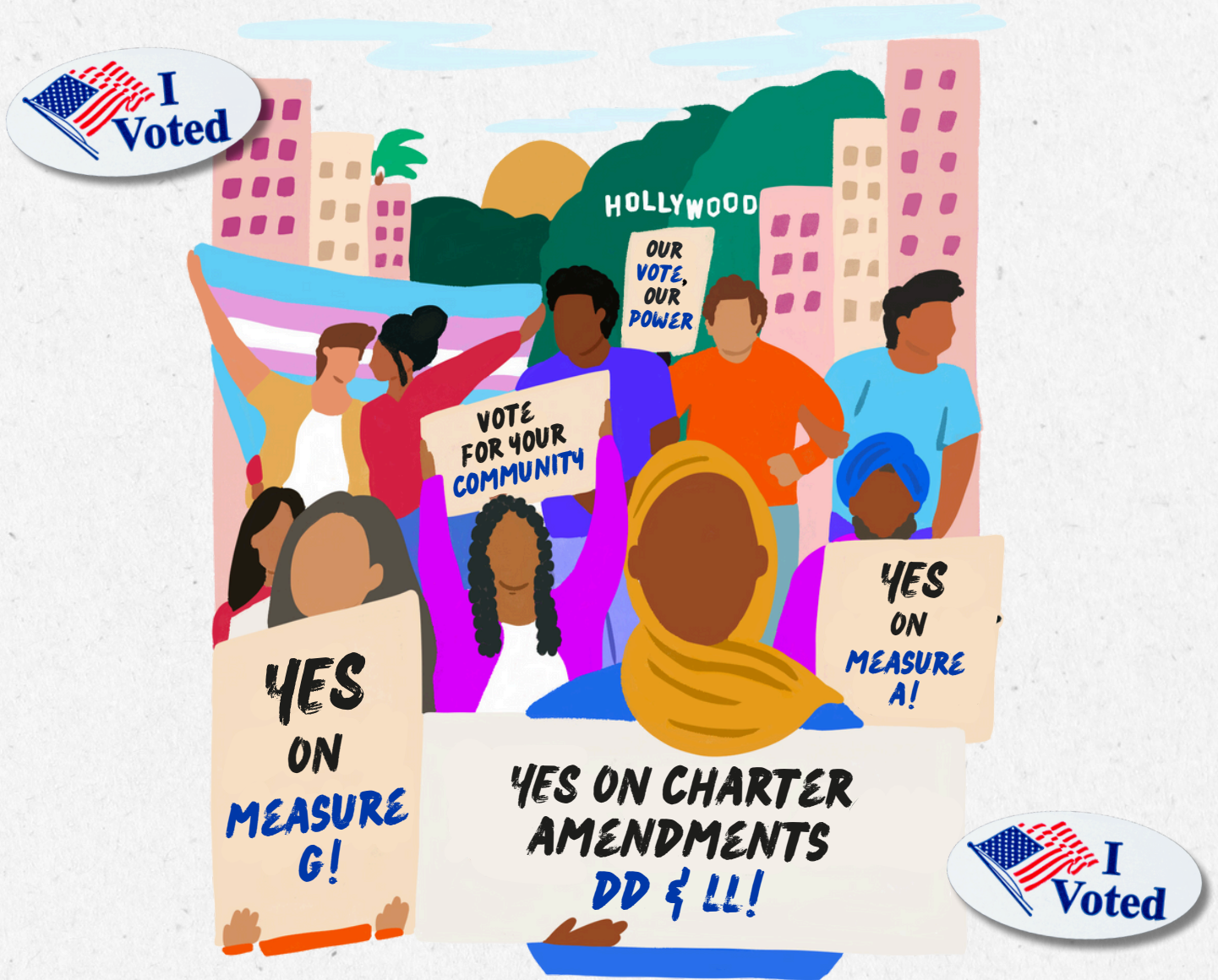




AAPI EQUITY
ALLIANCE

VOTER GUIDE

A guide to ballot measures for Los Angeles County voters




For more information, including summaries translated into AAPI languages, visit

aapiequityalliance.org/voterguide

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Additional information available at ethics.lacity.org

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ABOUT

Democracy is on the ballot, this year more than ever.

Through November 5, 2024, voters in Los Angeles County can weigh in on proposals ranging from affirming the right of same-sex couples to marry in the state of California, to dramatically updating how county government works in Los Angeles.

AAPI Equity Alliance releases a voter guide every major election cycle to help Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and others in Los Angeles understand and evaluate ballot measures. This voter guide includes measures for the State of California, County of Los Angeles, and City of Los Angeles.*

Depending on where you live, your ballot may include additional measures.

We explain what each measure does and its impact, including on AAPIs,** and we share a recommendation on how to vote:

- ✓ SUPPORT = we recommend voting “yes.”
- ✗ OPPOSE = we recommend voting “no.”
- NO POSITION = we are not making a recommendation.



You can read the full text of these measures at the following websites.

- * sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-measures/qualified-ballot-measures
- * content.lavote.gov/docs/rccc/documents/measures-appearing-on-the-ballot-08-16-2024-draft-final-1.pdf
- * clerk.lacity.gov/clerk-services/elections/municipal-elections/ballot-measures

Because we are a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization, we do not endorse individual candidates.

AAPI Equity Alliance (AAPI Equity) - formerly, the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON) - is a coalition of 40+ community-based organizations serving the diverse needs of the 1.6 million Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community in Los Angeles County and beyond. We are dedicated to improving the lives of AAPIs through civic engagement, capacity building, and policy advocacy. Learn more about AAPI Equity at aapiequityalliance.org.

We are one of the co-founding partners of Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition that tracks and responds to hate against AAPIs across the country. Learn more about Stop AAPI Hate at stopaapihate.org.

* AAPI Equity Alliance is not analyzing Los Angeles City Charter Amendment ER (City Ethics Commission Authority and Operational Independence) due to a conflict of interest.

** We use the term "AAPIs" throughout this voter guide to refer to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, unless the underlying source we cite uses another term (for example, the U.S. Census uses Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders or NHPI) or refers to a specific subset of our communities. We recognize that the term "AAPI" encompasses a large and diverse set of communities and that the identity is debated within our communities. We use the term "AAPI" because AAPI Equity Alliance includes among its member organizations and leadership representation from the Pacific Islander community.

KEY DATES TO KNOW

Monday, Oct 7

Vote-by-mail ballots are mailed to voters



Monday, Oct 21

Last day to register to vote in advance of Election Day

More information at registertovote.ca.gov

Saturday, Oct 26

First day of in-person voting

Look up your vote center at lavote.gov

Tuesday, Nov 5

Election Day!

Last day to mail your mail-in ballot or turn it in at a vote center

If you missed the deadline to register to vote, you can still register up until and on Election Day!

More information at sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/same-day-reg



VOTING IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE

LA County is required to provide help to voters in languages other than English, including in Bengali, Burmese Cambodian/Khmer, Chinese, Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Spanish, Tagalog/Filipino, Telugu, Thai, and Vietnamese.

- * Call 1-800-815-2666, option 3, to request translated materials to be mailed to you.
- * Receive help in one of these languages on Election Day at most vote centers, including on the voting machine.
- * Find translated election materials online at lavote.gov.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS? NEED TO REPORT A PROBLEM?

If you are a voter in the Los Angeles and Orange County areas with questions about voting, such as how to vote or where to vote, or if you want to report an issue with voting, you can contact Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California.

Telephone:

- Chinese: 800-520-2356
- English: 888-349-9695
- Hindi: 855-971-2552
- Khmer: 800-867-3126
- Korean: 800-867-3640
- Tagalog: 855-300-2552
- Thai: 800-914-9583
- Vietnamese: 714-477-2958

Social Media:

- DM on X (Twitter): @ajsocal_
- DM on IG: @advancingjusticesocal
- DM on TikTok: @advancingjusticesocal
- DM on Facebook: @advancingjusticesocal
- Also on WeChat, Red, Kakao Talk, Missy USA, and Vietnamese-language social media

Website: ajsocal.org/votingrights/

Text: 213-241-0250

Email: voter@ajsocal.org

CALIFORNIA STATE PROPOSITIONS



 **VOTE FOR YOUR PLANET** 

PROPOSITION 2: AUTHORIZES BONDS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL & COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACILITIES

Analysis by Riley Chen and Hoang Nguyen, AAPI Equity Alliance



SUPPORT

SUMMARY

There are about 10,000 public schools and 115 local community colleges in California, serving nearly 8 million students.¹

Proposition 2 would issue \$10 billion in bonds to fund the construction and modernization of these facilities, with \$8.5 billion for K-12 facilities and \$1.5 billion for community college facilities.

A bond is a loan. When the government does not have the funding necessary to perform its functions, it raises money by issuing bonds which can be bought by individuals and organizations. The government eventually pays that money back, with added interest. It is estimated that the state of California is currently repaying about \$80 billion in bonded debt.

It is estimated that repaying Proposition 2 would cost \$500 million annually over a span of 35 years.²

ANALYSIS

Supporters, including the CA School Board Association and construction groups, argue that California's K-12 schools and community colleges are in major need of basic structural repairs, renovation, and modernization. 38% of students across the state go to schools that do not meet minimum facility standards, and districts need to spend \$3.1 to \$4.1 billion annually to maintain these subpar facilities.³ Additionally, schools have not received new state bond funding since 2016.⁴ Funding for public school facilities is heavily dependent on these bonds, and existing money allocated for repairs has long since been exhausted. Students should not have to go to schools that are in disrepair, where basic necessities such as air conditioning and heat are not available.

Opponents, including some low-income school districts, argue that the measure disadvantages students in less wealthy districts. The state typically pays for 50-60% construction and renovation costs, leaving the rest for the local school districts to figure out.⁵ Funds are distributed through matching grants, which means the more money a local school district can raise, the larger the match from the state.

We recommend supporting this ballot measure. More money for schools to rebuild and renovate is a good policy. Overall, the vast majority of students in California would benefit from additional funding to repair and modernize school facilities.

PROPOSITION 3: CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO MARRIAGE

Analysis by Riley Chen and Hoang Nguyen, AAPI Equity Alliance



SUMMARY

In 2008, California voters approved Proposition 8, which declared in the state's constitution that marriage is valid only if it is between a man and a woman.⁶ This measure was invalidated by the United States Supreme Court in 2015, which established the right to same-sex marriage across the country.⁷

The language defining that marriage is between a man and a woman still remains in the California constitution. If approved, Proposition 3 would repeal that language and add language that would enshrine marriage as a "fundamental right" for all.

ANALYSIS

Supporters, including Governor Newsom, Equality California, and the Human Rights Campaign, argue that California should enshrine the right to marry for all in the state's constitution, in case the Supreme Court overturns its own ruling that established that freedom across the country. Additionally, they argue Prop 8's discriminatory language remains "a stain on our state's Constitution" and an injustice that is necessary to correct.⁸

Opponents argue that the traditional, religious definition of marriage has existed for a long time and that lifting boundaries on the definition of marriage would "open Pandora's Box."⁹

There are an estimated 685,000 AAPI adults in the U.S. that identify as LGBTQ.¹⁰ In California, there are around 66,000 AAPIs who identify as LGBTQ.¹¹ Furthermore, over 1/3 of all AAPI same-sex couples in the U.S. live in California.¹²

We recommend supporting this measure to ensure the freedom to marry is available for all in California. The right to marry is a central part of our autonomy and freedom, and denying same-sex couples this right would be unfair and discriminatory. Ultimately, this measure protects a fundamental right for same-sex couples from the whims of the Supreme Court, while eliminating outdated and prejudicial language from the state constitution.

PROPOSITION 4: AUTHORIZES BONDS FOR SAFE DRINKING WATER, WILDFIRE PREVENTION, AND PROTECTING COMMUNITIES AND NATURAL LANDS FROM CLIMATE RISKS



Analysis by Dean S. Toji, Ph.D., Co-Chair, Environmental Justice Committee, AAPI Equity Alliance

SUMMARY

Global warming has heated the planet to the highest temperatures ever experienced. The result is climate change, which disrupts the natural systems and conditions necessary for society to function – extreme and unusual weather events undermine water, food, and energy supplies, and make many places unlivable. Both must be addressed.

Proposition 4 would allow the state to sell a \$10 billion bond to fund activities that help protect people and nature from the destructive and harmful impacts of climate change. It would invest in safe drinking water, water capture, wildfire protection, parks and air pollution reduction projects. It would also support renewable energy projects to help transition away from fossil fuels, the major source of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming.¹³

Proposition 4 requires that at least 40% of the bond money must be used for activities that directly benefit communities that have lower incomes or are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

ANALYSIS

AAPIs care about climate change and want the government to act.¹⁴ AAPIs should continue to support action now by supporting Proposition 4, alongside others like the California Democratic Party, environmental groups, and labor.

Addressing climate change means preparing to survive its destructive impacts and to stop the causes of global warming. AAPIs experience the impacts of climate change just like everyone else. Low-income persons, including AAPIs, bear the greatest hardships. Take heat waves, for example. Low-income AAPIs and others are more likely to live in hot apartments without air conditioning, and in much hotter neighborhoods with fewer trees and greenery.¹⁵ They are more likely to have jobs in hot workplaces and outdoors. They use public transportation more frequently and wait at bus stops that provide little or no shade.¹⁶ Nearly all of the climate bond program areas address such impacts.

Proposition 4 also helps us move away from fossil fuels – the main cause of global warming. Proposition 4 would fund renewable energy infrastructure, which helps make it possible to eliminate fossil fuels from electricity generation. The other areas funded by Proposition 4 also reduce greenhouse gases while they help cope with climate change impacts, because activities that protect and enhance forests, wetlands, natural habitats, parks, and farmlands also remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it in trees and other plants and in healthy soils and habitats.

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association argues that California already has too much bond debt and Proposition 4 would add another \$10 billion plus interest. The total cost of the bond is estimated at \$19 billion.¹⁷ That is a lot, but it is a fraction of the cost to the state of well more than \$200-billion in estimated climate change impacts by 2050,¹⁸ not to speak of the cost to human health and life.

PROPOSITION 5: ALLOWS LOCAL BONDS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE WITH 55% VOTER APPROVAL



Analysis by Ale Campillo, Policy Advocate, Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance

SUMMARY

Local bonds help finance community investments like new schools, affordable housing, and sewer systems. Currently, most California bond proposals are required to appear on an election ballot and receive two-thirds (66.67%) support from voters in relevant jurisdictions.

If passed, Proposition 5 would lower the current voting requirement from two-thirds (66.67%) to 55%. By lowering the voter threshold to 55%, Proposition 5 would make it easier for voters to approve bonds that could fund affordable housing and other projects in their jurisdictions. If approved on the November 2024 ballot, the new 55% threshold would also apply to any bonds appearing on the same November 2024 ballot.

ANALYSIS

Supporters, including the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, California Democratic Party, and the California State Building and Construction Trades Council, argue that requiring a two-thirds vote to be the threshold for passing a law allows one-third of voters to overrule the wishes of a supermajority of voters. This isn't fair. By lowering the threshold to 55%, a majority of voters will be able to more easily fund community priorities like new schools, street and sewage infrastructure, and affordable housing.¹⁹ For example, this could ease the passage of bonds that build affordable housing for California's most vulnerable families, seniors, and veterans.²⁰

Opponents, including the California Association of Realtors, California Chamber of Commerce, and National Federation of Independent Business, have spent over \$29 million to protect the 2/3 threshold.²¹ The main argument against Proposition 5 is that property owners might have to pay disproportionately more when local governments find solutions to pay back borrowed money. Critics claim it's easy to take on more debt when you aren't the one paying it back.

We recommend a yes vote on Proposition 5 as an effective step towards lowering the barrier for local governments, with the approval of a majority of voters, to fund projects that address the region's housing crisis. The AAPI community could benefit from bonds, including those that develop affordable housing. For example, AAPIs 65 years and older are the fastest growing elderly community of any racial group in Los Angeles per capita, but nearly half of elderly AAPI renters and homeowners are burdened with spending more than 30% of their income on housing.²² Building affordable housing in Los Angeles will greatly improve the lives of low income, elderly, and immigrant AAPI. (For more about the challenges that AAPIs face in finding and keeping affordable housing, see the analysis for LA County Measure A.)

PROPOSITION 6: ELIMINATES CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION ALLOWING INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE FOR INCARCERATED PERSONS



Analysis by Godfrey Plata, Civic Engagement Consultant, AAPI Equity Alliance

SUMMARY

California's constitution allows for "involuntary servitude" as a punishment for a person who is incarcerated in state prisons. While the state's constitution does not define "involuntary servitude," the U.S. Supreme Court has described "involuntary servitude" as "forms of compulsory labor akin to African slavery" – in other words, forcing people to work against their will.²³ In practice, this has meant that incarcerated Californians may be required to work in prisons, at times for as little as 35 cents per hour.²⁴ Those who refuse to do this work can face additional punishment.

Proposition 6 would change California's constitution, banning involuntary servitude as a punishment for crime in state prisons. Instead, work would be voluntary for those who are incarcerated. If passed, state prisons would also be banned from disciplining those who refuse to work.

Prisons could still offer "time credits" to incarcerated Californians who choose to work while imprisoned. "Time credits" are credits that can reduce the amount of time individuals are incarcerated, in exchange for work.

ANALYSIS

Voters should support Proposition 6. Involuntary servitude in or out of prison is unjust, unnecessary, and unfair. After the Civil War, the Thirteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution banned both slavery and involuntary servitude, but supporters of slavery made an exception for its use as punishment. Then and now, this loophole has allowed prisons to maintain slavery-like conditions away from the public eye.²⁵

California has seen rising incarceration in particular for Asian and Pacific Islander men.²⁶ Meanwhile, it remains one of nearly twenty states that still has constitutional language permitting involuntary servitude as punishment.²⁷ California should follow the lead of Oregon, Colorado, and Tennessee, just some of the states where voters have removed involuntary servitude as punishment from their respective constitutions.

Supporters of proposition 6 include the California Labor Federation, the ACLU of California, the Abolish Slavery National Network, California Black Legislative Caucus, and the California Teachers Association. While there are no formal campaigns in opposition, some lawmakers have worried that this could open the door to mandating minimum wage for incarcerated Californians, which would cost the state more than one billion dollars each year.²⁸ However, Proposition 6 does not require wages at all, and state law explicitly protects the state from being required to pay prisoners minimum wage.²⁹

PROPOSITION 32: RAISES MINIMUM WAGE

Analysis by Riley Chen and Hoang Nguyen, AAPI Equity Alliance



SUMMARY

In 2016, voters approved increasing the state's minimum wage from \$10.50 to \$15 per hour by 2022.³⁰ Adjustments to inflation have since increased this wage to \$16 in 2024.

This measure would increase the state's minimum wage to \$18 per hour for all employees by 2026. After the minimum wage reaches \$18, there may be annual increases to that wage adjusting for inflation and rising costs of living.

If passed, these increases to the minimum wage would occur at different speeds, depending on whether an employer has 26 or more workers, or 25 or fewer workers. For employers with 26 or more workers, the minimum wage would reach \$18 starting on January 1, 2025. For employers with 25 or fewer workers, minimum wage would reach \$18 starting on January 1, 2026.

ANALYSIS

Supporters, including numerous union & workers' organizations and elected officials, argue that wages have not kept up with rising living costs and inflation. Despite increases in the minimum wage, inflation continues to eat into wage growth, with 39% of Californians reporting that their finances are "worse off" than a year ago.³¹ In fact, after adjusting for inflation, average wages are down 1.3% compared to 2020.³² Raising the minimum wage would help combat inflation, and ease financial burdens for many workers. Increases to the minimum wage will boost hiring, particularly in the restaurant industry, which has seen staffing shortages since the COVID-19 pandemic due to low wages.

Opponents, including the National Federation of Independent Business, argue that increases to the minimum wage will result in job losses and negatively impact the economy. However, studies overwhelmingly show that wage increases do not have a negative effect on employment.³³ Rather, higher wages would mean increased purchasing power, along with opportunities to boost business and stimulate the economy.³⁴

We recommend supporting Proposition 32. In order to afford a basic standard of living in California, the wage for a single person without children would need to be \$27.32 per hour.³⁵ For a family of two working adults and two children, their wage would need to be at least \$33.26 per hour.³⁶ Clearly, the current \$16 wage is far below what is needed, and even \$18 is still not enough.

AAPIs make up one in six workers (16%) in California, and nearly a quarter (23%) of AAPI Californians are working but struggling with poverty.³⁷ Many of these workers have multiple minimum wage jobs, yet lack the resources to afford basic needs such as housing due to rising costs. AAPI minimum wage workers depend on this income as a means to support themselves and their families. Though a \$18 wage is far from what is needed, it is a step forward towards improving quality of life and bridging California's wage gap. Ultimately, this measure would increase wages for 5.1 million workers, and is estimated to lift 3.5 million workers throughout the state out of poverty.³⁸

At the same time, we recognize the need for governments at every level to support the small businesses which would be particularly impacted by the wage increases and support policies to do so.

PROPOSITION 33: EXPANDS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' AUTHORITY TO ENACT RENT CONTROL ON RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY



Analysis by Ale Campillo, Policy Advocate, Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance

SUMMARY

Currently, under state law, if California tenants live in apartments and corporate-owned single-family homes that are older than 15 years, landlords have to follow a policy popularly known as rent control. They cannot raise rent more than 5% (plus the cost of inflation) in a single year. Even if inflation is high, the most that these landlords are allowed to raise rent in any given year is 10% total.³⁹

However, these caps on rent increases do not apply to single-family homes or housing built on or after February 1, 1995. Furthermore, the state allows landlords to charge whatever rent they want if and when an apartment becomes vacant, even in buildings otherwise subject to rent control.⁴⁰

Proposition 33 would change this reality, allowing cities and counties to determine rent control policies for any housing type, for housing constructed at any time, without state interference. Following the passage of Proposition 33, local jurisdictions could take action to alter existing rental laws, if they so choose. Proposition 33 would also prevent the state legislature from interfering with future attempts to limit localized rent control.

ANALYSIS

Supporters, including unions and housing justice groups, argue that Proposition 33 would enable local governments to enact rent control measures meaningful to their community contexts and thereby fight rising eviction rates. Opponents, including the California Apartment Association and California Business Roundtable, fear that Proposition 33 would destabilize the housing market and reduce the number of new housing developments due to fear of lower profits.

We agree with the supporters and recommend a yes vote on Proposition 33. It would give local governments a tool to slow eviction rates for low-income AAPIs who otherwise cannot keep up with rising rental hikes in expensive places to live such as Los Angeles. In LA's Chinatown neighborhood alone, dozens of tenants are being evicted, many of whom are elderly community members.⁴¹

Legalizing local rent control measures is essential for mitigating the post-COVID housing crisis in LA.⁴² Proposition 33 will restore the ability for local governments to regulate rent control for all building types and empower legislators to protect community interests without the burden of state law.

PROPOSITION 34: RESTRICTS SPENDING OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG REVENUES BY CERTAIN HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS



Analysis by Hoang Nguyen, Director of Government Affairs, AAPI Equity Alliance

SUMMARY

When nonprofit healthcare providers purchase prescription drugs from pharmaceutical companies, those providers receive a federal drug discount because they serve low-income patients. The money saved is meant to be used to serve more patients. However, federal law does not explicitly restrict how healthcare providers spend these revenues, which means some have spent the money on activities not related to direct patient care.

Proposition 34 would only apply to healthcare providers who have spent over \$100 million in any 10-year period on activities besides direct patient care and who have run multifamily housing with more than 500 health and safety violations. These providers would be required to spend at least 98 percent of their net revenue earned from the federal drug discounts on direct patient care, or risk penalties and losing their tax-exempt status.

The measure would only impact a few health care entities in California. Specifically, it is targeting the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, which is an international organization providing HIV-care and health services to those in need. They also operate pharmacies, thrift stores, health and wellness centers, affordable housing locations, and food-service programs, none of which are considered direct patient care but still provide much needed support and relief.⁴³ Over the years the Foundation has spent almost \$100 million from its revenues to support ballot measures in California, including two failed proposals that would have limited rent increases throughout the state.⁴⁴

ANALYSIS

Supporters, including the California Republican Party and California Apartment Association, argue that health care entities should stick to their mission of providing healthcare and housing services, and not use taxpayer dollars to engage in political activities. The biggest contributor to this measure's campaign is the California Apartment Association, which opposes rent control laws.⁴⁵

Opponents, including the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, National Organization of Women, and Consumer Watchdog, say that this measure is deceptively designed as a patient protection effort but is in reality a way by the California Apartment Association to stop rent control policies by targeting the Foundation's ability to advocate.

We recommend opposing Proposition 34. The high cost of rent is impacting the quality-of-life of AAPIs throughout the state: 40% of the six million Asians and 58% of the 330,000 Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in California are renters. Nearly a third of Asian renters⁴⁶ in Los Angeles pay more than 50 percent of their household income on housing.⁴⁷ In regard to rental affordability, Pacific Islanders faced the harshest conditions, with less income on average and housing affordability decreasing.⁴⁸ One of the main solutions to the housing affordability crisis in California is rent control. Opposing this measure would allow organizations such as the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, which provides housing support to the people it serves, to continue advocating for rent-control measures on the ballot for the voters to decide.

PROPOSITION 35: PROVIDES PERMANENT FUNDING FOR MEDI-CAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Analysis by Candice Cho, Managing Director of Policy and Counsel, AAPI Equity Alliance



SUMMARY

Medi-Cal is a program that provides health coverage for low-income Californians. It serves more than a third of Californians, or 15 million people, including nearly 1.5 million AAPIs.⁴⁹ California contracts with managed care organizations (MCOs), like Kaiser Permanente and Blue Shield, to provide health care under Medi-Cal.

For the last twenty years, the state has charged an “MCO tax,” which raises \$7-8 billion annually. The tax revenue pays for the program – which must otherwise be paid for by the state using other money – and for increased payments to doctors and other providers. Both the state and the federal government, which helps to pay for Medi-Cal, must approve the tax. The state’s approval expires in 2026.⁵⁰

Proposition 35 would create strict rules on how the state can use the revenue from the MCO tax, taking this decision out of the hands of the state legislature and Governor as they balance the budget year to year. Some providers would see payment increases, such as doctors, emergency departments, and community hospitals. Others, such as community health workers, would not. Proposition 35 would also make the MCO tax permanent starting in 2027, subject to federal approval.

ANALYSIS

Supporters, which include a coalition of doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers who would see an increase in payments, argue that the revenue from a health care tax should go to providing health care. They say that California does not pay its providers enough to continue treating Medi-Cal patients, which means less access to care and longer wait times for patients.⁵¹

Opponents include Governor Newsom, the Children’s Partnership, the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, and the League of Women Voters. They argue that instead of freezing how the MCO tax revenue is spent, elected officials should have flexibility to consider it when balancing the entire state budget and communities should be able to advocate for it during the budget process. They argue that locking in payment rules that benefit the providers backing this measure comes at the expense of other Medi-Cal providers and priorities. For example, the measure eliminates continuous coverage for children younger than six and wage increases for the community health workers (CHWs) who connect AAPIs to essential health and social services,⁵² while community health centers and public hospitals would not receive funding commensurate with the significant numbers of Medi-Cal patients they treat. Finally, they argue that it makes Medi-Cal less financially stable. Proposition 35 would create a billions-of-dollars shortfall in the program that the state would have to pay for with money from somewhere else in the budget, possibly at the expense of other priorities.⁵³

Because there are important arguments on both sides impacting AAPIs, AAPI Equity Alliance is not taking a position on Proposition 35.

PROPOSITION 36: ALLOWS FELONY CHARGES AND INCREASES SENTENCES FOR CERTAIN DRUG & THEFT CRIMES



Analysis by Hoang Nguyen, Director of Government Affairs, AAPI Equity Alliance

SUMMARY

In 2014, California voters raised the threshold for imprisonment in California's overcrowded, costly, and ineffective prison system.⁵⁴ Proposition 47 reclassified some nonviolent felonies (e.g. shoplifting, simple drug possession and writing a bad check) as misdemeanors, unless the defendant had prior convictions for murder, rape, certain sex offenses, or certain gun crimes.

Proposition 36 would roll back Proposition 47 and add new penalties for drug use and a broad range of theft offenses, as well as lengthen prison sentences for some drug and theft crimes.

This measure, if passed, would allow a person who has had two prior drug or theft-related convictions to be charged with a felony by either possessing certain drugs, including cocaine and fentanyl, or by committing theft under \$950. Defendants who plead guilty to felony drug possession and complete treatment can have the charges dismissed, unless a court or prosecutor determines that the treatment has been "unsatisfactory."⁵⁵ Additionally, the measure would also require the court to warn anyone convicted of possessing for sale, transporting, or distributing any amount of "hard drugs" that they could be charged with murder if they sell or distribute drugs in the future and the recipient dies. This would apply not only to drug dealers, but to anyone who might provide a friend or fellow user with drugs (whether in exchange for money or not). Overall, the measure would lead to a spike in the state prison population and therefore would cost potentially hundreds of millions of dollars annually.⁵⁶

ANALYSIS

Supporters, including the state's Republican Party, law enforcement associations representing police, sheriffs, and district attorneys, and retailers like Walmart, argue that the rise in crimes in California is the direct result of Proposition 47 and criminal justice reform efforts which lowered punishments and, therefore, encouraged criminal activities. However, state data show no significant increase in the number of reported nonviolent felonies impacted by Proposition 47, shoplifting or overall theft, in California since the measure passed.⁵⁷

Opponents, including Governor Newsom and the state's Democratic Party, say that criminal justice reforms, including Proposition 47, have reduced recidivism (whether a convicted person commits another crime) and both the prison population and its racial disparities, saving the state more than \$800 million.⁵⁸ "Cost savings have gone towards programs that make the state safer, like mental health and drug treatment, diversion programs, housing, and victims' services."⁵⁹

We recommend opposing Proposition 36. Research shows that "tough-on-crimes" tactics, such as increasing prison time for nonviolent offenders or lowering the threshold for classifying a nonviolent offense as a felony, do not deter crimes.⁶⁰ Instead, long prison sentences without meaningful opportunities to rehabilitate tend to cause more crimes through recidivism. Additionally, the cost to imprison a person in California is \$106,000 annually. We believe that this money should be used to address poverty, homelessness, substance abuse, housing affordability, and lack of healthcare, which are often the root causes of crime. The tough-on-crime approach has racially disparate impacts from who gets arrested to who gets convicted to who serves time and how much – essentially being more punitive to Black persons and other people of color for the same offenses that white people commit.⁶¹

LOS ANGELES COUNTY BALLOT MEASURES



 **VOTE FOR YOUR LIVELIHOOD** 

MEASURE A: HOMELESSNESS SERVICES & AFFORDABLE HOUSING ORDINANCE

Analysis by An Le, Assistant Director, Community Building & Engagement, Little Tokyo Service Center



SUPPORT

SUMMARY

Measure A would raise money to fund affordable housing and provide care for unhoused people struggling with mental illness through a permanent half-cent sales tax in Los Angeles County. The tax would not apply to groceries, gas, medication, EBT purchases, rent, or diapers. It would set clear goals for homelessness programs. It would require that funding be moved away from lower-performing programs to those that are higher-performing. Independent audits and citizen oversight would ensure that goals are being met.

The measure would repeal and replace Measure H, a temporary quarter-cent sales tax in the county that expires in 2027.

ANALYSIS

We recommend voting yes on Measure A. The State of California is experiencing a severe homelessness crisis, with Los Angeles County making up the largest share at over 75,000.⁶² Asian Americans (AAs) and Native Hawaiians & Pacific Islanders (NHPIs) make up over 17% of Los Angeles County.⁶³ Like other communities, AAs and NHPIs struggle with the high cost of living, including housing. For example, in some places in the city, at least 40% of AANHPI residents earn under \$50,000⁶⁴ and some residents spend at least 49% of their income on rent.⁶⁵ There were over 1,800 unhoused AA and NHPI students in Los Angeles County in the 2022-23 school year.⁶⁶

Homelessness is a countywide problem affecting all racial and ethnic communities, which requires countywide solutions. The City of Los Angeles, which accounts for over 45,000 of the unhoused population in the County, has already passed taxes affecting the wealthiest in the City, but a permanent source of funding is needed to address immediate needs and provide resources to make and keep housing affordable. Without the funding raised by this measure to support affordable housing and care for unhoused people, supporters of Measure A estimate a 25% increase in the number of people who are unhoused. This tax is estimated to cost low-income families \$2.50 per month.

Supporters include the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), United Way of Greater LA, Downtown Women's Center, and California Community Foundation.

Opponents include the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and Los Angeles County Business Federation, which has raised concerns about the proposal, saying it is "rushed" and would result in a "permanent tax."⁶⁷

MEASURE E: CONSOLIDATED FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY EMERGENCY RESPONSE & INFRASTRUCTURE SPECIAL PARCEL TAX INITIATIVE ORDINANCE



Analysis by Candice Cho, Managing Director of Policy and Counsel, AAPI Equity Alliance

SUMMARY

The LA County Fire Department serves more than four million residents across 59 cities and all unincorporated areas in the county.⁶⁸ The Department's \$1.44 billion budget is not funded out of the county's normal budget. Instead, a majority of revenue comes from property taxes collected in those areas (64.5%) and fees paid by cities receiving services (12%).⁶⁹

This measure would authorize a parcel tax of six cents (\$0.06) per square foot of structural improvements in geographic areas served by the Fire Department. (A parcel tax is a tax on real property, which is collected as part of a property tax bill but not based on the value of the property.) The tax would start on July 1, 2025, and increase annually by the lower of 2% or the California Consumer Price Index. The money raised by the tax - about \$150 million per year - would go toward hiring more paramedics and firefighters, updating outdated communications and IT systems, and buying more equipment like fire engines and water-dropping helicopters.⁷⁰

ANALYSIS

LA County Firefighters Local 1014, which is sponsoring the measure, represents over 3200 firefighters, paramedics, dispatchers, pilots, and forestry and health hazmat personnel. The union argues that funding has not kept up with the growth in calls for help during emergencies and longer, more dangerous wildfire seasons, and that the tax is needed to keep communities safe and save lives.

We did not identify any groups or arguments in opposition.

LA County is home to more than 1.6 million AAPIs, many of whom live in the 59 cities or unincorporated areas served by the Department, such as Artesia, Diamond Bar, La Canada Flintridge, and Walnut. We recommend a yes vote on this measure to ensure that these communities have access to the life-saving services they need.

MEASURE G: LOS ANGELES COUNTY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE, ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY CHARTER AMENDMENT



Analysis by Hoang Nguyen, Director of Government Affairs, AAPI Equity Alliance

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors governs the county. The five elected members of the Board oversee the county's hospitals, mental health and public benefits system, jails, and much more. They also appoint the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is in charge of the daily operations and administration of the county government.

This ballot measure would reshape Los Angeles County government by amending its charter to expand the Board from five to nine members by the year 2032 and make the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), currently appointed, an elected position by 2028. Additionally, the measure would form an independent ethics commission; authorize the suspension, with or without pay, of an elective county officer who has been criminally charged with a felony related to a violation of official duties; prohibit former county officials from lobbying the county for a minimum of two years after leaving county service; and establish a Charter Review Commission for community input, amongst other changes. The measure also requires that all these changes be funded with existing County funding sources and result in no additional costs to taxpayers.

ANALYSIS

Los Angeles County is the biggest county in the nation by population, with over 10 million people. Each of the five members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors represents over 2 million residents. That number is more than many states' populations. For comparison, the second most populous county in the nation is Cook County, Illinois, with over 5 million residents, where its Board of Supervisors has 17 elected members, each representing 300,000 residents.⁷¹

Supporters of this measure include three of the five Supervisors, U.S. Representatives Judy Chu and Ted Lieu, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), United Way of Greater LA, Downtown Women's Center, and California Community Foundation. They argue that more seats on the Board of Supervisors will enable each Supervisor to represent fewer people, which will produce better, more effective, and more responsive government. They argue that smaller districts will make it easier to run less expensive campaigns and for candidates from different backgrounds to run for office. Furthermore, having a directly elected County CEO would make the head of the executive branch more directly accountable to the voters and provide a check against the Board of Supervisors, who right now act as both the legislative and executive branches of the county government.

Opponents of the measure, including two of the five Supervisors and the Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, argue that more government does not necessarily result in better government, and that a bigger Board would not necessarily lead to better representation for all communities of color. Shifting some of the power of the Board of Supervisors to a countywide elected CEO may concentrate too much authority within the CEO. They also criticize the process for placing the measure on the ballot as rushed and opaque, and express concerns about the cost.

MEASURE G: LOS ANGELES COUNTY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE, ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY CHARTER AMENDMENT



Analysis by Hoang Nguyen, Director of Government Affairs, AAPI Equity Alliance

We recommend a yes on Measure G. The status quo does not adequately serve AAPI communities. With 1.6 million people in Los Angeles County who identify as Asian or Pacific Islander, representation on the Board of Supervisors is critical. Yet there has never been an AAPI elected to the Board, in part because of the enormous size of each district. This measure would improve the opportunity for AAPI representation by making it more possible to draw a district where AAPI voters are a plurality with significant influence at the ballot box. Better representation is essential to better policies for AAPIs.

Additionally, the measure creates a system of checks and balances that finally aligns the atypical structure of Los Angeles County government with other local and state governments across the country – giving the voters the power to elect both the executive *and* the legislature. Other large counties, such as Cook County and Harris County, elect both the executive and legislative bodies.⁷² This is also similar to most local and state government structures across the country where there is typically an elected executive (Mayor or Governor) and an elected legislature (City Council or State Legislature). While some power is transferred to the newly elected Chief Executive Officer position, the Board of Supervisors would retain much of their legislative authority to put forward bills and policies.

Furthermore, the other reforms included in this measure would help prevent abuses of power and strengthen transparency and accountability in county government.

LOS ANGELES CITY BALLOT MEASURES



 **VOTE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY** 

CHARTER AMENDMENT DD: INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION FOR THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES



Analysis by Candice Cho, Managing Director of Policy and Counsel, AAPI Equity Alliance

SUMMARY

We all live in political districts. Some districts stay the same over time, while others must be redrawn to reflect changes in population because the law requires districts to be about equal in size. For example, if you live in the City of Los Angeles, you live in a city, whose boundaries are stable and where voters can elect the Mayor. You also live in one of fifteen City Council districts, whose boundaries can change and where voters elect Councilmembers.

Redistricting is the process of redrawing these lines, usually after the Census, a once-in-a-decade process to count every person living in the United States. Redistricting is important because how districts are drawn influences which residents can run for office, how expensive it is to campaign, and thus who can win, how public dollars are spent, who gets services, and what policies are put into place. You can participate in redistricting by advocating for your community, however you define it, to be kept whole, to be placed in the same district with other similar communities, or to be placed in a particular district.

Who gets to hear from the public and draw these lines really matters. There are many ways to divide the same number of people into districts, and these ways can be manipulated to benefit certain candidates or communities while punishing others.

In Los Angeles, there are two systems for redistricting. For the City of Los Angeles, the LA City Council appoints a commission to draw a recommended map of fifteen districts, which the Council can choose to adopt, change, or reject. By contrast, in LA County (which includes other cities besides Los Angeles), an independent commission of residents draws the map for the county's five supervisorial districts.

In 2021, the LA City Council rejected the map drawn by the commission it appointed and drew its own map. The next year, a leaked recording involving three Councilmembers exposed the racism and gamesmanship motivating this decision. The Council's map is the map we live with today. This recording, as well as other scandals plaguing the Council, led to this ballot measure.⁷³

This proposal would amend the City Charter (the city's "constitution") to replace the current appointed commission with an independent redistricting commission (IRC). Sixteen residents would redraw the Council districts every ten years following the Census. Any resident who is at least 18 years old and has lived in the city for at least five years could apply to serve on the commission, with some restrictions on eligibility to ensure true independence (e.g., a recent Council candidate could not serve).

ANALYSIS

We join the coalition of good government and community groups recommending a yes vote on Charter Amendment DD.

Like other Angelenos, AAPIs are experiencing a crisis of faith in city government.⁷⁴ AAPIs do not feel adequately represented by our city government. AAPIs do not feel that the Council takes enough action to respond to our needs, from affordable housing to safe neighborhoods.⁷⁵ AAPIs are not

CHARTER AMENDMENT DD: INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION FOR THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES



SUPPORT

Analysis by Candice Cho, Managing Director of Policy and Counsel, AAPI Equity Alliance

engaged by candidates for elected office.⁷⁶ AAPIs strongly support the creation of an IRC as a step in the right direction of strengthening representation of our communities.⁷⁷

All Angelenos, including AAPIs, deserve a fair, transparent, and inclusive redistricting process that prioritizes community representation. An IRC will better reflect the diversity of the city than a group of political appointees. An IRC may more meaningfully engage with diverse communities, including AAPIs, because the commissioners are not beholden to the elected officials who appointed them. Elected officials should not be able to choose their own voters, either directly or through their appointees.

The State of California and LA County, along with many other government jurisdictions across the nation, have IRCs, making them a proven, trusted, and nonpartisan reform. A group of residents who care about their communities can engage in the hard and important work of redrawing political districts by listening to what *everyone* has to say - not just the elected officials who are personally invested in how the lines of their districts are drawn.

We did not identify any groups or arguments in opposition.

CHARTER AMENDMENT FF: LOS ANGELES FIRE AND POLICE PENSIONS; PEACE OFFICERS

Analysis by Hoang Nguyen, Director of Government Affairs, AAPI Equity Alliance



SUMMARY

This measure would authorize the Los Angeles City Council to change city law to transfer the pension plans of some public safety workers from the Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System (LACERS), which is the regular pension plan that most city employees have, to the Los Angeles Fire and Police Pension Plan (LAFPP), a specialized pension plan. The public safety workers impacted would be police officers who work at the Los Angeles Airport and Port, and park rangers.

This change is estimated to cost the city \$86.4 million.⁷⁸

ANALYSIS

With no specific impact on the AAPI community, AAPI Equity Alliance is not taking a position on this ballot measure.

Supporters of this measure argue that public safety workers should be included in the LAFPP since they are essentially performing the same duties as police officers. Opponents are concerned about the one-time and ongoing cost to the city's budget, which might impact services.

CHARTER AMENDMENT HH: CITY GOVERNANCE, APPOINTMENTS, AND ELECTIONS

Analysis by Godfrey Plata, Civic Engagement Consultant, AAPI Equity Alliance



SUPPORT

SUMMARY

The City of Los Angeles is governed by a document called a Charter, just as the Constitution is the governing document for the nation. The city's charter can only be changed (or in official terms, amended) with the approval of voters. This year, Charter Amendments HH and II collect a variety of amendments in two different ballot measures. Some of the amendments are very technical, while others are more consequential.

Between the two, HH contains the more consequential amendments of the two ballot measures, focusing on the powers that particular city officials and agencies have to do their work. This means that voters can learn about what their public officials are and are not allowed to do. For example, HH clarifies that:

- the City Controller, as the city's chief accounting officer, can audit city contractors and subcontractors;
- the City Attorney, as the city's lawyer, can subpoena witnesses, compel their testimony, require the production of any books, papers, records or other items, and require responses relevant to their investigations, except for from "City offices, departments, officers, or employees";
- ordinances and referendums proposed by petition must be referred to a department or office for a report on their fiscal and other impacts on the City; and
- individuals appointed to city commissions must file financial disclosures before they can be confirmed.

Additionally, the amendments direct the Board of Harbor commission to have among its five members at least one member from San Pedro and at least one member from Wilmington, and empower the Mayor to make temporary appointments to Executive Director or General Manager positions in case of vacancies.

ANALYSIS

We recommend a yes vote on Charter Amendment HH. While there are no specific impacts to AAPIs in Los Angeles, HH helpfully clarifies the powers of the City Controller and City Attorney, likely in response to recent conflicts. For example, the City Controller began to investigate Urban Alchemy, a non-profit provider of a city service contracted to attend to incidents involving unhoused Angelenos.⁷⁹ When Urban Alchemy refused to cooperate with the Controller's asks – and instead sued the city – the City Attorney argued that the Controller didn't have jurisdiction to require responses from contractors like Urban Alchemy.

We support the clarifications in this measure because it gives voters a transparent look into what elected and appointed officials can and cannot do. However, we are concerned that city departments like the LAPD (which leads policing) or Department of City Planning (which controls land use, including for housing) would continue to be protected from investigation by the City Attorney. This means Angelenos must ultimately rely on state or federal attorneys to hold these departments accountable. While voters should support the amendments made in HH, they should also advocate for future charter amendments that enable deeper representation and accountability in government.

There is no known opposition to this charter amendment measure.

CHARTER AMENDMENT II: CITY ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

Analysis by Godfrey Plata, Civic Engagement Consultant, AAPI Equity Alliance



SUMMARY

The City of Los Angeles is governed by a document called a Charter, just as the Constitution is the governing document for the nation. The city's charter can only be changed (or in official terms, amended) with the approval of voters. This year, Charter Amendments HH and II collect a variety of amendments in two different ballot measures.

Charter Amendment II's proposals won't apply to many of us. Instead, they would primarily impact those working for the city. However, voters must approve these amendments according to city procedure. Charter Amendment II's proposals clarify that:

- non-discrimination rules governing city employment protect employees based on gender identity;
- the city can lease public park land to LA County or LAUSD for up to 50 years for "the erection and maintenance of public buildings consistent with public park purposes";
- El Pueblo Monument and the LA Zoo should be considered public parks; and
- the Airport Commission can establish fees and regulations for the "use of and access to airport property by commercial and private operators for aeronautical and ground transportation purposes."

ANALYSIS

We recommend supporting Charter Amendment II. Some amendments – like the inclusion of gender identity into non-discrimination policies – serve more than 50,000 workers employed by the city.⁸⁰ Voters should support the rights of city workers to be protected regardless of gender, as well as their ability to advance in their career pursuits by having their certifications be acknowledged across different city departments.

Other amendments clarify actions that specific city departments can take to do their work, and voters should approve this measure simply to enable this work to happen. For example, enabling the city to lease public park lands to LA County or LAUSD acknowledges that city residents are also beneficiaries of county and LAUSD services. Charter amendments like these – mostly necessary to enable the work of the city – must still be approved by voters to be enacted.

There is no known opposition to this charter amendment measure.

CHARTER AMENDMENT LL: INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION FOR THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Analysis by Candice Cho, Managing Director of Policy and Counsel, AAPI Equity Alliance

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) serves nearly half a million K-12 students (including more than 27,000 students identifying as AAPI)⁸¹ across Los Angeles County, making it the second largest school district in the country. The district is run by a Board of Education, whose seven members are directly elected by voters in seven districts. The Board hires and fires the Superintendent (who manages day-to-day operations), decides how to spend the \$19 billion budget, and creates district-wide policies.⁸²

The boundaries of these seven districts are redrawn every ten years in a public process called redistricting. (For more about redistricting and why it matters, see our analysis of Charter Amendment DD.) The process is currently led by an advisory commission of fifteen members, all appointed by elected officials: four by the Mayor, four by the LA City Council President, and one by each of the seven Board members.⁸³ The Los Angeles City Council has final say over whether to adopt, reject, or amend the commission's map.

Charter Amendment LL would replace the current commission with an independent redistricting commission (IRC). The IRC's fourteen members would redraw the Board districts every ten years. Anyone who is at least 18 years old and has lived in LAUSD for at least three years could apply to serve, with some restrictions on eligibility to ensure true independence (e.g., a recent Board candidate could not serve).

Although this measure amends the Los Angeles City Charter (the city's "constitution"), any voter who lives in LAUSD, regardless of whether they live in the city, can vote on it.

ANALYSIS

We recommend a yes on Charter Amendment LL. Families and students deserve a fair, transparent, and inclusive redistricting process that prioritizes community representation, not political insiders. Elected officials, including Board members, should not be able to choose their own voters, either directly or by appointing the commissioners who draw the lines of the Board districts.

An independent commission of residents will better reflect the diversity of LAUSD than a group of political appointees. It may more meaningfully engage with these diverse communities, including AAPIs, because the commissioners are not beholden to the politicians who appointed them. There are also important provisions to make it easier for the public to participate in redistricting. For example, public hearings would be required to be geographically spread out across LAUSD and some meetings would be held on evenings or weekends.

We did not identify any arguments in opposition.

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