

**Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry Action Network
Ballot Measures Committee**

**Propositions with Recommendations
November 4, 2008 Election**

Prop. 1A – High Speed Passenger Train Bond Act

SUPPORT

Nearly \$10 billion in bonds would be sold to partially finance a high speed (150-200 mph) dedicated rail line between San Francisco, Sacramento and Southern California. This option would significantly reduce the need for expanded airports and highways between northern and southern California. Technology already exists, is safe and well understood, and highly patronized in nearly all developed countries of the world, such as France, Germany, and Japan. Significant reductions in green house emissions, gasoline use, and highway accidents will result. This initiative relates to Unitarian Universalist concerns regarding California's environmental degradation, and our respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. It is an appropriate use of bonds for a major capital expense with significant benefit for the state.

Prop 2. Confining Farm Animals:

SUPPORT

Our history (Unitarian Henry Bergh founded Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in 1868) includes compassion for animals a good in itself and as a means to a more compassionate society. Ethical Eating is currently a Commission on Social Witness Study Action Issue. Unitarian Universalists are in UUs for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and the US Humane Society supports this measure. Chickens are active, inquisitive, exploratory, engaging. Only 10% of poultry farmers in CA currently use the severe confinement which this measure would abolish. Chickens may currently spend their lives in the space of an 8 1/2 by 11 piece of paper. This proposition would also abolish severe confinement of pregnant pigs and sheep. This measure would require fairly minimal standards, such as room to move freely, move one's limbs, etc. There would be some enforcement costs, but these could be offset somewhat by penalties and fines. Opponents claim that egg production might move out of state; almost opposition backers are egg producers. The United Farm Workers Union supports this measure, which is significant, since they are the ones who do most of the work with these animals.

Prop. 3 – Children's Hospital Bond Act

NO POSITION

This measure authorizes nearly 1 billion in bonds to fund children's hospitals. 80% of proceeds go to 8 non-profit regional centers which treat children without regard to a family's ability to pay, and currently treat a majority of low-income children. 20% of proceeds go to Univ. of CA children's hospitals. Unitarian principles of justice, compassion and equity are central to evaluating this proposal. However, many hospitals serving low income populations, more needy than children's hospitals which have a dedicated donor base, are not included in this bond measure. Bonds should be used for major capital investments, not operating expenses as is the case here.

Prop. 4 – Waiting period and parental notification before termination of a minor's pregnancy.

OPPOSE

Prop 4 requires a physician to notify a parent of a pregnant minor before performing an abortion. It also mandates a 48 hour waiting period prior to an abortion. As UUs we support open family communication but recognize in about 25% of

cases this is not possible due to family threats of violence or abandonment. This process may place a teen's health and safety in danger. This requirement may lead many girls to use unsafe, illegal abortion procedures rather than notify their parents. Others, fearing family rejection or abuse, consider suicide. Good family communication cannot be imposed by government. California voters have already rejected this proposal twice. Unitarian principles of justice and compassion are violated by the implications of this proposal. The measure may also be seen as an attempt to curtail the right to choice, long supported by Unitarian Universalists.

Prop. 5 -- Nonviolent Drug Offenses, Sentencing, Parole and Rehabilitation.

SUPPORT

Prop 5 requires the state to expand treatment and rehabilitation for non-violent drug offenders and parolees. It reduces criminal consequences of nonviolent offenses. Additional costs of treatment would be offset by reductions in prison and parole operating costs. This measure is predicted by the CA legislative analyst to save the state significant amounts of money, and would reduce prison overcrowding and reduce recidivism. The initiative emphasizes the development of preventive interventions. Major funding is provided by George Soros. Unitarian principles of justice and compassion are central to evaluating this proposal.

Prop 6. Police and Law Enforcement Funding. Criminal Penalties and Laws "The Runner Initiative"

OPPOSE

This initiative diverts over \$1 billion per year out of our state's general fund, earmarking it for law enforcement and prisons, reducing spending on education and health care. It targets immigrants (no bail) and poor people (Section 8 housing), increases number of teens 14 and older prosecuted as adults, and it would reduce spending on teen drug treatment. Prop 6 is in direct opposition to UUA Statement of Conscience (2005) on Criminal Justice and Prison Reform, supporting alternatives to incarceration and emphasizing restorative justice, rehabilitation, treatment. California already spends more on incarceration than on education. This proposition is contrary to our principles of justice, equity, and compassion.

Prop. 7 -- Renewable Energy Generation

OPPOSE

Promoting renewable energy is a worthy goal and seems on its face to be compatible with UU values. However, most environmental groups, alternative energy producers, and both publicly and privately-owned utilities oppose this measure. It is poorly drafted, it sets wildly unrealistic goals, it might shut some small alternative energy producers out to the market, and it waives some crucial environmental review requirements for the sites of new power plants. It also appears to benefit a small group of large solar suppliers, and may stimulate lengthy litigation. We recommend waiting for a chance to support a well-drafted, realistic bill to promote alternative energy.

Prop. 8 -- Eliminates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry

OPPOSE

UU congregations, together with the UU Legislative Ministry (UULM), have worked hard for years to promote the rights of gays and lesbians. This proposition would amend the California Constitution to take away the right of same sex couples to marry, the right recently upheld by the California Supreme Court. Amending the Constitution is a drastic step that would cause problems down the road and make depriving people of fundamental rights part of our state constitution. But mainly, this proposition should be opposed because it would eliminate a civil right for some that should be guaranteed to all Californians. The proposition would set up a second class citizenship for gays and lesbians, violating our commitment as Unitarian Universalists to respect the dignity and worth of every person.

Prop. 9 -- Criminal Justice System. Victims' Rights. Parole

OPPOSE

This measure would expand the role of crime victims in the criminal justice system, giving them the right to participate in various stages of the process, including parole. It would interfere with criminal defendants' due process rights, and some of these rights are already granted under state law. UUs have long advocated for the rights of criminal defendants; this measure would impair those rights.

Prop. 10 -- Alternative Fuel Vehicles and Renewable Energy. Bonds

OPPOSE

This measure would use general obligation bond funds to subsidize development of natural gas vehicles and clean energy technology. It would provide benefits -- perhaps huge -- to a small group of developers of natural gas technology. UULM recommends a "no" vote because such a use of bonds to subsidize a small segment of the population is inappropriate. T. Boone Pickens is a major funder of this initiative. Prop. 10 should be opposed by UUs because it is misleading, because it is an inappropriate use of bond funding, and because it would benefit a very small number of potential grantees. Despite its title, it does not support our respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Prop. 11 Redistricting

OPPOSE

This measure is relevant to our Unitarian Universalist support for democratic processes, and our UU Legislative Ministry issue of reclaiming democracy. This measure is unlikely to create a less polarized legislature, according to a recent study by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). The study found that electorally competitive districts frequently attracted polarized candidates, not centrists or moderates. Additionally, Prop 11 violates the principle of equal protection under the law, and proportionate representation. This ballot proposition would replace redistricting by the elected legislature with redistricting by a 14 member council: 5 Democrats, 5 Republicans, 4 Other. As of Sept 5, CA has 44% Democrats, 32% Republicans, and 20% other. The measure, financially supported by Republican donors, presents a significant power shift not supported by popular representation. Organizations representing people of color are concerned language in Prop 11 will undermine opportunities for electoral representation. Prop 11 is supported by Common Cause, League of Women Voters, AARP, health insurance companies seeking to stop "single payer" health reform, Governor Schwarzenegger, the CA Chamber of Commerce, and Republican donors. It has been opposed by Sen. Boxer, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Party, the Green Party, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, MALDEF, Asian American Pacific Legal Center, CA Labor Federation, CA Firefighters, AFSCME, and the CA League of Conservation Voters.

Prop. 12 Bonds for Veterans Housing

NO POSITION

Legislatively referred unanimously by CA Assembly and State Senate, this proposition would provide a \$900 million bond to assist veterans in purchasing houses and farms in CA—to be repaid by loan holders at no cost to CA taxpayers. The initiative is not targeted to combat veterans in Iraq, Afghanistan: it includes all who have served. No significant relevance to UU history or values, although it may be seen as a special interest measure.