



BRAIN TRUST LIVE'S

CALIFORNIA GENERAL ELECTION PROPOSITION CHEAT SHEET (NOV. 2016)

PROP	VOTE	WHY
51	NEUTRAL	The state of California has a lot of backlogged school infrastructure projects, and this bill would allow the state to issue bonds to pay for some of them. We like the idea of improving school facilities, and most of the education community is in favor, but a notable concern is that our state's resident responsible adult, Gov. Jerry Brown, is not. He says the prop is a good idea in theory but written by and for developers, making it "a blunderbuss effort that promotes sprawl and squanders money that would be far better spent in low-income communities." Out of respect for Brown's amazing use of the term "blunderbuss," we aren't confident in the yes vote advocated by some progressive orgs and are instead going to use this opportunity to remind voters that this kind of bill is exactly why the prop system is stupid. Is this our only chance to improve our education infrastructure? It shouldn't be.
52	YES	This is an extremely complicated and boring measure that has to do with the fees paid by California hospitals to the state so that we can get federal matching funds from Medicaid. A YES vote on 52 is a vote to continue a program that is already in place and, by extension, prevent the state legislature from diverting this money into the state's general fund (ie. non-healthcare uses). The major opposition to this prop was the SIEU-UHW, which would have been concerning, but they changed their position to "neutral" a while ago and now basically nobody is actually against it except one lone California Republican. It's cute that he's still trying, but there's a reason he's all alone on this one.
53	NO	This prop is the brainchild of a single California rich person, Dean Cortopassi, the owner of Stanislaus Food Products Company and evident stranger-hater. Since the measure has only one donor (him), it might not surprise you that it really only has a few beneficiaries (i.e. wealthy people like him). Cortopassi has a record of trying to stop necessary large-scale infrastructure projects that benefit all of us, and as the only donor to the pro-53 effort he's continuing his tradition of wasting time and money on preventing regular, non-wealthy Californians from having nice things. Prop 53 would have a litany of annoying consequences, chief among them that many necessary local infrastructure projects would require the approval of non-locals before getting state money, but most annoying is that measure contains no exemptions for natural disasters...in California...where we talk daily about what will happen when the "big one" strikes. Basically, if the entire city of Santa Monica is destroyed by a tsunami-plus-forest fire-plus-windstorm, this prop would require a state-wide vote before they can receive state money to repair the damage. Who has the time? Apparently only Cortopassi.

54	NO	<p>This bill, like Prop 53, has a sole rich-person funder, Charles T. Munger. Munger is an experimental physicist at Stanford (note: what?!) with a long history of opposing progressive issues and donating to non-worthy causes. (If you're wondering why he's rich, his father is the vice chairman of Warren Buffet's very own Berkshire Hathaway. MONEY!) Prop 54 is one of those measures that sounds good in theory, but would have annoying and counter-productive consequences in practice. 54's major provision is that it would require the state to post legislative material 72 hours ahead of any votes. This sounds good for sure, but a lot of non-Mungers believe that it will actually increase the prominence of moneyed special interests by giving lobbyists three days to engage in focused lobbying efforts while regular people are left out of the process. Others are concerned that it will prevent legislators from engaging in the kinds of behind-the-scenes negotiating that actually get deals done in politics. That's because this prop also eliminates a rule prohibiting the use of legislative proceedings in political ads. If 54 passes, out-of-context legislative proceedings will be fair game for a bunch of nonsense ads that will bother us throughout future election seasons. In confusing cases like these, it's generally a good idea to ask why a sole billionaire would bother spending their own money on changing the state constitution. The answer is rarely "for the good of all people."</p>
55	YES	<p>Back in 2012, California voted to levy a tax on the wealthy that would raise money for public education, and Prop 55 would extend that tax for another twelve years. This measure will put roughly \$11 billion into public schools, colleges, money we sorely need. A warning for all you rich/aspiring rich people, this prop will NOT raise your taxes, it will simply keep them as-is. Works for us.</p>
56	YES	<p>Currently the state of California taxes each pack of cigarettes at \$.87. This measure would raise that tax by \$2/pack and allocate the additional revenue to a litany of health causes and anti-tobacco efforts. The opposition to this measure is making the bizarre claim that the prop will rob schools of \$600 million a year, but nobody is sure on what grounds. They seem to be claiming that the revenue raised by Prop 56, in going to a specific list of causes, is not also going to a random list of other causes. It's like claiming that you won't support a targeted clean-air tax because it doesn't build rollercoasters. Who cares? Let's tax cigarettes \$100 million each. Let's tax them into oblivion. Let's make them too expensive for real people to buy. Let's get rid of cigarettes and pick up nervous ticks that don't impact the respiratory health of the people around us. Go team!</p>
57	YES	<p>One of the great tragedies of modern America is that we have only 5% of the world's population yet nearly 25% of the world's prisoners. There are many things that need to be addressed to fix this - overhauling of the prison industrial complex, a national discussion about our massive racial and class incarceration discrepancies - but though Prop 57 is far from that overhaul, it's a decent enough place to start. This measure allows people incarcerated for non-violent crimes to have easier parole process and shave time off their sentences in exchange for earning continuing education credits. In the case of the latter especially, experts say this would bring down the recidivism rate. Prop 57 also allows judges (not prosecutors) to decide whether young defendants are charged as minors or adults, giving us an opportunity to focus on rehabilitation within the juvenile system for teen offenders. And if you don't care about people, fine - this prop also saves the state a ton of money. 10% of our state budget is spent on the prison system and getting non-violent offenders out of the system earlier saves us all a bundle. (Note: If you didn't read carefully and are worried about this prop releasing prisoners into the streets to murder you and your family, don't panic. This bill keeps violent offenders behind bars.)</p>

58	YES	<p>Let's imagine for a moment that you and your family are forced to move to a foreign land after Donald Trump ruins America. Now imagine that foreign land refuses to teach your kids in any language other than the wacky one they speak because they decided decades ago that they didn't much like immigrants or their dumb languages. That's mean right? Your kid is also super screwed, huh? Well, that's currently what California is up to, and we have been since 1998 when we passed Prop 227 and required schools to teach in English only. We, of all states, should be ashamed given our large immigrant and even native non-English speaking populations. Prop 58 seeks to revise Proposition 227 so that we can make sure every student has the same access to a good education no matter what language they're raised with. This one should be an easy decision for all non-meanies – vote yes.</p>
59	YES	<p>If you're a listener of our podcast, reader of our blog, or a person who has ever met us in this lifetime, you know that we are 100% convinced that Citizens United is the root of literally every political evil facing America. It's why we can't have single payer healthcare, it's why we can't deal with gun control, it's why we can't pass prison reform, and it's why you need a gross wrinkled old sugar daddy (see: Sheldon Adelson) to be able to run for public office these days. And while we realize Prop 59 can't do anything specifically to deal with Citizens United, it does allow our voices to be heard. As the biggest state in the union, it's important that Californians make a bold statement and lead the way in getting money out of politics. Let's take the first step to making sure we never again have to know who and what idiots like "The Koch Brothers" are.</p>
60	NO	<p>Agreement between the major political parties? WHAT?!?! That's right, pretty much everyone thinks Prop 60 is garbage, and we're right there with them. Now, do we think that you, as people of the world, should be practicing safer sex? Yes! Do we think that porn purveyors should work tirelessly to ensure that their performers are protected from sexually transmitted diseases? Yes! Do we think that you at home should personally have the right to sue porn producers just for spotting a performer not wearing a condom and collect cash from them in court? WAIT, THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS THIS PROP DOES?!?! Yeah, Prop 60 is a little wacko, and we actually have some evidence that it's probably going to be unhelpful. Los Angeles passed a similar measure (Measure B) in 2012 and it may not shock you to learn that the entire industry basically left the city and went partially underground where there were fewer safety precautions in place for performers. There's no reason to think the same thing won't happen statewide if 60 is passed.</p>
61	YES	<p>Even Bernie Sanders has been campaigning for this prop so you can imagine how much we're on board! In this age of Pharma Bro (and Sis), it's time to start reigning in prescription drug spending. In California our public healthcare and government pension systems all negotiate separately with drug companies, a fractured approach that winds up costing taxpayers millions. In fact, in the last two decades, prescription drug spending has increased by over 500% - that's well beyond inflation and the needs of the industry. The Department of Veterans Affairs, meanwhile, pays the lowest drug prices of any government agency. This prop would require state government agencies to pay no more than what the VA does for drugs, fighting big pharma price-gouging with the fire of the largest medical and pension system in the nation. The opposition to this measure is well-moneyed and largely comprised of big pharma and the GOP officials that represent them, so unsurprisingly there's been some scare-mongering regarding the impact this will have on consumers. We think it's absolutely worth the (overdramatized, unverified) risk to begin reigning in drug costs and proving that sudden 500% increases in drug prices are not a real part of doing business.</p>

62	YES	<p>For God's sake, let's just get this one right this year. The death penalty is a cruel, inhumane, vindictive, unnecessary punishment that makes all of us complicit in the murder of other people. It's been abandoned by more than 139 nations, there's no evidence it works as a crime deterrent, it's disproportionately levied against people of color, it's irreversible even when new evidence comes to light, and for you greedsters out there, the court processes it requires cost taxpayers more than terms of life without parole do. Let's get rid of it once and for all!</p>
63	YES	<p>Californians want gun control and we're not sorry! Prop 63 requires people to obtain a permit before buying ammunition, a minor check that is widely supported by all thinking people and essentially the bare minimum we can do to reign in some of our crazier gun violence issues. This measure will also eliminate some loopholes surrounding the ownership of large-capacity magazines, regulate the transport of ammo from out-of-state, and prevent people who've been convicted of gun theft from continuing to possess firearms. Once again, the bare minimum we can do. Obviously, if you've listened to our podcast, you know that protecting the rights of gun owners is nowhere near the top of our list of priorities, but this law is pretty low-impact on the law-abiding gun toting masses so even you gun nuts out there can feel good about supporting it. If we can't count on the rest of America, let's at least live in a state where we don't have outrageous mass shootings all the time!</p>
64	YES	<p>I mean, duh. Opposition to this prop is largely harping on the same scare-monger facts that they've always relied on – that legal marijuana will turn you and your young children into car-crashing drug addicts fully in the grip of black market drug dealers. That outdated view is especially insane since the presence of government oversight is more likely to DECREASE the influence of shadowy melodramatic drug cartels and, most importantly, DRIVING WHILE UNDER THE INFLUENCE WILL REMAIN ILLEGAL, obvs. Some people have raised fair concerns – we should absolutely think about how, in the aftermath of passing this, we can protect small family marijuana growers in NorCal. We should also make sure we adequately regulate how pot sellers advertise to make sure they can't target children, much like we do for alcohol and cigarette companies. But, come on, let's not be idiots here. If the entire state is regularly smoking pot (it is), what is the value of keeping it illegal anyway?</p>
65	NO	<p>As is often the case in the crazy, crazy world of California voting, this year's ballot contains two sets of competing propositions. In each case only one prop can survive. For years private companies and industry lobbyists have used this "two props for one policy" strategy to confuse voters and Prop 65 is definitely the most insidious blatant distraction prop of November 2016. This measure mandates that money collected from the state-mandated sale of carryout bags (ie the \$.10 fee stores collect when you need a bag) be directed into a new fund, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund. Sounds good, right? The thing is, most environmental groups, as well as the state Democrats, aren't on board. They argue that the money in this environmental fund will wither out as people adjust to bringing bags to the store, so it wont make a meaningful contribution to saving the environment. The priority of the plastic bag ban is and always has been to reduce waste, and the competing Prop 67 allows stores to use this same money to comply with the law, speeding up the process. 65 is a corporate-sponsored distraction from the bottom line.</p>

66	NO	This is the second example of the "two props for one policy" scam, and frustratingly this one supersedes Prop 62, the prop that would ban the death penalty. Part of not screwing up outlawing the death penalty yet again is voting NO on this one, especially since it would actually speed up the death penalty appeals process (the one appeals process that we definitely shouldn't rush). Though both deal with changing the laws surrounding capital punishment, Prop 66 leaves the death penalty in place, and that's just not acceptable.
67	YES	Prop 67 is the bag prop we DO want. It allows businesses to use the profits generated by the mandated \$.10 bag fee to cover the costs of complying with the prop itself, providing recycled paper or reusable bags, and distributing educational materials encouraging customers to use reusable bags. The point of the bag ban is to cut down on the use of disposable bags as quickly as possible, and this prop offers our best chance at making this policy change count!