

Western Center's 2020 Proposition Guide

Californians are voting on important propositions on the 2020 California ballot right now. We know it's confusing, so below you'll find our guide to the propositions. All of our work, and how we see these propositions, centers around creating greater economic and racial justice, especially for people in California oppressed by poverty.

For more information to help navigate the propositions, we highly recommend the [CalMatters proposition guide](#). If you prefer video, they have [one-minute video explanations](#) of each.

SHORTCUT

PROP 14 – No position
PROP 15 – YES
PROP 16 – YES
PROP 17 – YES
PROP 18 – YES
PROP 19 – No position
PROP 20 – NO
PROP 21 – YES
PROP 22 – NO
PROP 23 – No position
PROP 24 – NO
PROP 25 – YES

PROPOSITION BREAKDOWN

PROPOSITION 14: [\\$5.5 Billion Stem Cell Research Bond](#)

Western Center Position: No Position

PROPOSITION 15: [Schools and Communities First](#)

Prop 15 is widely referred to as the property tax split roll. In 1978, voters approved Prop 13 which limited property taxes on all property owners, both commercial and residential, by capping taxes at 1.1 percent of the value of the property at the time it was purchased. While Prop 13 is often viewed as untouchable politically, in truth it is a major source of wealth inequality and a prime example of structural racism, because it keeps taxes permanently low for those who are long time property owners (overwhelmingly white), but imposes a higher tax on those who bought property more recently (increasingly people of color). Prop 15 would not fix all the problems created by Prop 13 but it would fix one, by setting commercial property taxes based on the current value of the property, not the original sale price. This would increase property taxes by \$6.5 billion to \$11.5 billion annually. 60 percent of this would go to cities, counties, and special districts and 40 percent would go to schools.

Western Center Position: YES

Prop 15 would take the first step toward restoring fairness to California's property tax system. It would provide significant revenue which can be used for affordable housing, eliminating homelessness, and providing public benefits. It would increase funding for K-14 schools. It would make it easier for new business to compete with established businesses by making all businesses pay taxes based on market rates.

PROPOSITION 16: [Repeal Ban on Affirmative Action](#)

This measure would reverse a 1996 initiative approved by California voters to ban the use of affirmative action in all forms of state and local government. Affirmative action is the practice of establishing certain criteria that allows consideration of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public education, public employment, and public contracting. The goal of affirmative action is to ensure that all people, regardless of their background, have a meaningful opportunity to benefit from government programs. In practice, affirmative action is intended to level the playing field and reduce the effects of explicit and implicit bias.

Western Center Position: YES

Western Center supported the bill when it was under consideration in the Legislature because it is consistent with our long standing principles of ensuring that California is an inclusive and equitable state. California, like the rest of the United States, was formed on a foundation of explicit white supremacy and patriarchy in law and society, which means active policies are required to obtain balance. The more that all segments of our community have the opportunity to receive the benefits of government, the less likely it is that bias will continue to be prevalent.

Western Center staff attorney Helen Tran explains more [in this blog post](#).

PROPOSITION 17: [Right to Vote for People Who Were Formerly Incarcerated](#)

This measure would allow Californians with a prior felony criminal conviction to be able to vote in California. Currently, a person convicted of a felony cannot vote while incarcerated or on parole. If a formerly incarcerated person on parole registers to vote or votes, that can be grounds to revoke their parole and return them to prison, even if they are otherwise abiding by all other terms of their parole. The current law acts as an additional punishment on the formerly incarcerated after they have served their time and deprives them of a fundamental right of all citizens.

Western Center Position: YES

Western Center supported this bill when it went through the Legislature because current law disenfranchises people from exercising the fundamental right to vote. As we know from our work, the history of racism in our country has led to over-policing of communities of color. Thus, this law disproportionately impacts Black and Brown communities and dilutes their voting power.

PROPOSITION 18: [Right to register to vote at age 17](#)

As it currently stands, a person can register to vote in California if they're a U.S. citizen at least 18 years old and a resident of the state. Registered voters can also run for elective office as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements. A person can pre-register to vote when they are either 16 or 17 years old. When a person pre-registers, they are automatically registered to vote when they turn 18. If passed, Prop 18 would allow eligible 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the next November general election to vote. Those 17-year-olds could vote in any special election or primary election before the next general election. The measure also means that 17-year-olds who turn 18 by the next general election could run for office if they meet all other eligibility requirements.

Western Center Position: YES

People decide who will be on the November ballot in primaries earlier in the year. People old enough to vote in November should have the opportunity to make that initial choice for the November ballot in the primaries, even if they're still 17. There are also [studies that show](#) that pro-voting initiatives like this encourage greater voter participation among young people, which is crucial for engaging younger generations into the political process.

PROPOSITION 19: [Change in Property Tax Rule](#)

This initiative makes changes to property taxes when people move or inherit property. Currently, persons over age 55 and those living with disabilities can move to another home and not see their taxes go up if the new property is equal to or less than the house they moved from. This initiative would expand the ability of older and disabled property owners to move and not pay higher taxes. It limits the ability of people to inherit property unless an inheriting family member lives at the property or if the property is worth more than \$1 million more than the assessed value of the house. Overall, the measure would result in increased revenue of tens of millions annually. This revenue would go to fire protection and schools.

Western Center Position: No Position

While this measure would result in some increased revenue it would not provide meaningful resources for health, welfare and housing programs. Proponents have asked Western Center to support but most major progressive groups are not supporting the measure.

PROPOSITION 20: [Restores Crimes and Limits Early Release](#)

This initiative proposes to repeal portions of criminal reform initiatives passed by voters (Prop 47 in 2014 and Prop 57 in 2016). If approved, Prop 20 would reinstate certain theft crimes as felonies instead of misdemeanors, and make it harder for people convicted of felonies to be approved for parole. It also expands collection of DNA samples from people charged with crimes, and from youth.

Western Center Position: NO

This measure would disproportionately and negatively impact people of color and low income Californians. In a time when large segments of the population are seeking a reduced criminal justice footprint, this initiative is moving in the opposite direction. Increasing the number of people with felony convictions will harm individuals, communities, and ultimately, our entire society, by making reentry into community much harder. It's harder to get a job and find a place to live with a felony conviction, and as it stands now and unless Prop 17 passes, people with felony convictions who are in prison or on parole can't vote. This initiative will needlessly place more people into these oppressive circumstances, exacerbating California's existing income and racial inequality and its housing/homelessness crises, which means greater instability for our state.

PROPOSITION 21: [Reduce State Limits on Local Rent Control](#)

This measure proposes to make several changes to a state law known as the Costa-Hawkins Act. That law strictly limits how local governments can control the cost of rental housing. It bars rent control on most single family homes, bars rent control on units built after 1995, and allows landlords to increase rent on a unit whenever a tenant moves out. Western Center was a major opponent of this law when

it was proposed and has remained so for the past 25 years. Prop 21 proposes to modify the Costa Hawkins Act by allowing rent control on units that are older than 15 years, including some single family homes, and it allows local governments to restrict rent increases on units when a tenant moves out.

Western Center Position: YES

A similar measure was on the 2018 ballot but failed. Since then there has been a spike in rent across California and significant increases in homelessness. With COVID-19 causing many tenants to be unable to pay the high cost of rent in California, it is necessary to pass meaningful limits on rental housing costs.

PROPOSITION 22: [Repeals Worker Protections for App-based Rideshare Workers](#)

This measure proposes to repeal a portion of [AB 5](#) that was passed by the Legislature last year to require that companies employing so called “independent contractors” instead classify workers as employees. Doing so means the companies must provide basic worker protections like unemployment insurance, workers’ compensation, health coverage, minimum wage, sick pay, overtime and social security. Large internet based corporations like Lyft, Uber, and Door Dash are proposing to eliminate these protections provided in AB 5. Western Center supported the bill because many drivers for these companies are not receiving a fair wage or minimum worker protections. When they are unable to drive, they are often left with nothing because as independent contractors, their employers are not required to pay into these systems. As a result, they often end up on public assistance and in crisis, meanwhile the companies experience record profit. Prop 22 would allow workers to remain independent contractors, and proposes that in lieu of traditional employee benefits, rideshare workers receive a menu of watered down worker protections.

Western Center Position: NO

Income inequality is quickly becoming one of the most important issues of our time. The average pay of corporate CEOs is now 321 times more than the typical worker they employ. The use of independent contractors is accelerating this trend by allowing companies to keep money normally used to provide basic employment services for themselves. App based companies are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to pass Prop 22, which is money they could be spending on basic worker protections, since workers make the companies possible.

PROPOSITION 23: [Kidney Dialysis Requirements](#)

Western Center Position: No Position

PROPOSITION 24: [Use of Personal Data by Private Business](#)

This measure makes a host of changes to California law regarding how personal information collected by corporations and data firms can be used and shared. This bill overrides elements of a 2018 “landmark” privacy law that limited the use of data sharing. Significantly, Prop 24 allows data collectors to use “neighborhood scores” in determining a person’s credit worthiness, which means a person’s credit could be lower because of the community they live in. Prop 24 reduces the number of companies subject to the law. It takes regulation for privacy breaches away from the state Attorney General and shifts it to a newly created state agency with capped funding. It also limits the ability of

the Legislature to decide how penalties collected by the state can be used by earmarking most penalty funds away from the General Fund.

Western Center Position: NO

A host of consumer organizations are opposing this measure and they have asked Western Center to join them in opposing. Some background context: a wealthy developer named Alastair Mctagart pulled a privacy initiative off the ballot in 2018 after the Legislature passed a privacy bill; he then submitted a new initiative that both strengthens and weakens the existing law. Western Center supports strong consumer protections and believes the legislative process, not the proposition process, is the appropriate forum for making changes to the law.

PROPOSITION 25: [Repeal State Law Eliminating Money Bail](#)

Prop 25 is a referendum to overturn a bill, [SB 10](#), which was passed in 2018 by the Legislature to eliminate the use of the money bail system in California. Under the money bail system, judges allow people to be released from jail before trial if they pay a bond to secure their appearance at trial. Many people can't afford bond and turn to bail bonds agencies to pay; people are then required to pay the agency 10 percent of the bond amount. That amount is non-refundable even if the person is acquitted or the charges are dropped. Data shows that the money bail system benefits those with wealth who can afford their own bail, while people with fewer resources often languish in jail for lengthy periods of time. In 2018 the Legislature passed SB 10 to eliminate this system and replace it with a system of release based on a "risk assessment" tool. Under this bill, the financial resources of the accused are not a factor in their release. Western Center was a co-sponsor of SB 10.

Western Center Position: YES

To support the bill that was passed to eliminate money bail, a person must vote "Yes." The referendum is essentially asking you to consider this as if you were a legislator deciding to support the bill. Western Center co-sponsored SB 10, and now urges a "Yes" vote for Prop 25. We understand the very real concerns about replacing money bail with the "risk assessment" algorithm system, as there is noted bias in that system. However, we feel it's likely that this is the only real opportunity to eliminate money bail in California, which disproportionately harms communities of color. If Prop 25 passes, it will be easier to address imperfections in the algorithm system than it will be to get the Legislature to take up ending money bail again.

Western Center policy advocate Jessica Bartholow explains more [in this blog post](#).