



California Ballot Measures

November 3, 2026

This study guide covers all fourteen ballot propositions: the law as it stands, what each measure would change, the strongest case on each side, the principles of Catholic social teaching that apply, and questions to weigh—with no recommendation on any measure.

14 MEASURES COMPILED AUG 3, 2026

A NOTE ON THIS DOCUMENT

The Bishops of California are not endorsing or opposing any measure on the 2026 California ballot, and nothing here should be interpreted as such. This resource exists solely to help Catholics form their conscience for faithful citizenship.

Every measure on this ballot calls for prudential judgment — a decision about whether a particular law will actually accomplish the good it promises. On questions like these, the Church forms consciences rather than issuing verdicts, and Catholics of equal good faith and equal fidelity can reach opposite conclusions.

HOW EACH MEASURE IS LAID OUT

Every entry contains the same six parts. “What the measure would do” states the change itself, first, so the question on the ballot is plain. “Where things stand now” then gives the existing law, because most of these measures alter something already on the books and the change is sometimes hard to judge without that context. “The case for” and “the case against” present each side’s argument in its own terms, not a rebuttal of it.

The Catholic Social Teaching lens then sets out where the measure resonates with the tradition and where it sits in tension with it, followed by a note on who has lined up on each side — which on several measures cuts against the obvious partisan read. Each entry closes with questions voters can consider as they weigh their choice. Most of those questions are empirical rather than doctrinal, which is deliberate: the disagreement among people of good faith is rarely about whether housing or health care or honest elections are goods, but about whether this particular instrument delivers them.

In-person voters can print this reference guide and take it with them to polling stations.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL DOCTRINE PRINCIPLES, THEMES, AND APPLICATIONS

NINE THREADS USED THROUGHOUT THIS DOCUMENT

HUMAN DIGNITY	Every person has inviolable worth because human life is a gift from God. This dignity is the foundation of all the other principles. <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> 27 · CCC 1929
COMMON GOOD	Society should be organized so that individuals, families, and communities can flourish—not merely so that private interests are protected. <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> 26 · Compendium 164–170
SUBSIDIARITY	Decisions should be made at the most immediate level capable of addressing them. Larger institutions should assist smaller communities rather than unnecessarily taking over their responsibilities. <i>Quadragesimo Anno</i> 79 · <i>Centesimus Annus</i> 48

SOLIDARITY	A firm commitment to the good of all, because we are genuinely responsible for one another. <i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> 38
OPTION FOR THE POOR	Social decisions should give particular attention to people who are poor, vulnerable, or excluded. Policy is assessed first by its effect on those with the least power to absorb its costs. <i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> 42 · <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> 186–201
GOODS AND PROPERTY	Private property is a real right, held under a social obligation: the earth’s goods are destined for all. <i>Rerum Novarum</i> · <i>Populorum Progressio</i> 22–23 · CCC 2402–2406
PARTICIPATION	People have a right and responsibility to contribute to the cultural, economic, and political life of society. CCC 1913–1917 · <i>Compendium</i> 189–191
CARE FOR CREATION	Human beings are stewards of creation and must use its goods responsibly. Environmental and social questions are one question; assessment of projects must be honest, transparent and include those affected. <i>Laudato Si’</i> 139, 183
PRUDENCE AND STEWARDSHIP	Prudence is the virtue that helps us discern the true good in concrete circumstances and choose the right means to achieve it. Good intentions do not substitute for workable means; obligations to future generations bind present decisions. CCC 1806 · <i>Laudato Si’</i> 159

PROPOSITIONS AT A GLANCE

PROP

1	Borrows \$11.25 billion for affordable housing and veteran home loans
2	Doubles the rainy-day fund cap, from 10% to 20% of general fund tax revenue
3	Makes the 2012 high-earner income tax permanent rather than expiring in 2031
4	Allows public financing of state and local campaigns
5	Ends the simultaneous successor election in a state recall
37	Authorizes \$25 billion in bonds for middle-income second mortgages
38	Borrows \$8.4 billion for immunology and immunotherapy research
39	Requires voter ID and citizenship verification
40	Imposes a one-time 5% wealth tax on California billionaires
41	Requires audits of new special taxes; ties them to the spending limit
42	Bans new state personal property taxes and most retroactive taxes
43	Requires two-thirds approval for citizen-initiated local special taxes
44	Requires health centers to spend 90% of revenue on patient care
45	Sets deadlines on CEQA reviews and lawsuits for essential projects

Read 40, 41 and 42 together

Proposition 40 is the billionaire wealth tax that has received much attention. Propositions 41 and 42 were placed on the ballot by opponents of that tax and are drafted to blunt or cancel it. If Prop 40 and either counter-measure both pass, courts could find them in conflict, and the measure with more yes votes prevails — meaning Prop 40 could win a majority and technically pass and still be voided.

Yes on 40 with no on 41 and 42 is the combination that fully enacts the wealth tax; no on 40 with yes on 41 and 42 is the combination that fully nullifies it. The moral question in this cluster is not only what each measure does on its own but whether a voter regards this kind of pre-emptive counter-drafting as a healthy exercise of direct democracy — a question of participation and of honest public deliberation as much as of tax policy.

THE MEASURES, IN BALLOT ORDER

Proposition 1 | Affordable Housing and Veterans Bond

The Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026 (Limón)

Legislature · SB 417

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Authorizes \$11.25 billion in borrowing: \$10 billion in general obligation bonds for affordable housing and \$1.25 billion in revenue bonds for CalVet home loans. Taxpayers repay the housing bonds with interest; veterans repay the CalVet portion through mortgage payments.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

California has no permanent funding source for affordable-housing construction. Projects often depend on layered federal, state, and local subsidies and periodic voter-approved bonds. General obligation debt competes with other General Fund priorities for decades; revenue bonds rely on a dedicated repayment stream.

SUPPORTERS

- Gov. Gavin Newsom; Democratic lawmakers; apartment and labor groups

OPPONENTS

- Republican state lawmakers

THE CASE FOR

Housing costs drive hardship, and market rents cannot finance homes affordable to the poorest households. Without state subsidies, many projects do not proceed. Supporters also emphasize that the veteran's program is self-financing and extends a century-old route to homeownership.

THE CASE AGAINST

A bond is a temporary infusion for a permanent problem and commits future budgets to interest. High per-unit costs could produce relatively few homes, while zoning, permitting, litigation and labor constraints may be the real bottlenecks. More subsidy in a supply-constrained market can also raise prices.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Housing as a human good · option for the poor · solidarity · stewardship of debt

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Appropriate housing supports human dignity and family life. Directing capital toward low-income households and veterans gives solidarity and the option for the poor concrete form. (Laudato Si' 152).

POINTS OF TENSION

Prudence asks whether the instrument works. Interest burdens future taxpayers, and an expensive bond that yields few homes could fail the poor while appearing to serve them. (Laudato Si' 159).

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Who actually receives the housing, especially among the lowest-income and unhoused?
2. How many homes will \$10 billion produce, and what is the Legislative Analysts Office's total repayment estimate?
3. Should the self-funding veterans' loans be judged separately from the taxpayer-repaid housing debt?

Proposition 2 Rainy Day Fund Expansion

Save for California's Future Act (Gabriel)
Legislature · ACA 20

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 2 would change California's rules for saving state revenue by doubling the maximum size of the rainy-day fund from 10% to 20% of annual tax revenue and requiring the state to save more during strong economic years. It would also stop counting deposits into the fund as spending under the state's constitutional spending limit. Supporters say this would help California prepare for future budget downturns, while critics note that it could leave less money available for current programs, schools, or taxpayer rebates.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

California's volatile revenue rises sharply with capital gains and falls in downturns. The Budget Stabilization Account, strengthened by voters in 2014, is capped at 10% of General Fund tax revenue. Under current rules, deposits count as spending and can trigger required taxpayer rebates and school payments.

SUPPORTERS

- Gov. Gavin Newsom; legislative Democrats

OPPONENTS

- Legislative Republicans

THE CASE FOR

Recessions increase need just as revenue collapses, putting services for low-income Californians at risk. A larger reserve can soften those cuts. Supporters call the current treatment of deposits a drafting flaw that penalizes saving. Prop. 2 also would expand the types of state debt that could be repaid with General Fund revenues that must be set aside each year.

THE CASE AGAINST

Money saved is unavailable for housing, care and food assistance needed now. Excluding deposits from the spending-limit calculation also narrows taxpayers' and schools' claim on surplus revenue. Critics argue California should restrain boom-year commitments rather than build a larger cushion for a volatile tax structure.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Prudence · intergenerational solidarity · universal destination of goods

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Reserves can be anticipatory solidarity: provision made in prosperous years for people most vulnerable during a downturn. Repaying existing debt also avoids shifting costs forward (CCC 1806).

POINTS OF TENSION

Accumulation is not an end in itself. Holding more money while present needs go unmet raises questions about timing and the universal destination of goods (CCC 2402-2404).

FISCAL IMPACT:

State budget reserves would be higher.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Which programs are cut first in recessions, and who depends on them?
2. When does prudent saving become withholding resources from urgent present needs?
3. Is reducing rebates and school payments a fair trade for a larger reserve?

Proposition 3 | Make the High-Earner Tax Permanent

Provides Permanent Funding for Schools and Healthcare by Extending Existing Tax on High Incomes
Initiative · Const. amendment

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 3 would make permanent California's higher income-tax rates on income earned above certain thresholds by high-income taxpayers. The rates, first approved in 2012 and currently scheduled to expire in 2031, generate an estimated \$5 billion to \$15 billion annually for education, with 89% going to K–12 schools and 11% to community colleges. Supporters say permanent funding would help schools plan for the future, while critics argue the tax was intended to be temporary and relies on a volatile revenue source.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

The higher rate applies only to income above inflation-adjusted thresholds, not to a taxpayer's full income. The tax generates an estimated \$5–\$15 billion annually, but collections fluctuate with capital gains. California already has the nation's highest top marginal state income-tax rate.

SUPPORTERS

- California's major teacher and school employee unions

OPPONENTS

- California Taxpayers Association

THE CASE FOR

Schools cannot make long-term staffing and program decisions around revenue scheduled to disappear. Supporters say voters have approved the tax twice, predicted flight of high earners has not occurred at the forecast scale, and expiration would create a multi-billion-dollar hole in education funding.

THE CASE AGAINST

A levy sold as temporary should not become permanent through repeated extensions. Permanence may weaken competitiveness and locks tax policy into the constitution. Because high-earner income is volatile, relying more heavily on it may make school funding less stable rather than more.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Education · taxation according to capacity · subsidiarity · prudence

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Catholic teaching recognizes taxation as a moral duty and supports burdens proportioned to capacity. Education especially serves children whose families lack alternatives, while local control reflects subsidiarity (CCC 2240; Mater et Magistra 132).

POINTS OF TENSION

If volatile revenue produces cuts in every downturn, the means may fail the students it names. Constitutional permanence also limits future communities' ability to respond to changed circumstances.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Maintains \$5 billion to \$15 billion of annual state income tax revenue by making a temporary tax increase on high-income earners permanent instead of letting it expire in 2031.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Has the revenue improved outcomes for students most in need?
2. Does reliance on high earners stabilize schools or expose them to market swings?
3. Is making the tax permanent different from placing it beyond ordinary legislation?

Proposition 4 | Public Financing of Campaigns

California Fair Elections Act of 2026 (Umberg)
Legislature · SB 42

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 4 would repeal California's constitutional ban on public funding for election campaigns, allowing state and local governments to create voluntary public campaign-financing programs. The measure would not create or fund a statewide program; any program would require separate approval and rules. Supporters say public financing could broaden participation and reduce candidates' reliance on private donors, while critics argue taxpayer money should not fund political campaigns.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

Voters banned public campaign funding in 1988. Courts later exempted charter cities, allowing places such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland and Sacramento to use matching funds or vouchers. The state, counties, districts, and general-law cities still cannot do so.

SUPPORTERS

- Common Cause; Clean Money Campaign; League of Women Voters; ACLU California Action

OPPONENTS

- California Taxpayers Association

THE CASE FOR

Campaign costs favor candidates with wealth or access to major donors. Public financing may let teachers, nurses and small-business owners compete, broaden representation and let candidates spend more time with constituents. This measure merely restores the option to state and local voters.

THE CASE AGAINST

Taxpayers could be required to fund candidates whose positions violate their convictions. Independent expenditures cannot be capped, so public money may supplement rather than displace private influence. Critics also argue scarce public funds belong in services, not political campaigns.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Participation · money in public life · subsidiarity · conscience and public funds

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Participation is a matter of justice, and money should serve rather than govern. Lowering financial barriers may broaden who can seek office; local choice also respects subsidiarity (Compendium 189-191; Evangelii Gaudium 57-58).

POINTS OF TENSION

Compelled support for objectionable political speech raises a genuine conscience concern. Prudence also asks whether public financing changes influence while independent spending continues untouched.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Ongoing costs to the state of a few hundred thousand dollars each year for the Fair Political Practices Commission to answer questions from state and local governments about public campaign finance programs.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Would public financing materially broaden who can run and win?
2. Does it reduce concentrated influence or merely add money beside independent spending?
3. How should taxpayers weigh compelled support for candidates they believe advance injustice?

Proposition 5 | Recall Election Overhaul

Elections: recall of state officers (Newman)
Legislature · SCA 1

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 5 would eliminate the replacement-candidate vote currently held at the same time as a recall election for a state officer. If an officer were recalled, the vacancy would instead be filled through existing succession or appointment procedures; local recalls would not change. Supporters say this would prevent someone from taking office with only a small share of the vote, while critics argue that it would weaken the recall process by removing voters' ability to choose an immediate replacement.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

State recall ballots currently ask whether to remove the officer and which candidate should replace that person. A replacement wins by majority in what can be a large field, while the incumbent cannot appear.

SUPPORTERS

- League of Women Voters; Common Cause; Secretary of State Shirley Weber

OPPONENTS

- Election Integrity Project California

THE CASE FOR

Removal should be judged on its merits, not bundled with a crowded successor contest. Filling the vacancy through appointment or a later election avoids installing a candidate with a small plurality and keeps recall from becoming a shortcut for someone unable to win a regular election.

THE CASE AGAINST

A recall is a direct check citizens hold on government. If removal no longer produces a voter-chosen successor, the tool becomes weaker. Vacancies or appointments can disrupt public administration and may return the choice to the same political establishment voters rejected.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Participation · authority ordered to the common good · accountability

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Legitimate authority should reflect the community's will and serve the common good. A successor supported by a small plurality may fail that test (CCC 1901-1902).

POINTS OF TENSION

Citizens also need meaningful tools to hold power accountable. A weaker recall or a prolonged vacancy can deprive the public of both accountability and effective government.

FISCAL IMPACT

Net fiscal effect unknown. In the event of a recall, savings or costs of millions of dollars to administer the election depending on the office recalled.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Is a small-majority successor more representative than a successor or appointment?
2. Who fills the vacancy, for how long, and who is harmed by delay?
3. Does the change improve majority rule or blunt a citizen check on power?

Proposition 37 | \$25 Billion Homebuying Loan Program

Creates Loan Program for Middle-Income Buyers of Qualified New Homes
Initiative · Statute

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 37 would authorize up to \$25 billion in revenue bonds to provide qualifying middle-income buyers with fixed-rate second mortgages covering up to 17% of the purchase price of a newly built home. Borrowers may earn up to 200% of area median income, buy homes up to \$1.5 million, and put down at least 3%. Borrowers would repay the loans rather than the state's General Fund. Eligibility only for newly built homes is intended to stimulate construction. Supporters say the program would expand homeownership and encourage construction, while critics argue that it could increase home prices, benefit relatively high-income households and expose the program to losses if borrowers' default.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

California down-payment assistance programs have repeatedly exhausted limited funds within days. Here, second mortgages would help cover the purchase-price gap and would be repaid by borrowers rather than directly from the General Fund. Eligibility only for newly built homes is intended to stimulate construction.

SUPPORTERS

- Bob Hertzberg; Building a Better California; Realtors; carpenters' unions

OPPONENTS

No organized campaign identified as of early August 2026

THE CASE FOR

Homeownership builds family stability and wealth but is increasingly inaccessible even to teachers, nurses and tradespeople. A 17% second mortgage helps households that can manage payments but lack a down payment. Limiting aid to new homes may spur construction and skilled work.

THE CASE AGAINST

Households earning twice area median income and buying near \$1.5 million are not the poorest. If supply remains constrained, buyer subsidies may raise prices and benefit sellers. A \$25 billion portfolio of second mortgages to buyers with minimal equity also creates downturn and default risk.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Family formation · widely shared ownership · dignity of work · option for the poor

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Catholic teaching favors broadly distributed ownership as a support for family independence and dignity and recognizes the value of skilled work created through homebuilding.

POINTS OF TENSION

The option for the poor asks who benefits first. Subsidizing relatively high-income buyers may bypass those in greatest need, raise prices and expose the public to poorly understood risk.

FISCAL IMPACT

No direct state or local costs.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Are households at twice area median income the families most in need of housing help?
2. Will support for buyers create homes or bid up prices when supply is limited?
3. If defaults rise, does the risk remain with borrowers or reach taxpayers?

Proposition 38 | Immunology Research Bond

Authorizes Bonds for Immunology Research
Initiative · Statute

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 38 would authorize \$8.4 billion in general-obligation bonds for research involving the immune system, including at least \$4.2 billion for cancer, heart disease and Alzheimer’s research. Products resulting from the funding would generally have to be priced 20% below the national average. Supporters say the investment could produce medical breakthroughs and make treatments more affordable, while critics question the long-term debt, the decision to set research priorities through a ballot measure and the ethical standards governing certain research materials.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

California voters previously approved bond-funded stem-cell research in 2004 and 2020. This measure follows that model: taxpayers repay long-term debt while a specialized institute directs research funding. Immunology has yielded major therapies, but the field includes methods with different ethical implications.

SUPPORTERS

- Institute philanthropists; ALS Association; Alzheimer’s Association; Blood Cancer United

OPPONENTS

- Robert Kaplan, former NIH associate director

THE CASE FOR

Immunotherapy has transformed treatment for serious diseases, and California’s research capacity could advance discoveries amid uncertain federal funding. The below-market pricing rule responds to the injustice of taxpayers funding treatments they later cannot afford.

THE CASE AGAINST

Research priorities ordinarily shift through competitive peer review; a voter earmark can lock in today’s assumptions and favor an institute tied to the measure. The debt competes with present-day healthcare needs. The measure’s treatment of research involving embryonic or abortion-derived material requires separate scrutiny.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Healing as mercy · research ethics · access to medicine · stewardship

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Care of the sick and ethically sound medical research serve human dignity. Publicly supported discoveries should also be accessible to the poor rather than priced as luxuries (Compendium 166).

POINTS OF TENSION

Purpose cannot justify every method. Catholic teaching rejects research that destroys embryos or relies on illicitly obtained fetal material; voters should verify the measure’s restrictions first (Dignitas Personae 30-35).

FISCAL IMPACT

Increased state cost of \$500 million to \$600 million annually for about 20 years to repay the research bond, with some or all of the cost offset if the funded research generates revenue.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Does the text bar research using embryonic or abortion-derived material? Resolve this first.
2. Is long-term state debt preferable to competitive public and private research funding?
3. Will the pricing requirement make resulting treatments genuinely accessible?

Proposition 39 | Voter ID and citizenship verification

Establishes Additional Voter Identification and Citizenship Verification Requirements
Initiative · Const. amendment

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 39 would require voters to provide government-issued identification when voting in person and the last four digits of a government-issued identification number when voting by mail. It would also require election officials to verify registered voters’ citizenship and publicly report verification rates. Supporters say these requirements would strengthen election security and public confidence, while critics argue that they could prevent eligible voters from voting because of missing documents or errors.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

California generally verifies identity at registration, not at each vote, and mails ballots to all registered voters. Many states require voter ID in forms ranging from strict photo rules to alternatives such as signature matching.

SUPPORTERS

- Reform California; Californians for Voter ID; Rep. Ken Calvert

OPPONENTS

- League of Women Voters; ACLU California Action; California Donor Table
-

THE CASE FOR

Election integrity and public confidence are genuine common goods. Identification is routine in many other settings, and verification is a basic administrative responsibility. Public reporting would make the state's safeguards measurable.

THE CASE AGAINST

Noncitizen voting is rare, while eligible people without current ID are disproportionately elderly, unhoused, disabled or poor. Mail-ballot number mismatches could disenfranchise voters. Verification efforts may also deter naturalized citizens and mixed-status families through fear or faulty data.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Participation · common good · option for the poor · solidarity with migrants

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Honest elections and confidence in institutions serve the common good. Government may legitimately protect the franchise for those entitled to exercise it.

POINTS OF TENSION

Participation is a right of justice. Added requirements fall hardest on people with the fewest resources and may burden immigrant citizens through fear or administrative error (Fratelli Tutti 129).

FISCAL IMPACT

Costs of between tens of millions of dollars and low hundreds of millions of dollars each year to implement new voting requirements.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. How reliable is current voter administration and fraud detection?
2. How many eligible voters lack qualifying ID, and what happens when mail-ballot data do not match?
3. Can public confidence be strengthened without deterring eligible poor, elderly or immigrant voters?

Proposition 40 | Billionaire Wealth Tax

Imposes One-Time Tax on Certain Taxpayers
Initiative · Amendment & statute

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 40 would impose a one-time 5% tax on net worth above \$1 billion for people who were California residents on January 1, 2026. 90% of that revenue would primarily support Medi-Cal, with the remainder going to education, food assistance, and administrative costs. Supporters say the tax would ask the wealthiest Californians to contribute more toward essential services, while critics argue that valuing assets would be difficult and that people might relocate. Read with Props 41 and 42.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

Unlike income tax, a wealth tax reaches assets whether or not they produce current income. No state has enacted one, and privately held businesses, art and partnerships are difficult to value. The LAO projects tens of billions in temporary revenue, substantial administrative costs, and possible ongoing income-tax losses if billionaires leave or restructure.

SUPPORTERS

- SEIU-UHW; California Democratic Party; Bernie Sanders; Teamsters; AFSCME

OPPONENTS

- Gov. Newsom; technology billionaires; teachers, physicians and clinic groups

THE CASE FOR

A few hundred people hold vast, often unrealized gains while Medi-Cal, schools and nutrition programs face shortfalls. Supporters say a levy only above \$1 billion asks nothing that threatens anyone's livelihood. The past residency date is designed to prevent avoidance.

THE CASE AGAINST

Revenue may shrink through restructuring, departure and litigation, while administrative costs remain. Taxing based on a past residency date raises legality concerns. Several organizations serving the programs named for funding oppose the measure question whether the promised money will materialize or truly supplement existing funds.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Universal destination of goods · solidarity · health care · property · rule of law

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Great wealth carries obligations to the common good; taxation may reflect capacity to contribute. Funding health care, schools and food assistance directly serves the poor (CCC 2402-2406; Mater et Magistra 132).

POINTS OF TENSION

Property remains a real right, and remedies should not treat a class of people merely as a resource. Retroactive liability and uncertain collections raise justice and prudence concerns.

FISCAL IMPACT

Temporary revenue increase of tens of billions of dollars spread over several years from wealth tax on billionaires. Possible ongoing decrease of less than \$1 billion per year in income tax revenue from billionaires.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Will the tax produce durable net revenue after avoidance, litigation and administrative costs?
2. Is liability based on a past residency date consistent with fair notice and the rule of law?
3. Why do teacher, physician and clinic organizations oppose funding directed to their sectors?

Proposition 41 | Audits of New Special Taxes

Requires Audits of Programs Funded by New State Special Taxes; Prohibits New State Taxes Excluded From the Voter-Approved Spending Limit Initiative · Const. amendment

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Requires four-year effectiveness and savings audits of programs funded by state special taxes enacted after January 1, 2026, plus a pre-election audit of programs an initiative tax would fund. It also bars enforcement of new taxes whose revenue is excluded from the constitutional spending limit, potentially blocking Proposition 40.

Supporters say the measure would improve accountability and ensure that tax-funded programs fulfill their promises, while critics argue that its broader spending-limit provision could restrict future public services and is primarily intended to block Proposition 40

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

Special taxes are earmarked for stated purposes, but California does not systematically audit whether the funded programs deliver. The 1979 spending limit restricts annual growth and generally sends excess revenue to taxpayers and schools; ballot measures can exempt new revenue from that calculation.

SUPPORTERS

- Building a Better California; Reform California; California Chamber of Commerce

OPPONENTS

- Proposition 40 proponents, led by SEIU-UHW

THE CASE FOR

Earmarked taxes should be measured against the promises used to win approval. Recurring and pre-election audits give voters information about effectiveness and savings. Supporters call the spending-limit provision a safeguard against initiatives drafted to evade a voter-approved fiscal constraint.

THE CASE AGAINST

Opponents say the popular auditing language masks the measure's main purpose: nullifying Proposition 40. The spending-limit provision restricts future taxes and services in ways unrelated to audits, while a pre-election audit could burden citizen initiatives more than legislative tax proposals.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Stewardship · accountability · common good · honest deliberation

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Public money is held in trust, and waste harms those who most depend on effective programs. Auditing promises is a direct exercise of prudence and accountable authority.

POINTS OF TENSION

A title emphasizing audits may obscure the measure's broader effect. Drafting one proposition chiefly to defeat another raises a separate concern about candor and honest public deliberation.

FISCAL IMPACT

The net fiscal effect is unknown as it depends on future decisions by voters, the Legislature, and other policymakers.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Would the auditing requirements be sound as a stand-alone policy?
2. What does the spending-limit provision do beyond auditing, including to Prop 40?
3. Does the title fairly disclose the measure's most consequential effect?

Proposition 42 | Ban on Personal Property and Retroactive Taxes

Prohibits New State Personal Property Taxes and Certain Retroactive State Taxes
Initiative · Const. amendment

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 42 would prohibit new state taxes on financial assets or other personal property and would prohibit certain retroactive taxes. The measure could prevent Proposition 40 from taking effect. Supporters say it would protect property rights and ensure taxpayers receive fair notice, while critics argue it would primarily benefit the wealthiest asset holders. Both prohibitions reach taxes enacted or taking effect on or after January 1, 2026, including Proposition 40. Read with Props 40 and 41.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

Both the state and local governments tax the ownership of certain personal property. These taxes are based on the property's value. Personal property includes everything people own other than real estate. One example is the vehicle license fee that car and truck owners pay to the DMV each year. Many types of personal property are not taxed. One major example is financial assets like stocks and investment accounts. Local business-property taxes are unaffected.

SUPPORTERS

- Building a Better California; Reform California; building trades; Chamber of Commerce

OPPONENTS

- Proposition 40 proponents, led by SEIU-UHW

THE CASE FOR

Savings and retirement assets protect families against illness, unemployment and old age; taxing mere ownership can reach values higher than income tax alone. A permanent boundary provides certainty. The retroactivity ban also protects fair notice so people aren't penalized in the future for actions or assets they acquired in the past.

THE CASE AGAINST

Modest family savings face no such tax; the immediate beneficiaries are the largest wealth holders, and the measure is designed to defeat Prop 40. A permanent constitutional ban removes options from future voters and lawmakers, including during emergencies.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Property rights · rule of law · family security · common good

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Property and savings can support family freedom and stability. Protection from retroactive taxation reflects the justice principle that people should know the law governing their actions (Rerum Novarum; CCC 2401).

POINTS OF TENSION

Property carries a social obligation and is not absolute. A permanent ban chiefly benefiting the wealthiest may constrain future communities facing serious common needs (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis 42).

FISCAL IMPACT

Possibility that tax revenues will not go up as much in the future.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Who gains practical protection: ordinary savers or the largest holders of financial wealth?
2. Is the retroactivity principle sound to protect taxation on assets acquired prior to the law?
3. Should today's voters permanently remove this tax option from future communities?

Proposition 43 | Two-Thirds Vote for Local Special Taxes

Local taxes: limitation (Wicks)
Legislature · ACA 22

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 43 would require two-thirds voter approval for local special taxes proposed through citizen initiatives. Taxes proposed by local government officials already require two-thirds approval. Supporters say identical taxes should face the same approval standard and receive broad public support, while critics argue that allowing slightly more than one-third of voters to block a tax increase could make it harder for communities to fund services such as transit, fire protection, clinics and homelessness programs.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

Since 1978, local taxes earmarked for purposes such as fire protection or transit have generally required two-thirds approval. In 2017, the California Supreme Court held in Upland that the constitutional restriction on local government did not necessarily apply to citizen initiatives, allowing those measures to pass by simple majority.

SUPPORTERS

- Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

OPPONENTS

No formal campaign identified; many deal participants have taken no public position

THE CASE FOR

The Upland ruling lets an identical tax face a different threshold depending on who places it on the ballot. Restoring one standard respects the supermajority voters previously chose and requires broad consent for burdens that can fall heavily on households, especially taxes on necessities.

THE CASE AGAINST

A determined one-third could block attempts to increase revenue for services including clinics, transit, parks and homelessness response.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Subsidiarity · participation · local common good · protection of the vulnerable

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Subsidiarity supports local decision-making and safeguards families from burdens imposed without broad agreement. Regressive local taxes can weigh hardest on poor households.

POINTS OF TENSION

Subsidiarity also empowers communities to act. A one-third minority may block services on which vulnerable residents rely, while the measure singles out grassroots participation for a higher barrier.

FISCAL IMPACT

Possibility that local government tax revenues will not go up as much in the future due to a higher vote threshold for certain taxes.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. Which services are commonly funded by these taxes, and who relies on them?
2. Should citizen and local government initiatives be governed by the same voter threshold?
3. Why should citizen initiatives face a higher threshold than measures placed by officials?

Proposition 44 | Community Clinic Spending Requirements

Requires Community Health Clinics Spend 90% of Revenue on Program Services
Initiative · Statute

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Requires covered community clinics to spend at least 90% of annual revenue on direct patient care and other mission services for low-income and underserved patients. Clinics below the AG-calculated ratio would be fined; penalties would fund health-worker training and staffing.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

California has about 2,000 “safety net” clinics. Federally qualified health centers and ‘look-alikes’ meet federal standards for serving low-income communities, often as the only provider in a rural or poor urban area. They receive enhanced Medicaid reimbursement, and some receive federal grants. Fixed administrative costs vary greatly by clinic size and location.

SUPPORTERS

- SEIU United Healthcare Workers West

OPPONENTS

- CA Medical Association, Primary Care Association; CTA

THE CASE FOR

Clinics receive public support because they serve the poor and should demonstrate that resources reach patients rather than administration, reserves or executive pay. A published ratio creates accountability, while directing penalties to workforce training addresses a major barrier to access.

THE CASE AGAINST

Prop. 44 could punish small and rural clinics whose overhead is proportionally higher and where no other care is available. It may discourage investments in facilities and technology for clinics that serve mostly underprivileged patients, including many Catholic clinics and pregnancy centers. Fining a struggling clinic could threaten the only provider in a community. The measure was put on the ballot by a union, not a healthcare organization.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Care for the underserved · stewardship · dignity of workers · institutional autonomy

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Institutions serving the poor are accountable for whether their resources actually reach the poor, and stewardship binds nonprofits as much as governments (Compendium 166 · Laborem Exercens 19).

POINTS OF TENSION

Subsidiarity holds that a higher-order community should not interfere in the internal life of a lower-order community, depriving it of its proper functions. The option for the poor is measured by what happens to the poorest people affected (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis 42 · Evangelii Gaudium 199), and medical care is a matter of right, not charity (Pacem in Terris 11).

FISCAL IMPACT

Increased state costs in the low tens of millions of dollars per year, covered by fees.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. What do covered clinics currently spend on mission services, and how is the ratio defined?
2. Would a fixed threshold disproportionately strain small and rural clinics?
3. What happens to patients if a community's only clinic is fined or closes?

Proposition 45 | Faster Environmental Review for Certain Projects

Modifies Environmental Review for Certain Projects
Initiative · Statute

WHAT THE MEASURE WOULD DO

Proposition 45 would establish deadlines for environmental reviews and related lawsuits involving designated essential projects, including housing, water, clean energy, medical facilities, schools and transportation infrastructure. Environmental impact reports would generally have to be completed within 365 days, with court proceedings completed within 270 to 360 days. Supporters say predictable deadlines would reduce delays and costs, while critics argue that faster timelines could weaken environmental analysis and limit the ability of communities to participate or challenge harmful projects.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

CEQA requires agencies to study environmental effects and consider alternatives and mitigation for public and permitted private projects. Supporters credit CEQA with preventing harm and amplifying affected communities; critics say litigation can delay worthy projects for years.

SUPPORTERS

- Chamber of Commerce; builders; Building a Better California; PG&E; Edison

OPPONENTS

- Environmental coalition; State Building and Construction Trades Council

THE CASE FOR

Delay raises the cost of homes, clean energy, water systems and public facilities, with tenants, ratepayers and taxpayers ultimately absorbing the extra costs. The measure retains review but imposes predictable deadlines. Supporters argue a year for analysis and roughly a year for litigation is sufficient for projects California urgently needs.

THE CASE AGAINST

Compressed schedules may weaken analysis and limit recourse for communities near polluting projects. Well-resourced applicants can move faster than residents assembling expertise and counsel. Construction unions also fear losing CEQA-based leverage used to secure labor standards.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING LENS

Integral ecology · housing · participation · dignity of work

POINTS OF RESONANCE

Ecological and social needs are inseparable. Delayed housing, clean energy, water and health facilities impose real human costs (Laudato Si' 152).

POINTS OF TENSION

Environmental assessment should be transparent. Shortened judicial review may most weaken communities with the least power (Laudato Si' 183).

FISCAL IMPACT

Initial costs for state and local governments, likely in the high tens of millions of dollars—potentially exceeding \$100 million—annually, partly covered by fees. Uncertain, potentially more significant positive or negative longer-term fiscal effects.

QUESTIONS TO WEIGH

1. How much delay comes from review and litigation rather than financing, labor or local politics?
2. Does the benefit of a streamlined timeline to build homes and infrastructure outweigh potential environmental concerns?
3. Can deadlines accelerate essential projects while preserving genuine consultation and recourse?

A CLOSING NOTE ON PRUDENTIAL JUDGMENT

The Church distinguishes between acts that are always wrong regardless of circumstance and prudential judgments about how best to pursue a good end. None of these fourteen measures is directly about intrinsically evil acts, though Proposition 38 raises a genuine question about research methods that a conscientious voter should resolve from the measure's own text. The remaining thirteen are questions of means: whether a particular bond, tax, threshold or deadline will actually produce housing, care, honest elections or a livable environment.

That is why the questions under each measure are largely empirical. On nearly every measure here, the disagreement among people of good faith is not about whether housing, health care, or honest elections are good — it is about whether this instrument delivers them. Several of the coalitions bear this out: a teachers' union opposing a tax that would fund schools, a construction union opposing a measure that would speed construction, and clinics opposing a measure written to direct money toward patients. These are not signs of bad faith. They are signs that people close to the work disagree about what the work requires.

On such questions the bishops of the United States have long taught that Catholics may differ, and that the obligation is to form conscience seriously, examine the evidence, and then judge — not to await an answer.

Prepared as a neutral formation aid. It endorses no measure, opposes no measure, and represents no diocese, conference, or campaign. Supporter and opponent lists are not exhaustive and can change. Where a case is presented "for" or "against," arguments were created using supporter and opponent arguments and are not the view of the [California Catholic Conference](#). Fiscal impacts were calculated by the [Legislative Analyst's Office](#). Citations point readers to the sources. Readers are encouraged to consult the California Voter Guide and other resources for additional information.