SPUR

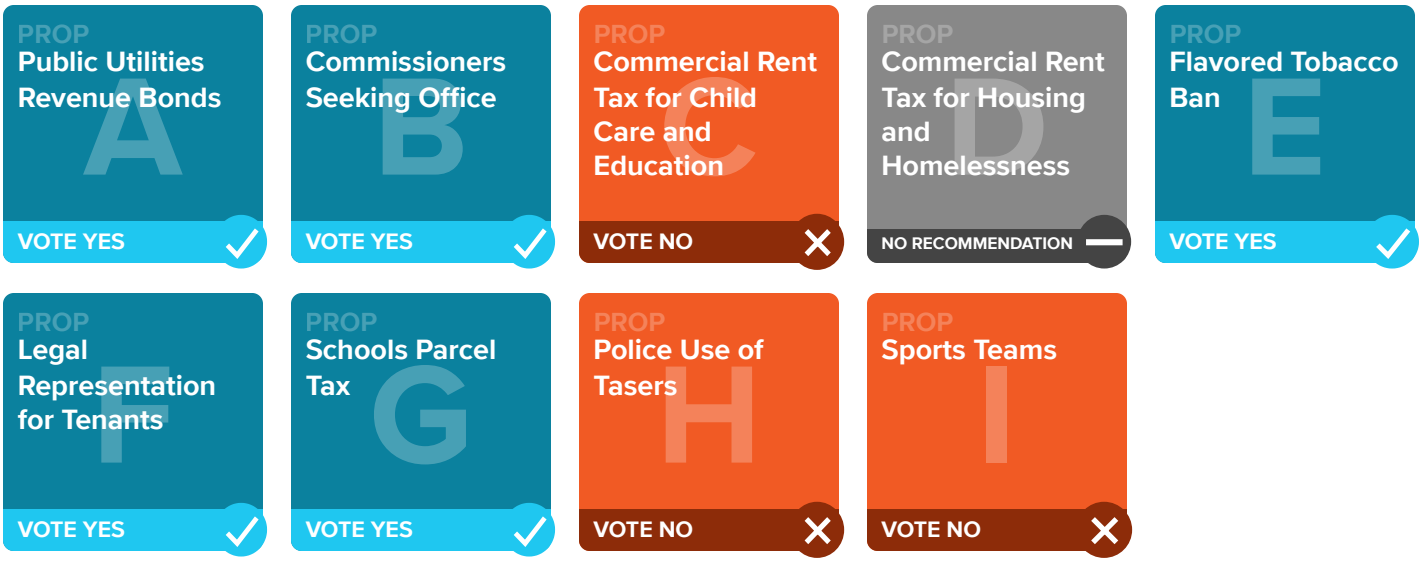
a member-supported nonprofit organization

June 2018 Voter Guide

Ballot analysis and recommendations

Nine city propositions and one regional measure appear on the San Francisco ballot on June 5, 2018. SPUR provides in-depth analysis and recommendations on each one.

San Francisco (SF)



Bay Area (BA)



SF Prop A

Public Utilities Revenue Bonds

CHARTER AMENDMENT

Public Utilities Revenue Bonds

Authorizes the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to issue revenue bonds to pay for power and electrical facilities without having to obtain voter approval.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

Prop. A would give the city's power operations the same ability to issue debt that is already delegated to the airport, the port and the SFPUC's own water and sewer operations. We believe it's important to confer on the city's public electricity utility the ability to reinvest in aging infrastructure, respond to new sustainability technologies, comply with regulations and maintain cost-effectiveness for its customers.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop B

Commissioners Seeking Office

CHARTER AMENDMENT

Prohibiting Appointed Commissioners From Running for Office

Requires that appointed members of city boards and commissions resign their seats if they declare candidacy for state or local elected office.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

This measure would help ensure that sitting commissioners and board members make decisions in service of their jobs and not to benefit their own political ambitions. While there isn't an obvious need for this amendment to the City Charter, what is accepted practice today is no guarantee of good behavior in the future. Today, multiple elected officials and bodies besides the mayor have appointing authority, which makes it more difficult for voters to hold a commissioner or board member accountable. With regard to conflicts of interest related to running for elected office, this measure would codify a common-sense practice and set reasonable standards of behavior for these public servants.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop C

Commercial Rent Tax for Child Care and Education

ORDINANCE

Additional Tax on Commercial Rents Mostly to Fund Child Care and Education

Imposes a tax on commercial landlords in San Francisco to fund child care and education programs.

Vote NO

SPUR's Recommendation

While there is a clear need for more affordable child care to serve San Francisco families, SPUR was ultimately not convinced that this tax structure at this tax rate was the appropriate choice, in part because it does not follow our principles for good tax policy. Singling out one segment of one industry with a significant tax increase over a single year is not equitable, and while the cause is a good one, the potential tax bears no relationship to the industry that would be affected (such as a tax on pollution that goes to fund environmental cleanup).

A more comprehensive effort to update and reform the gross receipts tax is needed, and it should take into account the city's growing and changing expenditure needs. The process should also include robust outreach and negotiation with all members of the business community, which appears to have been absent in the development of this measure. This scattershot effort is not a step in the right direction, nor does it set a good example for others seeking funding for their agendas.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop D

Commercial Rent Tax for Housing and Homelessness

ORDINANCE

Additional Tax on Commercial Rents Mostly to Fund Housing and Homelessness Services

Imposes a tax on commercial landlords in San Francisco to fund housing and homelessness programs.

No Recommendation

SPUR's Recommendation

SPUR's Board of Directors was torn on this measure. SPUR has fought for more housing for everyone for over a hundred years, and we are challenged to vote against a measure that would help build more housing for homeless San Franciscans and middle-income families who are not well served by today's housing solutions.

On the other hand, there are serious concerns that singling out one segment of one industry is not an equitable way to establish tax rates and does not follow SPUR's principles of good tax policy. A more comprehensive effort to update and reform the gross receipts tax is needed, one that adjusts gross receipts rates to complete the phasing out of the payroll tax and, ideally, one that takes all of the city's funding needs into account comprehensively. Prop. D's scattershot effort is not a step in the right direction, nor does it set a good example for others seeking funding for their agendas. SPUR also believes in broadening the tax base for funding affordable housing beyond businesses. This measure would not do that.

SPUR's board was divided on these points and was not able to reach enough votes to recommend either a "yes" vote or a "no" vote on this measure.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop E

Flavored Tobacco Ban

REFERENDUM

Prohibiting Tobacco Retailers from Selling Flavored Tobacco Products Referendum

Upholds a recent ordinance that bans the sale of flavored tobacco products in San Francisco.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

The city has a long-standing policy of trying to reduce tobacco consumption because of its negative impact on public health. Flavored tobacco offerings are especially detrimental as they are designed to encourage greater consumption and many are specifically marketed to youth. In light of this, the Board of Supervisors made a unanimous decision to ban the sale of these products within the city.

San Francisco's ban goes beyond other efforts at dissuading harmful behavior, such as an education campaign or a tax, and should not be undertaken lightly. The impact of the ban should be monitored to ensure that it achieves its desired outcome. If new problems arise because of the ban, the Board of Supervisors would still have the ability to amend or repeal the ban to deal with them.

On balance, the potential positive public health impact of this ban outweighs the concerns about consumer choice or lost revenue for stores selling tobacco products.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop F

Legal Representation for Tenants

ORDINANCE

City-Funded Legal Representation for All Residential Tenants in Eviction Lawsuits Ordinance

Requires the city to create a program to provide full scope legal representation to residential tenants facing eviction.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

SPUR believes that a right-to-counsel program would deter evictions and would help with homelessness prevention, an important part of reducing homelessness overall. While we have serious reservations about recommending a measure that would create a new program without a dedicated funding source, the depth and breadth of San Francisco's housing shortage and affordability crisis merits this step. And while we'd prefer a means-tested program, an estimated 80 percent of tenants facing eviction in San Francisco are at or below 80 percent of area median income, which means this program would be likely to serve those who need it most.

Housing security is foundational to many aspects of well-being, including educational attainment, mental health and economic mobility, and San Francisco is struggling amid an affordability crisis of historic proportions. The city can — and should — be a national leader on this progressive issue.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop G

Schools Parcel Tax

PARCEL TAX

Living Wage for Educators Act

Levies an annual $298 parcel tax to raise salaries for San Francisco Unified School District educators.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

The cost of living in San Francisco is a significant burden on the teachers and staff whom we entrust with a critical mandate: educating our children and youth. While SFUSD can rightly be proud of the investments it has made into innovative programs and services that support students, teacher salaries are far below those of other cities in the region and untenable for a growing number of educators.

Competitive pay would help SFUSD attract top talent in the midst of a historic state-wide teacher shortage. It would also keep teachers in the classroom and cultivate an experienced staff cohort. This measure is an opportunity for San Francisco to reaffirm its support for educators and their value to the city. We should no longer ignore teachers' degrading quality of life, nor accept that they make just over half of the median income in San Francisco.

San Franciscans have made investments in students and in capital improvements for public schools; now they face an opportunity to make needed investments in teachers. On its own, this parcel tax will not solve the problem of low salaries for SFUSD educators, nor will it solve the affordability crisis they face. However, in combination with the negotiated agreement between the district and the union to raise salaries, this measure is a necessary — and long overdue — next step in the right direction.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop H

Police Use of Tasers

ORDINANCE

Policy for the Use of Tasers by San Francisco Police Officers

Requires that all SFPD officers be equipped with electronic stun guns by December 2018, subject to training, supervision, reporting and accountability requirements.

Vote NO

SPUR's Recommendation

Decisions regarding use of force and similar policies should be decided by the Police Commission and not at the ballot box. The expedited timeline this measure would put in place is not necessary and not worth circumventing the authority of the SFPD and the Police Commission. Furthermore, the conditions outlined in the measure are more permissive than the parameters established by the Police Commission and the SFPD, many of which would be moot should the measure pass. The SFPD and the Police Commission engaged in thoughtful deliberation with a range of stakeholders on the use of these weapons in San Francisco, taking into account the city's values around use of force and de-escalation and the use of Tasers on vulnerable populations.

San Francisco should not be locked into an approach that is out of step with the expectations of the Police Commission, the SFPD and community stakeholders or that would thwart the Police Commission and SFPD's ability to govern the use of the weapon.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop I

Sports Teams

DECLARATION OF POLICY

Relocation of Professional Sports Teams

Conveys the opinion that the city should not encourage or condone the relocation of well-established sports teams to San Francisco.

Vote NO

SPUR's Recommendation

Sports teams are businesses, and like other businesses, they often choose to relocate for financial and other reasons. Cities, in turn, often compete to host these businesses. Certainly, there are policy arguments to be made about how actively San Francisco should court businesses or about how cities within the Bay Area should consider economic development more broadly. This ballot measure is not the right vehicle for those conversations.

As a nonbinding policy measure, this proposition would do nothing to stop the Warriors from moving from Oakland to San Francisco, nor would it require any changes to the city's economic development policy in the future. From a process perspective, this measure would have made more sense as a resolution for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

BA Measure 3

Bridge Toll

USER FEE

Bay Area Traffic Relief Plan

Increases tolls on the Bay Area's seven state-owned bridges, excluding the Golden Gate Bridge, by $1 in 2019, $1 in 2022 and $1 in 2025 to fund regional transportation capital investments.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

While RM3 wouldn't generate enough money to solve our transportation problems once and for all, it is a necessary measure to help us meet increasing demands on our transportation system. The measure would pay for important transportation projects that would have real impact for many system users. It would also provide a long-term fix in that bridge tolls in the future could be indexed to inflation, allowing the region to better keep pace with its growing transportation system needs.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

Acknowledgments

The goal of the SPUR Voter Guide is to offer objective analysis and advise voters on which measures will deliver real solutions. Our Ballot Analysis Committee heard arguments from both sides of the issues, debated the measures' merits and provided recommendations to our San Francisco Board of Directors. The board then voted, with a 60 percent vote required for SPUR to make a recommendation.

SPUR's San Francisco Board of Directors reviewed, debated and adopted this analysis as official policy on February 21 and March 19, 2018.

SPUR Ballot Analysis Committee: Bob Gamble (Co-Chair), Fran Weld (Co-Chair), Michaela Cassidy, Jim Chappell, Kim-Mai Cutler, Diane Filippi, Ed Harrington, Vince Hoenigman, Aaron Johnson, Jim Lazarus, Jeanne Myerson, George Miller, Terry Micheau, Molly Turner, Steve Vettel

SPUR Staff: Kristy Wang, Susannah Parsons, Karen Steen, Alicia John-Baptiste, Arielle Fleisher, Sarah Karlinsky, Laura Tam, Eli Zigas