

ELECTION 2006

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Voter Guide* 2-5
- Child Care News* 5

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CALL TO ACTION: MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT FOR CALIFORNIA'S CHILDREN

This year there are several measures on the November Ballot that impact children's health and well being. The Children's Network has not taken an official position on any of the initiatives, but basic information on several of the proposals is highlighted inside this special edition of our newsletter, along with references on where to obtain additional information.

In pulling information together for this summary, we relied heavily on the work of the Children's Advocate newsletter (www.4children.org), the California Budget Project (www.CBP.org) and the Easy Voter guide (www.easyvoter.org.) We thank them for their generosity in making this information available to us and to the public.

As always, we encourage you to vote on Election Day, keeping the needs of children in mind. This year you must be sure you are registered to vote by October 23, and the election itself is on Tuesday, November 7.



PLEASE NOTE: *Due to a new law, you must provide your drivers license number or other identification information in order to register to vote.* Register to vote online at www.ss.ca.gov, or call 1-800-345-8683 to have a registration form sent to you. Voter registration forms are also available at the Children's Network office, your local Family Resource Center, library, post office, or DMV.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR FREE COMMUNITY TAX SERVICE

If you like helping people and are looking for a fulfilling volunteer opportunity, then consider the Volunteer Return Preparation Program. Trained volunteer Tax Assistors are needed to provide free, basic income tax preparation services to community members with low-to-moderate incomes who cannot afford professional tax assistance. Volunteers will help individuals complete and electronically file their returns – all for free.

Who are these volunteers? People just like you – college students, law students, homemakers, members of volunteer or community organizations, and business men and women. Volunteers receive free instruction and all materials necessary to prepare basic income tax returns. Training and certification generally is conducted in December and January. Registrations are now being accepted for training and certification at locations convenient for both instructors and volunteers.

If you or your organization want to get involved and would like more information about the Volunteer Return Preparation Program, contact Rhonda Smith at (707) 421-7229.

ELECTION 2006: CHILDREN'S ISSUES VOTER GUIDE

EDUCATION MEASURES

Proposition 88: *Property parcel tax for education*

This measure would provide \$500 million for class size reduction, textbooks, school safety, and better K-12 schools. It would be funded by a \$50 tax on each piece of real estate. Funds would go to school districts, county offices of education and charter schools.

SUPPORTERS SAY... Prop. 88 would:

- Reduce class size and provide additional text books and school safety measures
- Help kids do better in school: "Children need safer schools, more materials, teachers in smaller classes," says Paul Mitchell of EdVoice
- Increase school funding: "California doesn't fully fund K-12 schools. This would help meet children's needs for a modest cost," says Mitchell. Funds would be allocated according to strict controls.

Supporters: EdVoice (916-448-3868, www.voteformbetterschools.org), California State Board of Education, Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

OPPONENTS SAY... Prop. 88 would:

- Not provide enough funds: It would bring in less than one percent of the education budget but "people would think the school funding problem is solved," says Nancy Adalian of the California State PTA.
- Lead to unequal funding among districts, says Larry McCarthy of the California Taxpayers' Association.

Opponents: No on Prop. 88 (916-927-1512, www.noprop88.com), California State PTA, California Taxpayers' Association —Jessine Foss

Proposition 1D: *School facilities*

The Legislature put this measure on the ballot. It would borrow \$10.4 billion by issuing bonds to build new K-12 schools (\$1.9 billion), modernize current schools (\$3.3 billion), relieve severe overcrowding in schools (\$1 billion), and build facilities for charter schools (\$500 million). Districts would need 50% matching funds to use the money, but poorer districts could get "hardship assistance." Community colleges and universities would get \$2.4 billion.

SUPPORTERS SAY... "Students need modern classrooms, where everything is clean and safe," says Mike Myslinski of the California Teachers Association.

Prop. 1D would:

- Relieve overcrowding: "Over a million students attend severely overcrowded schools—and schools will get 250,000 more students in the next ten years," says Myslinski.
- Repair schools: By improving school and playground safety, taking out asbestos, and repairing roofs.
- Provide needed money: Previous measures raised money for school facilities, but more is needed.

Supporters: Rebuilding California, (www.plan4ourfuture.org), California Chamber of Commerce, California State PTA, California Taxpayers Association, California Teachers Association, Coalition for Adequate School Housing, EdVoice

OPPONENTS SAY... "Bonds are an expensive way to build schools," says Thomas Hudson of the California Taxpayer Protection Committee—the state budget should include funds for building schools each year.

Prop. 1D would:

- Not benefit poor schools because these districts can't raise matching funds.
- Increase California's debt. California already owes billions from previous bond measures. If state funds fall short, bonds have to be paid back first.
- Not reform school funding. "California spends a lot on kids, but it's not reflected in what we're getting back," says Hudson.

Opponents: California Taxpayer Protection Committee (916-991-9300), California Republican Assembly, California Political Review (editorial board) —Jessine Foss

HEALTH MEASURES

Proposition 86: *Tobacco tax for children's health care*

This measure would raise \$2.1 billion for affordable health insurance for all children (\$371 million), emergency room services (\$828 million), prevention and treatment of cancer, lung disease, and asthma (\$416 million), smoking prevention and cessation programs (\$213 million), nurse education (\$100 million), and community clinics and First 5 programs (\$64 million). It would increase cigarette taxes by \$2.60 a pack.

SUPPORTERS SAY...The measure would “win health coverage for all kids, prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit, and strengthen health care in our communities,” says PICO California.

Prop. 86 would:

- Insure all kids: Children would be eligible if they are under 19, don't qualify for public programs, and live in families with incomes under 300% of the poverty level (\$60,000 for a family of four).
- Save billions in long-term health costs: More children would have access to primary care (rather than relying on expensive emergency room visits) and fewer people would get cancer or asthma because of smoking.
- Prevent deaths related to smoking: The high price of cigarettes would keep kids from smoking and encourage smokers to quit.

Supporters: 100% Campaign (510-763-2444, x 122, www.100percentcampaign.org), Children's Defense

Fund-California, PICO California, American Lung Association of California, California Department of Health Services, California State PTA

OPPONENTS SAY...“This tax (could) drive the cigarette market underground” and encourage tobacco smuggling, says Jon Coupal of the Howard Jarvis Tax Association.

Prop. 86 would:

- Add more taxes in a state that is overtaxed.
- Not be fair to smokers, particularly low-income smokers who pay a higher percentage of their income for cigarettes.
- Provide services for illegal immigrants.
- Bring in less money over time because people will quit smoking.

Opponents: Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association (916-444-9950), California Chamber of Commerce, National Tax-Limitation Committee

Proposition 84: *Water quality and park improvements*

This measure would borrow \$5.4 billion by issuing bonds to provide funds to public agencies (which may contract with qualified service providers) for safe drinking water projects, flood control, protection of natural resources, improvements to state and local parks, and improvements to air and water quality.

SUPPORTERS SAY... Prop. 84 would:

- Provide clean drinking water for every community.
- Restore and expand state parks so children can “see and feel history,” says the campaign.
- Create regional and local parks in underserved neighborhoods and expand overused parks.
- Reduce the risk of flooding that could leave Californians without safe drinking water after a natural disaster.

Supporters: Yes on Prop. 84 (916-558-1516, www.yeson84.com), California League of Conservation Voters, National Wildlife Federation, Black American Political Association of California, League of Women Voters of California

OPPONENTS SAY... Prop. 84 would:

- “Line the pockets” of environmental groups: “Many organizations that gave money to put the measure on the ballot would get millions for their projects,” says Uhler.
- Be very expensive: “Over 30 years, the bonds will cost \$10 to \$11 billion to pay back,” says Uhler.
- Not fully meet water and energy needs: There are no funds for dams or reservoirs.

Opponents: National Tax Limitation Committee (916-786-9400), California State Board of Equalization, Americans for Tax Reform

OTHER MEASURES

Proposition 87: *Tax on oil production*

This measure would tax oil production in California and spend \$4 billion on efforts to reduce gasoline consumption, encourage purchase of alternative vehicles and alternative fuels, and fund research on renewable energy in an effort to reduce dependence on foreign oil and provide a cleaner environment. Although about 12% of the oil pumped in the US comes from California, California is the only major oil producing state which does not currently tax oil production.

SUPPORTERS SAY...

- Prop. 87 makes oil companies pay their fare share for cleaner air and energy and makes it illegal for them to pass the cost on to consumers
- Provides rebates on alternative fuel vehicles and renewable energy like wind and solar power
- Reduces California's dependence on foreign oil by increasing consumption of alternative fuels
- Reduces pollution that causes global warming, asthma, lung disease and cancer

Supporters include the American Nurses Association, the American Lung Association, the Sierra Club. Additional information is available at Yeson87.com.

OPPONENTS SAY...

- Prop. 87 will reduce oil production in California due to higher production costs
- Reduces funding to schools to the extent it results in a corresponding reduction of other tax revenues such as state income tax
- Raise the price of gasoline at the pump

Opponents include Chevron Oil and the California Chamber of Commerce. Additional information is available at NoOilTax.com.

Proposition 1C: *Housing and emergency shelter*

The legislature put this measure on the ballot. It would borrow \$2.9 billion by issuing bonds to provide support for homebuyers (\$500 mil) and housing for seniors, low-income families, and emancipated foster youth (\$395 mil); people with disabilities (\$195 mil); and farm workers (\$135 mil). It would also fund shelters and transitional housing for battered women and people at risk of homelessness (\$195 mil), parks and transportation for new housing.

SUPPORTERS SAY... Prop. 1C would be:

- Good for kids: "It would provide stable homes for children," says Julie Spezia of Homes 4 California. California's affordable housing crisis is threatening children's well-being with overcrowding, unsafe housing, and homelessness.
- Good for the economy: It would create 87,000 full-time jobs, \$3.5 billion in wages in the housing industry, and millions in tax revenue.
- Good for the environment: It would prioritize building on under-utilized land and pay for cleaning up polluted sites.
- Good for women and kids leaving abusive relationships: Over 5,000 women and children were turned away last year from full battered-women's shelters. (Children who witness domestic violence often have emotional or behavioral problems.)

Supporters: Homes 4 California (916-447-0503, www.homes4ca.org), AARP, California Chamber of

Commerce, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, California Teachers Association, Housing California

OPPONENTS SAY... Prop. 1C would:

- Badly use bond funds: "It is improper to use general obligation bonds to create a home for an individual" instead of paying for public services such as roads and dams, says Lew Uhler of the National Tax-Limitation Committee.
- Increase California's debt by borrowing more money through bonds.

Opponents: National Tax-Limitation Committee (916-786-9400), Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, Assemblymember Chuck Vore.

Proposition 89: *Public financing for state elections*

This measure would provide public funds for candidates running for state office, beginning January 2007. It would also limit campaign contributions by corporations and unions. The measure would be funded by a 0.2% tax increase on corporations. Candidates would:

- Need \$5 contributions from enough voters to be eligible;
- Agree not to accept money from most private sources;
- Receive a fixed amount of money for their race;
- Get additional money, if needed, to match opponents' spending.

SUPPORTERS SAY... "Children are the last consideration in Sacramento," says Charles Idelson of the California Nurses Association, because of lobbying by special interests.

Prop. 89 would:

- Limit the power of corporations because they would no longer be able to spend millions to end health and welfare protections.
- Improve how politicians do their jobs because they wouldn't have to fundraise in office.
- Improve the election system. In states with public funds for elections, more women and people of color run for office, voter turnout increases, and campaign costs decrease.

Supporters: Yes on 89 (800-440-6877; <http://yeson89.org>), California Nurses Association, California League of Women Voters, Consumer Federation of California

OPPONENTS SAY... Prop. 89 would:

- Reduce the voice of teachers by "severely limiting the ability of unions to fight for our students," says Mike Myslinski of the California Teachers Association.
- Lead to "bad" laws, says the California Chamber of Commerce, such as SB 2 (which would have required employers to provide health coverage).
- Not address real problems such as fraud, health care, schools, and transportation.
- Not limit spending by wealthy candidates on their own campaigns.

Opponents: No on 89 (916-448-4234), California Chamber of Commerce, California Small Business Roundtable, California Taxpayers' Association, California Teachers Association, National Tax-Limitation Committee

SOLANO'S NEED FOR MORE PRESCHOOL AND BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Although Solano County has a similar number of children ages 0 to 13 as Sonoma and San Francisco Counties, the number of licensed child care centers and spaces available are markedly fewer. Sonoma County has more than twice as many child care centers and over 3,000 more spaces than Solano; San Francisco has more than three times as many centers and over 10,000 more spaces. In addition, there are more than 1,400 families eligible and waiting for subsidized child care and development services in Solano County. There are currently two funding opportunities available through the California Department of Education that, if successfully applied for, will help Solano County close this gap.

New Preschool Funding: Assembly Bill 172, signed by the Governor in early September, will provide \$55 million in new funds: \$50 million for preschool programming and family literacy and \$5 million for wraparound services to extend part-day programs. In addition, \$50 million was included in the Child Care Facilities Revolving Loan Fund. The funding will be targeted at low performing schools based on 2005 Academic Performance Index scores; 20 elementary schools catchment areas in Solano County will be eligible. Visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/af> for more information. Applications are expected to be released in October, 2006.

After-School Education and Safety (ASES) Program: The After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program provides academic and enrichment activities as constructive alternatives for kindergarten through grade nine students in before- and after-school programs. All eligible applicants (including local educational agencies and public agencies) requesting to establish before- and after-school programs at public elementary, middle, and junior high schools are encouraged to apply. Over \$400 million new funding is available statewide. Visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/profile.asp?id=744> for more information. Applications are due to the California Department of Education by November 3, 2006.

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NEWSLETTER

Mary LeCompte, Editor

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