56,493
16	The Santa Rosa Press Democrat	54,000
17	Long Beach Press-Telegram	41,038
18	Inland Valley Daily Bulletin	38,286
19	San Bernardino Sun	36,076
20	The Desert Sun	30,555
21	Chico Enterprise-Record	29,000
22	Bakersfield Californian	22,000

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**In both 2016 and 2018, we observed that editorial endorsements (pro or con) were a leading indicator of success at the ballot.**

- Of the 10 measures on the 2016 ballot with a majority of editorials in favor, only one failed to pass (Prop 62, repeal death penalty); out of the seven measures with a majority of editorials against, only three passed.
- Of the 11 initiatives on the 2018 ballot, each of the four measures endorsed by a majority of leading newspapers was approved by voters (Prop 1 – Housing Bond; Prop 2 – Tax Revenue for Homeless Prevention; Prop 4 – Children’s Hospital Bond; Prop 11 – Ambulance Employee Regulations). Of the seven initiatives opposed by a majority of leading newspapers, only two (Prop 7 – Repeals Daylight Savings Time and Prop 12 – Animal Space Requirements) were approved by California voters. The remaining five were defeated.

For many measures, endorsements have been lopsided – as indicated below.

<b>2020 California Initiative Editorial Endorsement Scorecard</b>		
<b>Proposition</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Prop 14 (Authorizes stem cell bonds)	0	13
Prop 15 (Removes commercial, industrial and some agricultural property from Prop 13’s tax protections)	3	13
Prop 16 (Removes voter-approved prohibition on race-conscious university admissions, public hiring and contracting)	5	12
Prop 17 (Allows felony parolees to vote)	14	1
Prop 18 (Allows 17-year-olds to vote in primaries and special elections if they’ll be 18 for general elections)	4	11
Prop 19 (Allows elderly, disabled and wildfire victims to retain lower property tax rates when they change properties)	1	14
Prop 20 (Rolls back sentencing and parole reforms enacted in Props 47 and 57)	1	13
Prop 21 (Removes statewide constraints on local governments enacting rent control)	1	17
Prop 22 (Allows gig tech companies to remain as independent contractors)	13	1
Prop 23 (New regulation of kidney dialysis clinics)	0	15
Prop 24 (Expands online consumer privacy)	1	12
Prop 25 (Overturn cash bail prohibition)	13	0

## Endorsements from the Top 22 California Papers

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Los Angeles Times		<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	
Mercury News	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
Sacramento Bee								<u>NO</u>				
Orange County Register	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
East Bay Times	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
San Francisco Chronicle	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
Fresno Bee								<u>NO</u>				
San Diego Union-Tribune		<u>NO</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>		<u>NO</u>		<u>YES</u>
La Opinion		<u>YES</u>										
The Press-Enterprise	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
The Record - Stockton												
San Gabriel Valley Tribune	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
The Daily Breeze	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
Modesto Bee								<u>NO</u>				
Los Angeles Daily News	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
The Santa Rosa Press Democrat	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>		
Long Beach Press-Telegram	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
Inland Valley Daily Bulletin	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
San Bernardino Sun	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
The Desert Sun												
Chico Enterprise-Record												
Bakersfield Californian	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>

### Noteworthy Editorial Quotes

#### Proposition 14

Santa Rosa Press Democrat – No

*“Our objection was to ballot-box budgeting. That’s an even more acute concern today, with millions of Californians out of work and the state struggling to fulfill its most basic obligations in the face of historic budget deficits caused by the coronavirus pandemic.” [Link](#)*

#### Proposition 15

Los Angeles Times – Yes

*“The other way that one could, and we argue should, view Proposition 15 is through a lens of hope. At long last there is a tangible fix in sight for one of California’s most intractable problems: a wildly unfair and lopsided property tax system that for four decades has starved local governments of the revenue they need to provide services and that has distorted the cost of buying a house and starting a business, to the detriment of young families and entrepreneurs.” [Link](#)*

San Diego Union-Tribune – No

*“This is a horrible idea for reasons that go beyond the insanity of imposing the largest property tax hike in state history on employers during a deep recession — and beyond the fact that the cost of the tax hikes would be largely passed on to consumers during a deep recession. Approving Proposition 15 is not about preserving essential government services, as advocates assert. It is about preserving generous government pensions that threaten to bankrupt government agencies across the state.” [Link](#)*

### **Proposition 16**

East Bay Times – Yes

*“The events of this year have highlighted the level of racial injustice that exists across the nation, including California. The disparity between Black and Latino residents and their White counterparts is readily apparent when it comes to income, health, education and the criminal justice system. Reducing those disparities will require a major effort on multiple fronts. Proposition 16 would give the state’s universities and government a valuable tool they need to fight existing structural inequalities.” [Link](#)*

Bakersfield Californian – No

*“Prop. 16’s reach goes beyond college campuses. It also would allow an applicant’s race, ethnicity, national origin and sex to be considered in public agency hiring decisions and the awarding of public contracts... Innovative minority recruitment strategies are a more effective way to increase diversity on university campuses, in public workforces and in public contracting.” [Link](#)*

### **Proposition 17**

Los Angeles Times – Yes

*“There are about 50,000 parolees in California and, according to advocates, 3 out of 4 men leaving prison here are Black, Latino or Asian American. In a nation with a long history of racial subordination, suppressing the votes of these former inmates, who have served their time, should especially trouble us.” [Link](#)*

### **Proposition 18**

San Diego Union-Tribune – Yes

*“To try to get young people engaged, empowered and excited about voting and to make them more enthusiastic about participation, 18 states have passed laws allowing voters who will be 18 by general elections to vote in primary elections. If adopted, Proposition 18 would add California to this list.” [Link](#)*

Santa Rosa Press Democrat – No

*“California allows too many low-turnout special elections on fiscal issues. We doubt that even the most politically engaged 17-year-old is fully prepared to weigh parcel taxes and bond acts. Even fewer would be subject to the taxes they would be voting on.” [Link](#)*

### **Proposition 19**

San Diego Union-Tribune – Yes

*“The great majority of older homeowners are middle-income, not rich. Allowing them (as well as disabled homeowners and wildfire or disaster victims) to downsize without suffering a huge property tax hit is a humane policy that helps people retire with much less financial stress. It would also promote fluidity in home sales, increasing the availability of larger homes for families with children and easing the phenomenon of Proposition 13 depressing the real estate free market by trapping empty nesters in homes bigger than they need.” [Link](#)*

San Francisco Chronicle – No

*“Older homeowners will continue to get a break, but young buyers will still face high property taxes keyed to a purchase price. It’s advertised as reform, but it’s nothing of the sort. It’s a contrived tweak of an already convoluted tax system through a multimillion-dollar campaign that is being bankrolled by the real-estate industry.” [Link](#)*

### **Proposition 20**

San Diego Union-Tribune – Yes

*“It reinstates potentially serious punishment for those who repeatedly engage in property theft and reclassifies 22 crimes from nonviolent to violent. The measure faces sharp criticism for undermining the momentum for criminal justice reform. But the drafters of Propositions 47 and 57 are the ones who have undercut the momentum for reform with their sloppy work then and their refusal to admit mistakes now.” [Link](#)*

Santa Rosa Press Democrat – No

*“Taxpayers spend more than \$50,000 a year on each of the approximately 100,000 inmates in California’s prison system. That’s about five times more than the state’s per-student investment in K-12 education. The state’s nonpartisan legislative analyst projects annual costs in the tens of millions of dollars for local governments under Proposition 20, because many of the affected inmates would serve their time in county jails. The state faces about a 1% increase in general fund spending, according to the legislative analyst, and may get stuck with legal costs defending the measure in court, as some of the parole changes are may violate the state constitution.” [Link](#)*

## **Proposition 21**

San Diego Union-Tribune – No

*“Rent control is the wrong way to help Californians struggling with housing. Lawmakers who are juggling a lot during this pandemic need to not lose sight of that. The long-term solution is listening to experts and building new houses.” [Link](#)*

## **Proposition 22**

Santa Rosa Press Democrat – Yes

*“Approving Proposition 22 would send a clear signal to Sacramento that Californians want ride shares and other app-based services to stay, and they want people to have the option of setting their own hours around other jobs, school or family obligations. Call it moonlighting or a side hustle or entrepreneurship, millions of Californians have found a new source of income in the gig economy. Don’t take it away from them.” [Link](#)*

Los Angeles Times – No

*“Proposition 22 would cement into state law a measure that fails to deliver on a number of important fronts. Not surprisingly for a labor law proposed by the app-based companies, the measure would continue to give transportation and delivery services a powerful incentive to cut costs by assigning core tasks to nonemployees. This is a particular problem for workers who put in a significant number of hours per week on the apps’ platforms.” [Link](#)*

## **Proposition 23**

Los Angeles Times – No

*“The one sure result of the doctor-on-duty mandate is that it would raise the cost of care. Opponents argue that clinics would trim their hours and open fewer new locations as a result, which would make it harder for patients to get treated. It also is likely to drive up the cost of patients’ bills, which would be a particular hardship for patients in California who are covered by Medicare — they have to cover the 20% copay out of pocket because Medigap policies here do not cover dialysis.” [Link](#)*

## **Proposition 24**

Los Angeles Times – Yes

*“Although California’s current privacy law is the strongest in the country, it has many shortcomings. Its limits apply only to the sale of data, so some sites have circumvented them by claiming they’re not selling personal information, they’re merely sharing it with partners. That’s one of several glaring loopholes that big, data-hoovering sites and platforms such as Google, Facebook and Spotify have exploited.” [Link](#)*

San Francisco Chronicle – No

*“When in doubt, vote no. It goes against a Californian’s instincts to reject what is advertised as a privacy protection initiative, but some objects on the ballot are smaller than they appear. There are no advancements to law in this initiative that could not be enacted by the California Legislature, after public hearings and vetting to assure they actually achieve their intended purpose and the ability to course correct for unintended consequences that emerge.” [Link](#)*

## **Proposition 25**

San Francisco Chronicle – Yes

*“One of the clear injustices of California’s court system is that suspects — not convicted but accused — are stuck in jail awaiting trial because they could not afford bail. This upends the very American ideal of innocent until proved guilty. A person accused of a crime who can’t make bail may well lose his or her job and means of supporting a family, along with future job prospects, no matter how the trial ends.” [Link](#)*

We will continue to update the 2020 California Initiative Editorial Scorecard in the coming weeks. Please feel free to share on social media and circulate to your colleagues, clients and friends.

Thanks,

Matt Klink & Joe Rodota