



California Ballot Measures: Explained by Experts

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The 2020 election is quickly approaching, and in some cases voters have already cast their ballots. Not only are voters selecting their preferred candidates, but many are also weighing in on ballot initiatives with important implications for public policy.

For reporters covering the debate around ballot measures currently being considered in California, the following experts are available to provide commentary and analysis:

All California Ballot Initiatives

MELISSA R. MICHELSON

Menlo College



Michelson's research interests include California politics, with particular expertise in race/ethnic politics and voter turnout.

"November's ballot gives Californians the opportunity to shift state politics in a more progressive direction: scaling back felony disenfranchisement, rent control, and eliminating cash bail. It also revisits classic big-money battles—kidney dialysis clinics, property taxes, and app-based delivery companies. But it's mostly under the radar as voters are focused on the presidential race."

Prop 16 - Affirmative Action

SHERICE JANAYE NELSON

Southern University and A & M College



Nelson's research interests include Black political leadership, Black women as political agents, and the Black experience throughout the Diaspora.

"Proposition 16 will undo Proposition 209 and provided the preferential treatment necessary for marginalized groups in the state of California. If 2020 has taught us nothing else, it has taught us that a racial hierarchy effects many aspects of our society which include public employment, public education and public contracting. To get closer to equity, we must acknowledge and repair the barriers that have been structurally created that excludes too many."

JAMAL MAZYCK

San Francisco State University



Maczyck's research focuses on minority student matriculation in higher education and postsecondary campus climate issues related to students of color.

"Proposition 209 has stagnated public policy, stalled opportunities, and further marginalized those adversely impacted long enough. Yes on Proposition 16 gives Californians a chance to right this wrong and provide equal opportunity for all."

Prop 18 - Primary Voting

MICHAEL S. LATNER

California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo



Latner's research focuses on electoral system design, voting rights and political representation.

"Reducing restrictions on voting age has been shown to increase voter participation. This measure would allow greater incorporation of voting into high school civics curriculum, preparing tomorrow's voters for the responsibilities of citizenship, and helping to instill the habit of voting regularly."

Prop 21 - Local Rent Control

ARTURO BAIOCCHI

California State University-Sacramento

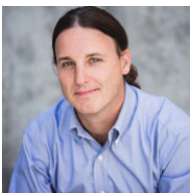


Baiocchi's research focuses on vulnerable young adults, mental health and homelessness.

"Prop 21 will allow local communities more 'control' over their 'rent control' --rolling back some of the previous state-level restrictions placed by Costa-Hawkins (1995), which currently limits the types of apartments/dwellings that communities can apply rent control ordinances. Faced with growing housing, homelessness and affordability crises, Californians need more control to balance the types and forms of rent control right for their communities."

ETHAN J. EVANS

California State University-Sacramento



Evans' interests include health care policy and reform, social welfare, organizations studies, and medical sociology.

"Ultimately, Proposition 21 returns local control to cities and counties allowing local people to decide how to best address the affordable housing crisis. State law currently limits how locals can protect residents being priced out of rental housing."

Prop 22 - App-Based Drivers

MICHAEL AHN PAARLBERG

Virginia Commonwealth University



Paarlberg's research focuses on immigration, labor, and the politics of Latin American diaspora communities.

"The misclassification of employees as independent contractors is an accelerating trend driven by the growth of gig work, and has implications for labor standards in the broader economy, as well as the nature of jobs in the future."

ARTURO BAIOCCHI

California State University-Sacramento



Baiocchi's research focuses on vulnerable young adults, mental health and homelessness.

"Whether uber and other app-based drivers should be excluded from payroll taxes and in turn unemployment insurance is an often-missed issue underpinning prop 22. While the debate on prop 22 has often centered on the desired flexibility of workers in the gig economy, a more fundamental question is whether these workers should qualify for standard safety-net programs funded by payroll taxes. Ironically, the pandemic has reminded many of us that while no one likes paying for insurance, these programs should apply to most forms of employment, and in turn funded by them."

BRIAN WILLIAM HALPIN

University of California-Davis



Halpin's research interests focus on low-wage work and workers, low-wage labor markets, and the reproduction of social and economic inequality

"Prop 22 is a clear example of how Uber and Lyft have continually tried to undermine workers' well-being in the so-called "gig" economy. Prop 22 allows these companies to continue to exploit labor and employment law to their benefit, while disadvantaging workers by shifting the risk and uncertainty of the market from the firm to the individual."

Props 17, 20, and 25 - Criminal Justice

KERAMET REITER

University of California-Irvine



Reiter studies prisons, prisoners' rights, and the impact of prison and punishment policy on individuals, communities, and legal systems.

Props 17, 20, and 25: "Once again, California voters have opportunities to simultaneously set new national standards to reduce the stigma of incarceration and support re-entry (through proposition 17 to extend voting rights to people with misdemeanor convictions and who have served their prison time for felony convictions) and also to roll back reforms that have done just this, likely re-inflating criminal justice costs at a time of fiscal crisis (through proposition 20 to expand the list of crimes counting as felonies, with all the associated

lengthening in sentences and collateral consequences)."

BRYAN L. SYKES

Cornell University



Sykes is a demographer and sociologist who studies the contours, causes, and consequences of crime and mass incarceration in America.

Prop 17: "Voting 'yes' on Proposition 17 is a step in the right direction for restoring the citizenship rights of formerly incarcerated people now on parole. This constitutional amendment means that many people, especially people of color, will no longer be disenfranchised by a system that dilutes the political power of specific demographic groups."

Prop 20: "Proposition 20 is complicated because it lumps a variety of issues into a single policy decision. One could vote 'no' to prevent the collection of DNA for crimes that are not related to sexual offenses or violence (shoplifting, grand theft, forging a check, etc.) but also vote 'yes' to change certain theft-related crimes from felonies or wobblers (crimes chargeable as felonies or misdemeanors) to misdemeanors. This is a complicated proposition precisely because there are five different policy changes wrapped up in a single proposition."

Prop 25: "Voting 'yes' on Proposition 25 would reduce the number of people in county jails simply because they are too poor to bond out. Risk assessments, while not always perfect, are better tools for evaluating the pre-trial and pre-sentence release of defendants than the size of their bank accounts or other financial resources."

NICOLE FOX

California State University-Sacramento



Fox's research focuses on mass atrocity, gender and memorialization.

Prop 20: "Prop 20 would make certain types of theft and fraud crimes felonies, instead of misdemeanors. This means that California will be sending more folks to prison, without parole and for longer. If passed, such a measure would contribute to California's mass

incarceration problem, which as a state currently locks up a higher percentage of its people than many developed nations. This would have a particular impact on black and brown communities who face higher incarceration rates, longer sentences and less lenient judgments than whites."

Prop 25: "Prop 25 is a tough one. Currently people who commit the same exact crime experience different outcomes while awaiting trial due to their socio-economic status. Wealthier Californians who can afford to pay a cash bail leave jail when awaiting their trial, while those who cannot afford bail stay there pretrial, with Black and Latinos more likely to be detained pretrial or have to pay cash bail. Prop 25 would change this, replacing cash bail with an algorithm evaluating the person's risk to show up for their court date. While Prop 25 could transform the exploitation that is inherent in the current bail system, we don't yet know if the risk assessment model used to create the algorithm would exacerbate the racial and economic inequalities we face today."

CHARIS ELIZABETH KUBRIN

University of California-Irvine



Kubrin's research focuses on neighborhood correlates of crime, with an emphasis on race and violent crime.

Prop 20: "Research, including my own, shows criminal justice reform in California is working. The state has been able to significantly downsize its prison population without harming public safety. Rolling back these reforms is likely to undermine this progress."