Questions and Answers

Why Should California Voters Support Proposition 39?

Prop 39 will fix the way our schools spend money AND fix our schools. The people of California are willing to invest in building and repairing schools. But they need and deserve assurance that school bond funds are spent wisely and effectively, not wasted or mismanaged. Prop 39 does both! If passed, Prop 39 will implement strict provisions that hold administrators directly accountable for the spending of local school bond funds. These accountability requirements will help ensure that every penny of voter-approved school bonds is spent directly on building and repairing classrooms — and not on administration or bureaucracy.

Who Supports Proposition 39?

A diverse, bi-partisan coalition including Governor Gray Davis, former Governor Pete Wilson, the California State PTA, California Teachers, the AARP, the California Chamber of Commerce, the League of Women Voters of California, the California Hispanic and Black Chambers of Commerce, Congress of California Seniors, California Professional Firefighters, California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, Consumer Federation of California, California Association of REALTORS®, the University of California and California State University systems, and more than 200 local and statewide community groups and leaders support Proposition 39. For a complete listing, please visit “Who We Are” at www.YESonProp39.org.

How Will Prop 39 Fix the Way Schools Spend Money?

If passed, Prop 39 would impose strict accountability requirements governing the way administrators spend voter-approved school bond funds. These requirements:

- Prohibit using funds for administration or bureaucracy;
- Require local school administrators to provide voters with a specific list of school construction projects to be financed by a proposed bond;
- Cap and limit how much property taxes can be raised by a local school bond;
- Require school districts to undergo two rigid, independent financial and performance audits every year to ensure funds are spent only on voter-approved projects and that all bond proceeds are accounted for;
- Mandate independent citizen watchdog committees comprised of local parents, taxpayers, homeowners, seniors, and business leaders to make sure money is not wasted;
- Give the watchdog committees powerful new ways to stop projects and prosecute violators and inform the public of abuse or waste if audits show waste or unauthorized spending;
- Prohibit these bond votes except during regularly scheduled elections.

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HOW WILL PROP 39 HELP FIX OUR SCHOOLS?

Currently California schools are among the most overcrowded in the nation. Some classrooms are forced to accommodate as many as 50 students at a time, making it almost impossible to learn. School districts with too few classrooms are forced to teach children in trailers and converted cafeterias, libraries and gyms. Experts predict we’ll need 20,000 new classrooms just to keep up with student population growth expected over the next ten years. And if we’re going to reduce class sizes, we’ll have to build even more classrooms.

Proposition 39 will help build and repair desperately needed schools and classrooms. By requiring a tough, yet realistic 55% super-majority vote, holding administrators directly accountable for school bond spending, and cutting waste and mismanagement, Prop 39 benefits many communities that desperately need to build schools and repair classrooms because of overcrowding and exploding student growth. Prop 39 also promotes the expansion of class size reduction programs that result in better learning and classroom discipline.

WILL PROP 39 RAISE PROPERTY TAXES?

No.

Proposition 39 is not a bond measure. Prop 39 is designed to fix the way our schools spend money and fix our schools by changing the way local school districts pass and spend bonds for repair and construction of schools and classrooms.

Under Prop 39, a super-majority 55% of local voters must approve a school bond before a district’s bonded indebtedness will increase -- resulting in modest increases in property taxes.

That’s why the California State PTA says, “Passage of Prop 39 doesn’t raise property taxes, doesn’t put a lien on your home, and doesn’t increase rents. Local voters have the final say in passing school bonds through a tough 55% super-majority vote.”

WILL PASSAGE OF LOCAL SCHOOL BONDS “DOUBLE PROPERTY TAXES” AS PROP 39 OPPONENTS CLAIM?

No.

Given the serious condition of California schools, it is unfortunate that the primary opponent of Proposition 39 is resorting to inflammatory rhetoric — designed to scare people into joining his organization — rather than working with us to help fix the way schools spend money.

Based on a study commissioned by former State Treasurer and Auditor General Thomas Hayes, it is “mathematically impossible” for school bonds to double property taxes. Here’s why:

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The average California homeowner pays about $1692 in property taxes each year. The portion of property taxes that goes to pay for school bonds represents only 1/34th of the average homeowner’s total property tax bill (often less than $50 per year).

Passage of Proposition 39 would impose a cap of less than $100 per year, for the average homeowner, on property taxes resulting from voter approval of a local school bond.

Under Proposition 39, if local voters approve a school bond, the most the average homeowner’s property tax bill could increase is from $1692 to $1791 — only a 5 percent increase — and a long, long, long, long way off from a “doubling of property taxes.”

That’s why the AARP says, “Shame on the Jarvis political committee. They can’t make their case with the facts so they resort to scare tactics, fear-mongering and misleading statements.”

**WHY CAN’T STATE GOVERNMENT PAY FOR NEW SCHOOLS?**

State government has neither the funds nor the bonding capacity to pay for all of the school construction and repair projects needed in California. Even when California voters approve a statewide school bond, it is unclear how much, when, or even if a local school district will receive funds to improve schools in their area. What’s more, often times school districts must first pass a local school bond before they can receive matching funds from the state.

Local school construction bonds give voters the power to build and repair schools and classrooms when and where they’re needed. By imposing a tough 55% super-majority vote, holding administrators accountable for school bond spending, and cutting waste and mismanagement, Prop 39 benefits many communities that desperately need to build schools and repair classrooms because of overcrowding and exploding student growth.