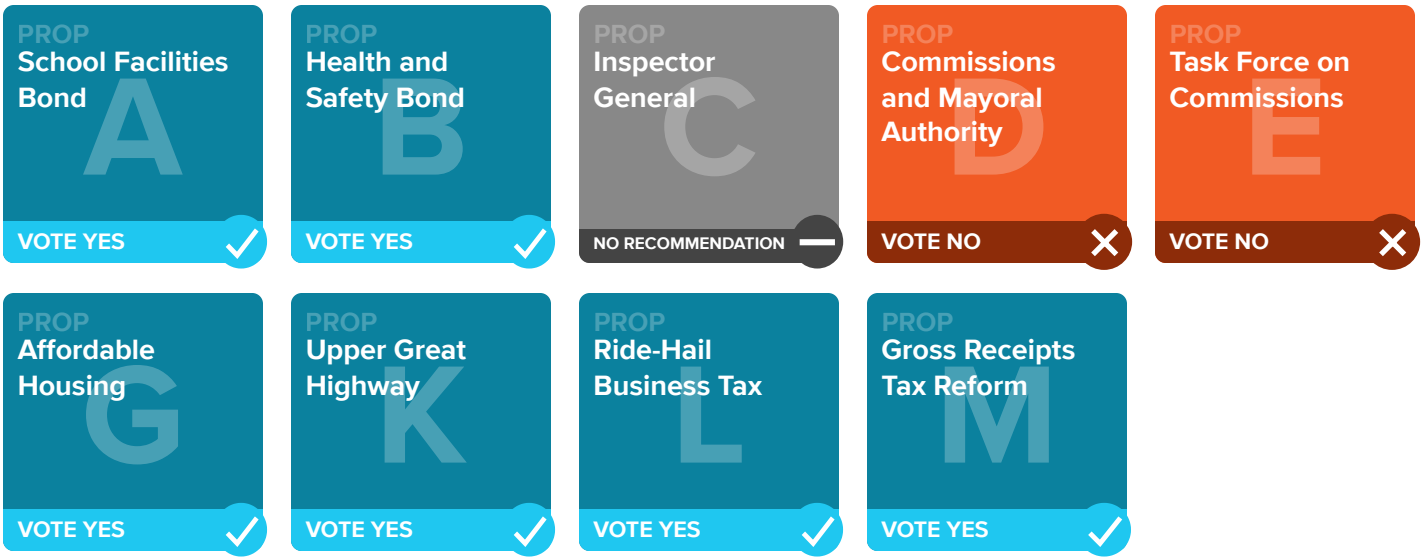
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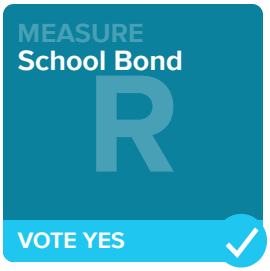
November 2024 Voter Guide

For the November 2024 election, SPUR analyzed local and state measures related to our policy areas on the California, San Francisco, San José, and Oakland ballots. Our analysis includes the background behind the measures, equity impacts, pros and cons, and a recommendation on how to vote.

San Francisco (SF)



San José (SJ)



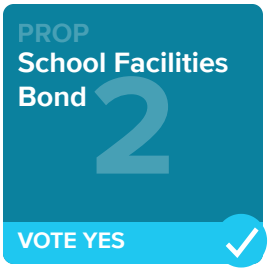
Oakland (OAK)







California (CA)











SF Prop A

School Facilities Bond

GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND

Schools Improvement and Safety Bond

Authorizes the San Francisco Unified School District to issue and sell $790 million in general obligation bonds to fund school facilities projects.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

Nearly half of SFUSD's student body is socioeconomically disadvantaged, and this bond would fund necessary facility improvements and provide healthy meals for a vulnerable population. The measure would ensure that San Francisco's public schools can provide safe, modern facilities for students and faculty, improving their daily experience and educational outcomes. Declining enrollment and financial instability are concerning trends, but the district still requires regular investment in the maintenance and modernization of school facilities. In fact, San Francisco families with children are more likely to remain in the city and enroll in the public school system if SFUSD facilities better serve their children's needs.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop B

Health and Safety Bond

GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND

Community Health and Medical Facilities, Street Safety, Public Spaces, and Shelter to Reduce Homelessness Bond

Authorizes the city to issue $390 million in general obligation bonds to fund upgrades to community health facilities, family shelters, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and outdoor public spaces.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

The COVID-19 pandemic was a clarifying moment for San Francisco, putting on full display the strengths of — and cracks in — San Francisco's public resources. Designed to help the city recover on myriad fronts, this bond measure would support a rich array of SPUR priorities, such as street safety, housing for homeless families, high-quality outdoor civic spaces, and the commitment that all people should have fair and just access to basic rights like health care. This bond elegantly ties together a number of pressing needs with the single theme of positively envisioning the future San Francisco wants to achieve and what critical investments are necessary to get there.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop C

Inspector General

CHARTER AMENDMENT

Inspector General

Establishes the position of inspector general and expands the authority of the Controller's Office to authorize investigations, issue subpoenas, and issue search warrants related to fraud, abuse, waste, and misconduct.

No Recommendation

SPUR's Recommendation

The SPUR Board of Directors was unable to reach a consensus position on this measure. Prop. C has the potential to increase the effectiveness of ongoing investigations of suspicious activities and whistleblower complaints, with minimal financial costs to existing city administration. However, relevant city departments are already actively coordinating on anti-corruption investigations. Moreover, the Board of Supervisors could have simply used legislation to create an IG position that is appointed by the controller without needing mayoral approval and confirmation from the Board of Supervisors. Although we appreciate the intention of the measure, we are unconvinced that the ballot box is the best way to realize that intention.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop D

Commissions and Mayoral Authority

CHARTER AMENDMENT

Reduces the Number of City Commissions

Limits the number of commissions that the city can have, reduces the administrative powers of commissions, and restores the mayor's authority to hire and fire most department heads.

Vote NO

SPUR's Recommendation

SPUR believes that significant changes are needed to San Francisco's commission system to create a more streamlined government with clearer lines of authority and accountability. Prop. D would provide a quick path to move that work forward. However, we are concerned that the evaluation process for commission changes did not incorporate input from the affected departments, stakeholders, and the general public and could have unanticipated consequences. The research that informed TogetherSF's criteria for eliminating commissions has not been shared publicly. We believe that a charter revision of this magnitude should include a deliberative public process with a shared framework and set of criteria that includes an equity analysis to determine which commissions should continue to exist. Without this process, it's hard to know whether the cap of 65 commissions is warranted.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop E

Task Force on Commissions

CHARTER AMENDMENT

Creating a Task Force to Recommend Changing, Eliminating, or Combining City Commissions

Establishes a task force charged with making recommendations to the mayor and Board of Supervisors on reforming San Francisco's boards and commissions.

Vote NO

SPUR's Recommendation

SPUR believes that a comprehensive evidence-based review of San Francisco's commission system is needed and that this proposition provides a path for that review. However, the bulk of this measure could have been enacted legislatively rather than through the ballot box. Additionally, it's unclear whether the measure would result in a meaningful reform of the city's commissions or would restore mayoral authority due to the lack of a mechanism to ensure timely action by the Board of Supervisors. SPUR believes that commissions and their overall relation to mayoral and departmental authority should be assessed. Only after a rigorous and transparent review is completed would it make sense to put a charter amendment on the ballot to implement the review's recommendations.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop G

Affordable Housing

CHARTER AMENDMENT

Funding Rental Subsidies for Affordable Housing Developments Serving Low-Income Seniors, Families, and Persons with Disabilities

Dedicates $8.25 million annually from the General Fund to subsidize extremely low-income housing from 2026 to 2046.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

SPUR believes that housing is a human right and should be affordable to everyone. Existing funding programs for affordable housing projects have failed to resolve operating deficits, pushing project sponsors to exclude households with the greatest financial need. There is a nationwide housing affordability and homelessness crisis, yet funding for housing and related social services has been reduced at federal and state levels. Given the lack of viable alternatives, cities and other local government agencies are the final bulwarks in the fight to end homelessness.

In San Francisco, systematic barriers preventing ELI households from accessing affordable housing have acute negative impacts on seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, and families with children, leaving them vulnerable to housing instability and the risk of homelessness. By investing in homelessness prevention, the city can reduce its costs to provide services to homeless people and avoid the incalculable personal costs to individuals and families who become homeless.

SPUR does not recommend establishing a set-aside lightly, but there is an urgent and overwhelming need to produce more affordable housing for ELI residents. Though SPUR is concerned about San Francisco's long-term fiscal health, this measure outlines options to use existing unspent revenues to fund the set-aside, which could reduce impacts to the General Fund and allow more flexibility during difficult financial times.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop K

Upper Great Highway

ORDINANCE

Permanently Closing the Upper Great Highway to Private Vehicles to Establish a Public Open Recreation Space

Establishes a new public open recreation space on the Upper Great Highway (between Lincoln Way and Sloat Boulevard) and permanently closes the road to private vehicles.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

The creation of new public open spaces was one of the most successful policy interventions made by the city during the pandemic. Streets that were primarily used by private vehicles have now become popular recreational spaces throughout the city. With the threats of rising sea level and coastal erosion becoming more real every day, Prop. K offers the opportunity both to protect neighborhoods from these dangers and to create more places for all San Franciscans to gather safely. SPUR has long supported policies that increase access to shared public amenities; encourage walking, biking, and transit instead of private vehicles; and proactively address sea level rise and coastal erosion in a fiscally, socially, and environmentally responsible manner. Prop. K would help fulfill all of these goals.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop L

Ride-Hail Business Tax

ORDINANCE

Additional Business Tax on Transportation Network Companies and Autonomous Vehicle Businesses to Fund Public Transportation

Adds a business tax on ride-hail platforms and autonomous vehicle companies that provide rides within San Francisco and uses tax revenue to fund public transportation services and programs.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

SFMTA is facing a severe operating deficit and is running out of both options and time to avoid cutting transit service. Muni serves many low-income riders, seniors, and people with disabilities. Failing to close the funding gap will harm the city's most disadvantaged populations. Prop. L would provide approximately $25 million in critically needed, ongoing funding for transit operations, starting as early as 2025. While SPUR has misgivings about imposing a new business tax in the midst of a broader reform effort and recognizes that Prop. L does not solve Muni's budget shortfall on its own, our concerns are outweighed by the critical importance of creating a predictable funding stream for transit operations.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SF Prop M

Gross Receipts Tax Reform

ORDINANCE

Changes to Business Taxes

Reforms the business tax structure in San Francisco to increase the city's economic resilience, adapt to post-COVID hybrid work patterns, create more transparency for taxpayers, and help small businesses.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

San Francisco is far too dependent on a small number of businesses for its business tax revenues. Moreover, the city's high tax burden on certain industries has become a liability, as there is a chance that those businesses could move away or reduce their footprint in San Francisco. This measure promises to build a more resilient and transparent tax system in San Francisco, while providing tax relief to small businesses that have struggled to recover from the pandemic. The measure would be fiscally neutral over the long term and would improve the city's financial footing. It would protect dedicated funding for critical priorities like homelessness services, while simplifying a highly complex tax structure and creating more predictability for the private sector.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SJ Measure R

School Bond

GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND

San José Unified School District Neighborhood School Safety and Improvement Bond of 2024

Authorizes the San José Unified School District to issue $1.15 billion in general obligation bonds over 30 years to fund school facilities projects and provide affordable housing for teachers and staff.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

California's schools are perpetually underfunded. Cost of living and quality of life shape school districts' ability to hire and retain high-quality instructors. Measure R presents voters with an opportunity to invest in many projects to support students and teachers, from ensuring that neighborhood schools are modern and functional to providing affordable workforce housing that will help the district recruit and retain qualified teachers.

The measure does not yet provide a clear plan for how bond revenues will be spent. SPUR recommends that SJUSD develop and release more information about expenditures with equity considerations before the election to help voters understand how the proposed investment will benefit the district's families. Although the information provided by the district on bond expenditures is inadequate, SPUR does not believe that the region's schools should be permitted to deteriorate. San José students deserve safe, modern facilities to support their education and development, and SJUSD teachers deserve affordable housing and the opportunity to live in the communities that they serve.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

OAK Measure MM
Special District Tax

PARCEL TAX

Oakland Hills Wildfire Prevention Zone Tax

Levies a special district parcel tax on properties in Oakland's Wildfire Prevention Zone to fund wildfire prevention activities.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

Periods of intense rains followed by dry summers and drought conditions have exacerbated wildfire risk in Oakland, especially in the Oakland Hills, where there's a higher chance of severe fires. Climate change will only worsen this hazard. Prop. MM would fund actions identified in the City of Oakland's Equitable Climate Action Plan to reduce wildfire risk.

It would pay for the tools in the recently adopted 10-year Vegetation Management Plan, including fire patrols, goat grazing for fuel reduction, public education, and evacuation route protections, all of which are critical activities to protect residents and structures from costly wildfire damage and destruction.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

OAK Measure NN
Public Safety Tax

INITIATIVE STATUTE

Authorizes Parcel and Parking Taxes to Fund Public Safety and Violence Prevention

Extends and increases a parcel tax and a parking tax surcharge for an additional nine years to fund police, fire, and violence prevention services.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

Measure Z has provided more than $30 million in annual revenue for the City of Oakland for police, fire, and violence prevention services. Expiration of this measure would represent a significant loss of funding for community organizations working to break the cycle of violence in at-risk Black and Latinx neighborhoods. Continuation of this funding is particularly critical given that the city projects continued budget deficits that will limit its ability to expand funding for police, fire, and violence prevention services out of the General Fund. Although the special parcel tax is a regressive tax, it exempts low-income and senior homeowners to minimize negative impacts.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

OAK Measure OO
Public Ethics Commission

CHARTER AMENDMENT

Public Ethics Commission

Updates the City of Oakland's charter, adding staff capacity to the Public Ethics Commission and clarifying its purpose, processes, and procedures.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

Enforcing ethics rules in Oakland requires adequate resources and staff capacity. Measure OO would align the Public Ethics Commission's structure and staffing to allow the commission to accomplish its core responsibilities and would update its mission to reflect its purpose and responsibilities under the Oakland Fair Elections Act. Although it doesn't do much to strengthen the commission's independence and oversight capacities, it does increase PEC's capacity to support investigations, which is needed to prevent and root out corruption in city government.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

CA Prop 2
School Facilities Bond

BOND

Authorizes Bonds for Public School and Community College Facilities

Authorizes the state to issue $10 billion in bonds for new construction and renovation of K-12 public school and community college facilities.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

Funding for school facilities is essential to ensure that California students continue to receive quality education. This measure provides an opportunity to address much-needed repairs and investment in new facilities for districts across the state. It would also make it easier for under-resourced districts to access additional state funding.

Critics of the measure argue that it fails to mitigate the disparate impacts of the SFP program on districts serving low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. These concerns should be taken seriously and should inform future state policy. However, even school districts (such as San Francisco and Oakland) that have been able to successfully access funding through the SFP in the past have a backlog of urgently needed repair, renovation, and construction projects. Without state bond funding, local school districts, taxpayers, and home builders will likely be charged additional taxes and fees to fund needed improvements. The benefits of replenishing the state's funding for school facilities as soon as possible outweigh the weaknesses of the program.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

CA Prop 4
Climate Bond

BOND

Authorizes Bonds for Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, and Protecting Communities and Natural Lands from Climate Risks

Authorizes a $10 billion general obligation bond to fund climate adaptation and resiliency projects.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

From devastating wildfires to droughts, floods, and extreme weather events, the impacts of climate change are undeniable in California. Without action, these impacts will worsen, posing significant risks to lives and livelihoods, ecosystems, infrastructure, agriculture, and the economy. Bonds are one of the main ways the state can invest in climate adaptation, hazard preparedness and mitigation, clean drinking water, and habitat restoration in the midst of a state budget shortfall. California is already paying the cost of climate change impacts from fires, floods, and extreme weather events. By investing in climate action now, voters can reduce future costs both economic and social.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

CA Prop 5

Voter Approval Threshold

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Allows Local Bonds for Affordable Housing and Public Infrastructure With 55% Voter Approval

reduces the voter approval threshold from two-thirds to 55% for local government general obligation bonds to fund affordable housing and a range of public infrastructure projects.

Vote YES

SPUR's Recommendation

Prop. 5 would better allow local residents to democratically choose to invest in affordable housing and public infrastructure in their communities to improve their quality of life. At a time when the need for affordable housing and infrastructure funding is particularly dire, this modest reform would increase the chances that local and regional governments can deliver housing and essential facilities that have the support of the majority of voters. The 55% voter approval threshold is already the requirement for local school facilities bonds. Prop. 5 would make it easier for jurisdictions to access local funding to leverage additional state and federal sources to finance affordable housing developments and other public infrastructure.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

CA Prop 32

$18 Minimum Wage

INITIATIVE STATUTE

Raises Minimum Wage

Increases the state minimum wage to $18 per hour by 2026 for all employers and then adjusts for inflation.

No Recommendation

SPUR's Recommendation

Raising the minimum wage is an effective strategy to create broader economic benefits and narrow the racial wealth gap, especially for low-wage Black and Latinx workers. In California, the state minimum wage is higher than the federal minimum wage but is also far below the cost of living for much of the Bay Area. While SPUR has generally supported minimum wage increases in the past, this measure raises concerns that, without exemptions for small businesses, the law could lead to unintended negative impacts for those small businesses that are struggling to recover from the pandemic. SPUR believes that interventions that don't raise costs for small businesses, such as guaranteed income programs, should be under serious consideration for addressing poverty in California. The SPUR Board of Directors was divided and could not reach a 60% majority to support or oppose this measure.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

CA Prop 33

Rent Control Rules

INITIATIVE STATUTE

Authorizes Cities and Counties to Enact or Expand Rent Control Ordinances

Repeals the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act of 1995 and prohibits the state from limiting the right of cities and counties to maintain, enact, or expand local residential rent control ordinances.

Vote NO

SPUR's Recommendation

California continues to deal with a decades-long housing affordability crisis. A shortage of housing has led to displacement of low- and moderate-income people and has increased homelessness and economic insecurity for the most vulnerable communities.

Rent control can be an important tool for community stability, providing significant benefits to residents who are able to live in rent-controlled units. Many current tenants in California would be unable to remain in their homes — or even in their cities — if their rents went up to market-rate levels.

However, housing markets are complex, and the elimination of state controls should not be determined at the ballot box. There is great risk in under-regulating rent control and depressing California's already-inadequate production of rental housing. In a report issued in 2021, SPUR estimated that the Bay Area should have built 700,000 new homes over the past decade and needs to build more than 2.3 million housing units over the coming 50 years to bend the curve on housing affordability. Local rent control laws could inadvertently (or intentionally) result in less housing production than the state needs to house the people who want to live here. Limiting new construction in the state would likely lead to a significant reduction in the construction of new rental homes, exacerbating our existing housing affordability and availability crises.

SPUR believes some reforms of rent control are worthy of consideration, pending policy analysis and a more comprehensive legislative process that brings together tenant advocates, developers, and other housing stakeholders. We support the idea of making single-family homes subject to local rent control laws when they are owned by corporate entities or owners with multiple units. Single-family homes are a large portion of the state's housing stock and a growing portion of the rental housing stock, so there's a significant opportunity to expand protections by making some single-family homes subject to rent control. We also support the idea of a "rolling" date for housing to become subject to rent control (in localities that have rent control ordinances), potentially by amending AB 1482. SPUR staff would welcome the opportunity to form a task force to investigate these options and develop a more comprehensive policy solution.

Addressing housing affordability for Californians requires solutions that go beyond rent control. More than half (53%) of renters in the state are considered "rent burdened," meaning they spend more than 30% of their household income on rent and utilities each month. Cities are struggling to address homelessness challenges, and many communities and households continue to experience displacement pressures. We must act to make housing affordable, stabilize our communities, and open our cities to residents of all backgrounds and economic means.

However, Prop. 33 is not the right tool for the job. It would have negative impacts on the production of housing that would outweigh its potential benefits. The state plays a key role in setting guardrails for local rent control policy, and the details of these guardrails are important. We urge the California State Legislature to work toward compromise legislation that can be negotiated through the legislative process.

Read our complete analysis at spurvoterguide.org

SPUR Voter Guide Purpose and Process

The goal of the SPUR Voter Guide is to offer objective analysis and advise voters on which measures will deliver real solutions.

For this election, SPUR analyzed measures related to our policy areas on the California, San Francisco, San José, and Oakland ballots. We only took positions on measures that were on the ballot by August 1, 2024; consequently, some smaller school districts in Santa Clara County that serve portions of the City of San José were not included in our analysis.

All ballot measures are researched and analyzed by SPUR staff.

For California measures, a committee of the SPUR Board of Directors made up primarily of board members reviews staff research, hears arguments from proponents and opponents of the relevant measures, debates the merits of each measure, and provides recommendations to the SPUR Board for a vote.

For city measures, subcommittees made up primarily of members of SPUR's city advisory boards in San Francisco, San José, and Oakland form the ballot analysis committees. Each committee reviews staff research, hears arguments on both sides of the relevant measures, debates the merits of each, and provides recommendations to the relevant SPUR city advisory board for a vote. The endorsements from each city advisory board are then affirmed by the SPUR Board of Directors with a vote of 50% of the members. The SPUR Board can overturn the recommendations of the city advisory boards with a 60% vote.

The SPUR Board of Directors voted to adopt positions on the relevant measures on August 14, 2024, and September 4, 2024.

Acknowledgments

California Ballot Analysis Committee: Jay Bradshaw, Ed Harrington, Don Falk, Bob Gamble, Ariane Hogan, Dawn Kamalanathan, Gregg Miller, Carl Shannon, Shakirah Simley, Molly Turner

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