

League of Women Voters of California

NEUTRAL

Proposition 1B Education Funding. Payment Plan Legislative Constitutional Amendment

At its March 2009 meeting, the LWVC board of directors decided that the League will remain *neutral* on Proposition 1B, a measure that would require supplemental payments to K-12 school districts and community colleges to address recent budget cuts, beginning in 2011-12.

ABOUT PROPOSITION 1B

Proposition 1B is a constitutional amendment that would require the state to make \$9.3 billion in supplemental payments to K-14 education in annual installments over approximately five to six years, beginning in 2011-12. These payments would become part of the Proposition 98 base for successive years. They would be in lieu of payments the state might otherwise be required to make for Proposition 98 “maintenance factor” obligations that would make up for the reduced school funding due to the poor economy in 2007-08 and 2008-09. Proposition 1B is intended to address uncertainty about whether Proposition 98 requires a maintenance factor for those years and how it would be calculated. Proposition 1B would become operational only if Proposition 1A also passes.

LEAGUE POSITIONS AND DISCUSSION

The League supports full funding of public education from pre-kindergarten through community college.

The LWVC Education: Pre-Kindergarten through 12 position supports a system of public education funding that is adequate, flexible, equitable, reliable and sustainable; derived from a combination of revenue sources; and distributed fairly to support access and equitable opportunities for all students. The state is ultimately responsible for providing a system of public education.

The LWVC Community College System position supports a statewide community college system with sufficient resources to fulfill its overall goal: to offer all Californians access to a quality higher education. The League supports measures to finance the non-capital costs of the system that provide stable funding, opportunities for long-range planning, and funding sufficient to accommodate all students.

On the other hand, the LWVC Constitution position calls for provisions that enable the legislature to deal with state problems efficiently, flexibly and with responsibility clearly fixed and for removal from the constitution of provisions that inhibit flexibility of governmental action to meet changing conditions.

The LWVC State and Local Finances (SLF) Position in Brief calls for measures to ensure revenues both sufficient and flexible enough to meet changing needs for state and local government services and calls for a system of public finance that emphasizes equity and . . . adequacy. The SLF position states a preference for measures that contribute to the flexibility of the system and are accompanied by

analyses of potential economic effects that are available to the governing body and general public prior to adoption. If there is earmarking of funds and taxes, both the SLF and Constitution positions call for it to be done by statute rather than in the constitution.

Discussion

The LWVC did not take a stand on the original Proposition 98 of 1988. We stated that “while the League has a long-standing commitment to long-term, stable funding for education, we cannot support this measure. Its constitutional provisions decrease state and local governments’ financial flexibility and give preferential treatment to one public service over others.” The League was a strong supporter of Proposition 111 of 1990, which adjusted the Gann spending limit and Proposition 98 by, among other things, adopting change in per capita personal income as the factor to be used for calculating the effect of inflation.

Based on our education and government finance positions, the League of Women Voters of California has decided to remain neutral on Proposition 1B. We support funding for education from pre-K through the community college level, and we believe that making up for the devastating cuts of recent years must be a priority. However, this proposal only adds further complexity to the state constitution. Proposition 1B is not needed, as the Legislature currently has the power to restore funding to education in a more straightforward way that is not tied to Prop. 1A. Even if passed by the voters, it would take effect only if Prop. 1A is also passed. In light of our strong opposition to Prop. 1A and to the manner in which the entire package of propositions was put together for this special election, we cannot support Prop. 1B.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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