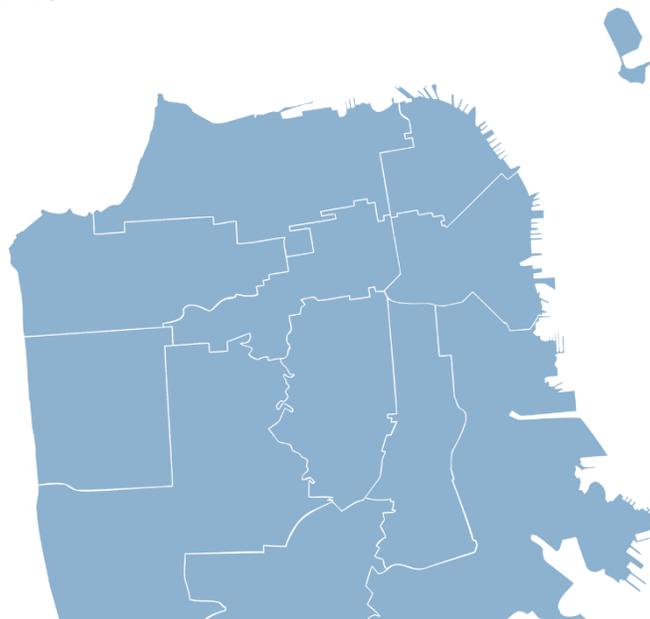




Pros & Cons Guide



Nonpartisan Information on Election Ballot Measures

Election Day is Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Polls are open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on Election Day

Early voting starts February 3

Register to vote by February 18

Request a vote-by-mail ballot by February 25



This guide was made by volunteers for the League of Women Voters of San Francisco, a nonpartisan political nonprofit. LWVSF provides education to help people participate in the democratic process and engages in advocacy to influence public policy that benefits the community.

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PROPOSITION A – City College Job Training, Repair and Earthquake Safety Measure

Bond measure placed on the ballot by the City College Board of Trustees. Needs the approval of at least 55% of voters to pass.

THE QUESTION:

Shall San Francisco Community College District be authorized to borrow up to \$845 million in bonds to make necessary earthquake safety improvements; make the College more environmentally sustainable through increased renewable energy use; and acquire, construct, and repair facilities, sites and equipment?

BACKGROUND:

City College, San Francisco's only community college, was established in 1935. Over 70 percent of its Ocean Campus buildings are rated in poor or very poor condition and need basic improvements, such as upgrading seismically unsafe buildings, improving access for the disabled, removing asbestos and mold, repairing leaky roofs and deteriorating plumbing. Classrooms and lab facilities need to be upgraded with modern technology to provide the needed skills for today's competitive job market; and improved security and emergency communication systems are needed to keep students safe.

THE PROPOSAL:

Proposition A would allow City College to borrow up to \$845 million by issuing bonds. The money raised would be used to repair, construct or acquire facilities; make earthquake safety improvements; and upgrade energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy.

If needed, Proposition A would allow an increase in property tax to pay for the bonds. The money raised would benefit the City College of San Francisco campus and could not be taken by the State. The money could not be used for administrator salaries or pensions. The measure requires the creation of an independent citizens' oversight committee and yearly audits to ensure all funds are used locally, effectively and as promised.

CONTROLLER'S STATEMENT:

See Page 32 of the following link:

https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Voting/2020/M20_VIP_EN.pdf

A "YES" Vote Means: If you vote "yes," you want to authorize City College to sell \$845 million in bonds for earthquake safety measures, repairs and upgrades to City College of San Francisco.

A "NO" Vote Means: If you vote "no," you do not want to authorize City College to sell these bonds.

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ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF PROP A:

- City College is a critical resource for thousands of residents. The State is not providing adequate funding for City College to maintain its education facilities and academic programs, so the City must step in to fill the funding gap.
- The measure will allow City College to integrate into the local community and ensure a safe healthy work and study environment by improving infrastructure, campus safety, repairing leaky roofs, and deteriorating gas, electrical and sewer lines.
- Some of the improvements will allow City College to generate more energy from renewable sources such as solar panels and use more water efficient fixtures so that City College is more environmentally sustainable.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PROP A:

- Adding another \$1.5 billion in debt to the current debt to be financed by property taxes is not fiscally responsible. It will lead to rising rents and higher costs for goods and services in San Francisco.
- In February 2017, tuition was waived for students at City College, even those who could afford to pay, adding to the need for other sources of revenue. The Board of Trustees should go back to the drawing board and come up with a revenue system that is equitable for everyone.
- All residents and businesses should pay their fair share, not just property owners.

pre-register at sixteen.
vote at eighteen.

www.registertovote.ca.gov



SECRETARY OF STATE ALEX PADILLA

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PROPOSITION B – San Francisco Earthquake Safety and Emergency Response Bond 2020

Bond measure placed on the ballot by the Board of Supervisors. Needs the approval of at least two-thirds of voters (66.66%) to pass.

THE QUESTION:

Shall the City issue up to \$628.5 million in general obligation bonds for improvements, including seismic upgrades, to facilities used for emergency response and recovery?

BACKGROUND:

The City owns and operates facilities for public safety and emergency response. These facilities include:

- The Emergency Firefighting Water System and Related Facilities, which provide a dedicated water supply system for fighting fires. The Emergency Firefighting Water System consists of three main components:
 - Core Facilities, which deliver water at high pressure to suppress multiple-alarm fires. The Core Facilities include Twin Peaks Reservoir, water tanks, and pump stations
 - Pipelines and tunnels throughout the City, which are used to carry water to approximately 1,600 fire hydrants
 - Cisterns, which are underground water storage tanks that store water for firefighting
- Fire and police stations and supporting facilities
- The 911 Call Center

A large earthquake could damage critical City and County of San Francisco facilities and infrastructure, which could compromise the capacity of first responders and other emergency workers in the event of an emergency. Some public safety buildings were upgraded with revenue from similar Earthquake Safety and Emergency Response bonds passed in 2010 and 2014, but many others have not yet been upgraded. The estimated cost of the proposed improvements is too great to be paid for out of the ordinary annual income and revenue of the City.

THE PROPOSAL:

Proposition B would authorize the City to borrow up to \$628.5 million by issuing general obligation bonds. If approved, the City would spend the money raised by these bonds on improvements, including seismic upgrades, to facilities used for emergency response and recovery. Projects funded by the bond proceeds could include the construction, acquisition, improvement and completion of:

- The Emergency Firefighting Water System
- Fire and police stations
- A firefighting training campus
- The 911 Call Center
- Other disaster response facilities

If needed, Proposition B would allow an increase in the property tax to pay for the bonds. City policy is to limit the amount of money it borrows by issuing new bonds only as prior bonds are paid off. Landlords would be permitted to pass through up to 50 percent of any resulting property tax increase to tenants.

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CONTROLLER'S STATEMENT:

See Page 36 of the following link:

https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Voting/2020/M20_VIP_EN.pdf

A “YES” Vote Means: If you vote “yes,” you want to authorize the City to issue \$628.5 million in general obligation bonds for the construction, acquisition, improvement and completion of the Emergency Firefighting Water System, fire and police stations, a firefighting training campus, the 911 Call Center and other disaster response facilities.

A “NO” Vote Means: If you vote “no,” you do not want the City to issue these bonds.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF PROP B:

- The City’s emergency response and recovery facilities need to be upgraded or replaced to help ensure the safety of first responders and citizens in the event of an emergency; postponing these necessary upgrades or replacements would only lead to higher costs over time.
- This measure creates 4,000+ construction and construction-related jobs.
- The bonds from the proposal would be overseen by citizens and subject to regular audits, which would reduce fraudulent or wasteful spending.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PROP B:

- The Earthquake Safety and Emergency Response Bond could increase property taxes, and increase the cost of living in San Francisco.
- This measure allows landlords to pass up to 50 percent of any resulting property tax increases to tenants, which could increase the cost of living for renters in San Francisco.
- The proposition does not specify how the money from the bond would be spent in each neighborhood. It is important that all neighborhoods be treated fairly.



Photo by Theresa Thompson, Creative Commons via Flickr

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PROPOSITION C – Retiree Health Care Benefits for Former Employees of the San Francisco Housing Authority

Charter amendment placed on the ballot by the Board of Supervisors. Needs the approval of a simple majority of voters (50%+1) to pass.

THE QUESTION:

Shall the City amend the Charter to give retiree health care coverage to City employees hired between March 7, 2019 and March 1, 2021 who previously worked for the San Francisco Housing Authority, based on their combined years of service to the San Francisco Housing Authority and the City?

BACKGROUND:

The San Francisco Housing Authority (Housing Authority) was established in 1938 as an independent agency to deliver housing assistance for low income individuals and households. The Housing Authority administers the Housing Choice Vouchers Program and Low Rent Public Housing Program. More than 12,000 San Franciscans benefit from these programs.

Federal funding for the Housing Authority has historically been provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In March, 2019 HUD directed the City to assume responsibility for the Housing Authority's essential functions. As part of the transition, the City started to hire people who were employed by the Housing Authority. As of November 15, 2019, the City had hired 24 of these employees and may hire more in the next two years.

The City Charter establishes a retiree health care trust fund that provides retiree health care benefits to employees of the City, the San Francisco Unified School District, the Superior Court of California, the County of San Francisco and the San Francisco Community College District. The City, retirees, and current City employees pay into this fund.

THE PROPOSAL:

Proposition C is a Charter Amendment which would extend retiree health care benefit eligibility to former Housing Authority employees who now work for the City by treating them as having begun City employment as of the date of their employment with the Housing Authority. These employees must also have been hired by the City between March 7, 2019 and before March 1, 2021, without a break in service between the Housing Authority and the City.

CONTROLLER'S STATEMENT:

See Page 42 of the following link:

https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Voting/2020/M20_VIP_EN.pdf

A "YES" Vote Means: If you vote "yes," you want to amend the Charter to establish retiree health care benefits for City employees who previously worked for the Housing Authority based on the number of years of employment with the City and the Housing Authority combined.

A "NO" Vote Means: If you vote "no," you do not want to make these changes.

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ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF PROP C:

- The measure would ensure that employees impacted by the Federal Government's requirements get fair treatment in determining their retiree health care benefits.
- The charter amendment would apply to a small fraction of public employees and have little impact on the cost of government.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PROP C:

- The impact on the cost of government cannot be predicted because the charter amendment would apply to an undetermined number of employees hired from the Housing Authority until March 1, 2021.
- The total cost could range widely depending on the employees' ages, years of service, length of continued employment, individual choices regarding medical plan enrollment, and decisions by the City regarding the hiring of affected employees.

PROPOSITION D – Vacancy Tax

Ordinance placed on the ballot by the Board of Supervisors. Needs the approval of at least two-thirds of voters (66.66%) to pass.

THE QUESTION:

Shall San Francisco impose a vacancy tax on landlords or tenants who keep ground-level retail or other commercial properties in some areas of the City vacant for a period of more than 182 days per calendar year?

BACKGROUND:

The City and County of San Francisco does not currently tax owners or tenants who keep commercial property vacant. City voters must approve increases in tax revenue spending limits.

THE PROPOSAL:

In some areas of the City, Proposition D would tax landlords or tenants, including the City of San Francisco, for keeping ground floor retail, or other commercial space, vacant for more than 182 days, consecutive or non- consecutive, in a calendar year. The ordinance amends the Business and Tax Regulations Code and Administrative Code and requires a two-thirds majority to pass. The tax would apply to ground level commercial spaces in the City's Named Neighborhood Commercial Districts (NCD) and Neighborhood Commercial Transit Districts (NCTD) and would impact the City's 30+ neighborhood commercial corridors, including Union Street, West Portal and Haight Street. A full list of those NCDs and NCTDs can be found at the San Francisco Planning Department's website. The tax would begin on January 1, 2021.

The fee schedule would be as follows:

- Spaces vacant in the 2021 tax year, \$250 per street-facing linear foot.
- Spaces vacant in the 2022 tax year:
 - \$500 per street-facing linear foot if that space was kept vacant both in 2022 and by any person in 2021; or
 - \$250 per street-facing linear foot if that space was kept vacant only in 2022
- Spaces vacant in the 2023 tax year and subsequent tax years:
 - \$1,000 per street-facing linear foot if that space was kept vacant in the tax year and by any person in both previous tax years;
 - \$500 per street-facing linear foot if the \$1,000 rate does not apply and if that space was kept vacant both in the tax year and by any person in the immediately preceding tax year;
 - \$250 per street-facing linear foot if that space was kept vacant only in the tax year

Certain nonprofits would be exempted from the tax, but the City of San Francisco would not.

Taxes collected would be used to create a Small Business Assistance Fund. Money in this Fund would be used to assist in the collection and administration of the vacancy tax by the Tax Collector and other City departments, and to assist small businesses in San Francisco.

The tax supplements a law that went into effect in 2019 requiring building owners to register vacant storefronts within 30 days of vacancy and pay a registration fee of \$711 annually. Failure to do so results in a penalty of \$2,844 (4 times the registration fee).

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CONTROLLER'S STATEMENT:

See Page 46 of the following link:

https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Voting/2020/M20_VIP_EN.pdf

A “YES” Vote Means: If you vote “yes,” you want to establish a vacancy tax on landlords and establish the Small Business Assistance Fund.

A “NO” Vote Means: If you vote “no,” you do not want to make these changes.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF PROP D:

- Long-term vacant storefronts take a toll on the prosperity and safety of communities. This tax discourages property owners from purposely leaving storefronts vacant, in order to push rental prices higher, and take advantage of tax losses.
- The vacancy tax will prevent small businesses from being displaced due to rent increases by imposing a penalty on property owners who leave storefronts vacant looking for a higher paying tenant.
- This measure will reduce long-term retail vacancies and allow new and existing small businesses to succeed in San Francisco's competitive commercial rental market.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PROP D:

- The tax can be passed through to small business owners from their landlords. It could increase rent for small businesses.
- A tax will not solve long-term vacancy issues. They should be assessed as one part of a larger comprehensive revitalization plan for ground level retail space.
- The period defined as long-term vacancy is inadequate. It can take 6 months to identify a tenant and agree on lease terms. That discourages landlords from renting to Pop-Up tenants, who typically lease for 90 days.

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www.vote411.org/first-time-voter-checklist



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PROPOSITION E – Limits on Office Development

Ordinance placed on the ballot by the required number of voter signatures. Needs the approval of a simple majority of voters (50%+1) to pass.

THE QUESTION:

Shall the City tie annual square footage allotment for certain Large Office Projects to whether the City is meeting its Affordable Housing Goals, and change the criteria for approving certain office projects?

BACKGROUND:

In 1986, San Francisco voters approved Proposition M, which limited large office developments to a total of 950,000 square feet annually, with 875,000 square feet allocated to projects of at least 50,000 square feet (“Large Office Projects”), and the remaining 75,000 square feet to projects with at least 25,000 square feet. It requires that the city approve projects based on a variety of factors, including considerations of location and a “balance between economic growth, housing, transportation, and public services.” If any of the 950,000 square feet goes unallocated, the unallocated amount carries over to the next year.

The State requires that cities plan for their housing needs and in doing so determines the amount of housing the Bay Area needs at different household income levels. The City has not met its housing goals set by the State (Regional Housing Needs Allocation, “RHNA”) for very low-, low-, and moderate- income housing.

In 2018, the City approved a plan that allows development of several Large Office Projects, (50,000 square feet and up), in the Central South of Market (“SOMA”) neighborhood.

THE PROPOSAL:

Proposition E would tie the City’s annual allotment for Large Office Projects, set by Proposition M, to the City’s progress on its state-determined affordable housing goal. It also sets a minimum annual Affordable Housing goal of 2042 units per year, a number determined by splitting the 8-year affordable housing goal set by the State into 8 annual goals. If the City falls short of the proposed annual goal, the upper limit of office space allocation for Large Office Projects would decrease by the same percentage as that shortfall. Under Proposition E, the allocation for Large Office Projects lost in one year could not be regained in succeeding years.

The City could “borrow” square footage from future allocations for Large Office Projects for:

- a) Large Office Projects that include affordable housing at a ratio of 809 units per 1 million square feet of office space (about 40 units for 50,000 square feet), and the housing is either on-site or off-site in an economically disadvantaged community.
- b) Large Office Projects located in Central SOMA that meet the following criteria:
 - they were submitted for approval by September 11, 2019;
 - they include property given to the City for affordable housing, a space for community arts or neighborhood-serving retail at reduced rents, or a public safety facility;
 - they would not cause the total amount of Large Office Projects approved in Central SOMA after January 1, 2019 to exceed a cumulative limit of 6 million square feet until 15,000 new housing units have been built in the wider SOMA neighborhood

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Square footage borrowed would be evenly deducted from allocation limits over a ten-year period rather than in a single year.

CONTROLLER'S STATEMENT

See Page 54 of the following link:

https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Voting/2020/M20_VIP_EN.pdf

A “YES” Vote Means: If you vote "yes," you want to tie the City's annual square-footage allotment for certain Large Office Projects to whether the City is meeting its Affordable Housing Goals, and you want to change the criteria for approving certain office projects.

A “NO” Vote Means: If you vote “no,” you do not want to make these changes.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF PROP E:

- Increased office development brings more workers and demand for housing and transit. Prop E would force the city to balance business development with its impacts on the existing housing crisis.
- Prop E provides accountability in following San Francisco's affordable housing goals.
- Prop E will decrease displacement caused by the lack of affordable housing, which disproportionately impacts minorities and other vulnerable groups.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PROP E:

- Opponents say this measure would benefit a few large developments in the SOMA neighborhood, rather than the community at large.
- Prop E could decrease the amount of funding available for affordable housing because less office space development means lower property and business tax revenue for the City.
- Further limitations on office development will cause rents to rise, increasing the cost for small businesses and nonprofits to operate in the City.

Be a voter!

You are eligible to register to vote in San Francisco if you are:

- ✓ A United States citizen
- ✓ A resident of San Francisco
- ✓ At least 18 years old on Election Day
- ✓ Not in prison or on parole for a felony conviction
- ✓ Not currently found mentally incompetent to vote by a court

Are you age 16 or 17? You can pre-register to vote at registertovote.ca.gov.

Not a citizen? Learn about voting for School Board at sfelections.org/noncitizenvoting.

Want more voting information? Visit sfelections.sfgov.org or call 415-554-4375.

Get even more election resources

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- Candidate forums
- Statements from candidates
- ...and more!

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