

No excuses voting guide for the California Primary

By Sabra Briere

Everybody has an opinion. The one certain way to exercise your opinion on candidates and issues is to vote. This year, there's no excuse for not knowing who the candidates are, and what they stand for. And so, there's also no excuse for voting blindly or skipping an election.

I decided to vote only for Democrats - and to look closely at all the women running for office. This decision is reflected in my recommendations.

I'm new to California, so I've had to study the candidates and the issues, well, seriously. And I've been waiting for my ballot to show up. If this helps you at all, then my life is improved.

One further caveat. Some people get really passionate about primaries. I'm not some people. If my choices aren't yours, I encourage you to look at other voter guides and endorsement lists.

My rationale is below. Here's my checklist.

Office	Candidate
Governor	Easton / Newsom
Lieutenant Governor	Kounalakis / Hernandez
Secretary of State	Padilla
Controller	Yee
Treasurer	Ma
Attorney General	Becerra
Insurance Commissioner	Lara
State Board of Equalization	Cohen
US Senator	Feinstein
US Representative	Thompson / Huffman
State Senator	McGuire
State Assembly	Wood / Aguiar-Curry
State Superintendent of Public Instruction	Thurmond
County Superintendent of Schools	Herrington*

Auditor / Controller	Roeser*
Clerk / Recorder / Assessor	Proto
District Attorney	Ravitz
Sheriff / Coroner	Mutz
Measures	
68 - Bonds for parks / Climate Change	Yes
69 - Transportation revenue used for transportation	Yes
70 - Requires a supermajority vote to use Cap and Trade reserve fund	No
71 - Requires an 'effective date' for all ballot measures	Yes
72 - Allows people to capture rain water without increasing their property taxes	Yes
Regional Measure 3 - increases toll (by \$1 in each of three years) to fund improved transportation options	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indicates unchallenged 	

I am not a third-party voter. I've seen too many situations where people think they can vote for the third party to 'send a message' - and someone totally horrible wins the election, by just about the same margin as the third party candidate received. I'm fed up with 'sending a message' when the only person who gets it is me.

So I'm voting for Democrats.

To decide which ones, I read the County's Voter Information Guide, the Democratic Party's endorsement list (from Sonoma County, so it's local), the California Official Voter Information Guide, the California State Strong endorsements, the San Francisco League of Pissed Off Voters endorsements ... and any others I could find.

Governor

The Democratic Party chose not to endorse in this race.

I listened to the recent debate with six (6) gubernatorial candidates. I have no polite words for the two Republicans. I liked what **Easton** had to say, and she is the only woman I consider viable. Her positions are right there on education, housing affordability, transportation, jobs, and taxes. And in a field that includes some real doozies, she came across to me as straightforward and unintimidated.

In the general election, I'll cheerfully vote for **Newsom** - who is acceptable, although not perfect. No one is perfect, and I won't take a risk for November.

Lieutenant Governor

The Democratic Party chose not to endorse in this race.

Kounalakis has a professional background in land development and is a former US Ambassador (appointed by Obama). She's also the child of immigrants who have lived the American dream.

Ed **Hernandez** (there's also a Republican Hernandez running, so don't be fooled) is a current Democratic State Senator who is term limited. His legislative focus is health care.

Either candidate works for me. I'm leaning toward the woman, because.

Secretary of State

Padilla. I have no complaint about the way he's been doing the job.

State Controller

Yee. I have no complaint about the way she's been doing the job.

Treasurer

Ma. I appreciate her background on the State Board of Equalization and her ability to focus her energies on keeping California economically healthy.

Attorney General

Becerra may have made a name for himself by suing the administration in DC, but is that a bad thing? I've never had to urge him to take a strong stance supporting the law.

Insurance Commissioner

Full disclosure - I don't really understand California insurance laws. But it's the role of the Insurance Commissioner to enforce them, so I want the best person for the job. At the same time, I'm sticking to my decision to look only at the Democrats.

Lara was endorsed by the Democratic Party. He supports universal health care and immigrant rights - and with possible expansion of California health insurance to reach undocumented immigrants, he seems like a good fit to me.

State Board of Equalization

All three Democratic candidates running for this position have basic skills. The SBE seems to be in flux, and deserves some fresh ideas and energy. I think **Cohen** can deliver on both.

US Senator

Feinstein. I could help anyone find reasons to support someone else ... but she has all the benefits of seniority and has shown a willingness to change her behavior and take a harder, more outspoken set of positions. No one else comes close.

California would lose if her voice left the table.

US Representative

I'll mark my ballot for **Thompson**. If you live in **Huffman's** district, please support him.

State Senator

He gives a great, stemwinding speech. I have no complaints about **McGuire**.

Assembly member

For the 2nd District (north and west, including Santa Rosa), I'm voting for **Wood**. And if you live in the 5th District, stretching east, north, and south of Santa Rosa, I encourage a vote for **Aguiar-Curry**. Both are well respected by their constituents.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Thurmond. The other leading Democrat is supportive of Charter schools - which I tend to consider a way to defund public schools and create more social outcasts without the tools or means to succeed - a permanent underclass. If schools are failing because they lack resources and appropriate standards, give them more resources and help set and enforce standards.

Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools

Only one person is on the ballot. Easy vote for **Herrington**.

Auditor / Controller

Only one person on the ballot. **Roeser**.

Clerk-Recorder-Assessor

Proto. I admit it. I've fallen for her non-political type font and the design of her signs. She has significant experience working in this office. And currently she is greatly expanding the amount of information available easily to the public from this office. That level of transparency appeals to me.

District Attorney

The ballot lists a choice. The ballot is sadly wrong. **Ravitch** is running unopposed. Scott Murray withdrew too late to get his name removed.

Sheriff-Coroner

This race is what started me looking at the issues and candidates. I've been to four (4!) different forums, a set of interviews conducted by a progressive group, and multiple community events where one - and only one - candidate showed up.

That candidate is **Mutz**.

As someone new to the community, I particularly like the concept of electing someone with few ties to the local politics of the sheriff's office. This is an opportunity for some strong internal reorganization of the Sheriff's Department. I know he may face resistance - but his experience elsewhere could truly result in the needed changes here.

Mutz reflected my experiences elsewhere with police reform and community involvement. He is open to new ideas, new voices at the table, and ways to remake the Sheriff's Department into a responsive and responsible organization.

A couple of other things. Mutz supports strong background checks for concealed carry permits. He would also address work-release for women and improved exercises yards at the jail. These may not be mighty, earth shattering issues, but they address a historic lack of services for prisoners and a history of too-easy access to weapons.

Regional Measure 3:

Yes

Should the tolls on bay-area bridges be increased (\$1 in 2019; \$1 in 2021; \$1 in 2023), with the revenue being allocated to a variety of projects and programs aimed at reducing traffic congestion? This includes more money to address congested areas, more money for passenger rail, and more bus / ferry services. I consider this an easy vote.

Proposition 68:

Yes

Should the State of California issue \$4 billion in bonds to increase the number of parks - including neighborhood parks; improve environmental protection and water infrastructure? We cannot address climate change and ongoing maintenance without a revenue source.

Proposition 69:

Yes

This would require that revenues from recent changes in the vehicle licensing fee and the diesel sales tax be used only for transportation purposes, including public transportation. This seems simple to me.

Proposition 70:

NO

There's no way I'd give a minority - any minority - the ability to prevent the government from enforcing environmental regulations. I believe in compromise and engaging both sides in the solution.

This proposition, if passed, would establish a higher number of affirmative votes in order to allocate the revenue from Cap-and-Trade. Currently, a simple majority allows California to allocate these revenues. If approved, the initiative would require a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote, and would place limits on what types of program could receive the funding.

It's complex, but it would give a small minority the ability to control how, when, and if the funds could be used. And that way lies legislative madness.

Don't sit on your hands on this one. **Vote NO.** Firmly.

Proposition 71:

Yes

I like clear rules. Ambiguous rules drive people crazy, and allow too much opportunity for an initiative to fail. It provides a bit of rigor to the initiative process.

Proposition 72:

Yes

It's surprising to me that an improvement to the environmental features in your home would be taxable. I'd think that putting in measures to capture rainwater would be *rewarded* by government, not penalized. And yes, increasing the taxable value of property seems to be a disincentive to do something that should be applauded.

Vote yes. Then get those gutters and rain barrel systems installed. Save the water, and save your neighbors downstream.