

## **SLO County supervisors oppose two measures on May ballot**

Propositions 1D and 1E would affect the county by diluting local control, board members decide

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After grappling with local implications of the six propositions on the statewide May 19 ballot, the Board of Supervisors opted Tuesday to oppose two of them and remain neutral on the rest.

Supervisors formally opposed Propositions 1D and 1E, but not before taking several swipes against a state government they consider “extremely dysfunctional,” to use Supervisor Adam Hill’s phrase.

Proposition 1D would take 50 percent of the money in the state’s many county “First Five” programs and give it to unspecified state’s children’s services.

First Five programs are aimed to help shape the first five years of children’s lives. Voters approved the program a decade ago when they passed Proposition 10.

Kena Burke of the county’s Children’s Health Initiative told supervisors that investing \$1 in First Five programs saves \$7 in prison costs later in the kids’ lives.

The proposed local revenue shift under Proposition 1D would be \$1.1 million a year for five years, according to County Administrative Officer David Edge.

Proposition 1E would authorize a similar transfer of funds, this time \$460 million from Proposition 63 mental health services. The money would be taken from proposed mental health programs authorized under Proposition 63 to programs already in place, such as mental health services for children and young adults.

Those two would have direct effects on the county, supervisors said, weakening local control.

As to the rest, Edge told them that one, Proposition 1F, was “largely symbolic.” Under Proposition 1F, elected state officials cannot receive a salary increase in a year when there is a budget deficit.

The other three, he said, have “indirect” effects on the county budget.

Hill and Supervisor Bruce Gibson criticized Proposition 1C, which allows the state to borrow \$5 billion from future lottery earnings to close the current budget gap. They called it a “short-term fix” that would take money from people addicted to gambling.

Eric Greening, a resident who speaks at most supervisor meetings, said passing Proposition 1C would be betting our future on “addictive behavior.”

But the board held back on Proposition 1C and the other three propositions because, as Gibson said, “positive and negative abound everywhere you look (in the measures).”

Supervisor Jim Patterson took it a step further, saying the ballot propositions were crafted to be “intentionally vague.”

Frank Mecham complained that “there are no clear ideas coming down from the state.”

Hill said the state budget morass — which he called “a dog’s breakfast” — will continue to be a problem until the system changes.

Underscoring all this was the feeling that the Legislature’s own failures in crafting a budget could work in Sacramento’s favor. If these propositions fail, Patterson noted, “it goes back into the hands of the legislators.”

“The system’s broken, we all know that,” Patterson said. “If the state buries itself too deeply, the ladder out is going to be local jurisdictions.”

Patterson blames party politics. Both Democrats and Republicans, he said, have a stronger allegiance to their political party than they do to the citizens of California.

The Legislature put the propositions on the ballot in February as part of a deal to finalize a belated budget. Since then, however, it has become clear that even with passage the annual budget shortfall will be at least \$8 million.