

BALLOTWATCH

The Seven

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SEVEN WORTH WATCHING

Voters in 34 states will decide 162 ballot propositions in the November general election. This memo lists seven measures that are particularly interesting or have national ramifications.

ALASKA

Marijuana Legalization

Ballot Measure 2 is an initiative that would make it legal for individuals over age 21 to grow, sell, use, or give away marijuana. It would also prohibit laws that stop doctors from providing marijuana for medical use. The measure allows for limits on marijuana use in public and to protect public safety.

In 2000, Alaska voters rejected a similar measure with 59% against. Unlike Measure 2, the 2000 proposition would have set the legal age at 18 and paroled some prisoners convicted of drug crimes.

ARIZONA

Illegal Immigrants

Prop. 200 would require proof of citizenship to register to vote, and would require state agencies to check the immigration status of program beneficiaries. It would be a misdemeanor if state employees failed to report violations of immigration law.

The measure is sponsored by Protect Arizona Now, and supported by a number of

Republican candidates for state offices. Almost all sitting officeholders are against the measure, including U.S. Senators John McCain (R) and John Kyle (R), Gov. Janet Napolitano (D), the state's eight congressmen, and the chairs of the state Democratic and Republican Parties.

Illegal immigration is a hot button issue that could increase turnout and affect the outcome of the presidential race in Arizona. The initiative has a family resemblance to California's controversial Prop. 187 in 1994 that seemed to galvanize Latino groups.

CALIFORNIA

\$3 Billion Bonds for Stem Cell Research

Prop. 71, an initiative, would establish a constitutional right to conduct research using stem cells and authorize a \$3 billion bond issue for stem cell research. If approved, the bond issue would be the largest ever authorized by a voter initiative. It comes on the heels of two huge bond measures placed on the ballot by the legislature and approved in March.

The measure has been endorsed by U.S. Senators Barbara Boxer (D) and Dianne Feinstein (D), former U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz, Microsoft CEO Bill Gates, the California Medical Association, and the American

Lung Association. The measure is opposed by the California Catholic Conference, and a scattering of tax limitation groups. Supporters have raised more than 10 times the amount raised by opponents.

CALIFORNIA

Employer-Provided Health Insurance

In the waning days of the Gray Davis administration, the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 2 which required businesses to provide health insurance to employees and dependents either by arrangement with a health insurance provider or by paying into a state program. The provisions would have taken effect in January 2004 but it was blocked when signatures were collected qualifying Prop. 72 for the ballot.

Prop. 72 is a referendum on Senate Bill 2: the bill will take effect only if Prop. 72 is approved by voters. The bill is supported by the California Labor Federation, California Medical Association, and a coalition of organizations representing health care consumers and providers, including doctors, seniors, patients, and working families. The bill is opposed by the California Chamber of Commerce and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R).

WORTH WATCHING (CONT'D)

COLORADO

Electoral College Votes

One measure with national implications is Amendment 36, which would allocate the state's nine electoral college votes proportionately to each candidate's popular vote instead of giving them all to the statewide winner. The measure is written to take effect retroactively, so it would shift four electoral votes from George Bush to John Kerry if current polls continue to hold.

Currently, all states but Maine and Nebraska use a winner-take-all system.

The initiative is financed by wealthy California activist Jorge Klor de Alva, and opposed by state's GOP leadership.

The measure will certainly be challenged on Constitutional grounds if the presidential election is close, drawing the courts into the fray again. The U.S. Constitution says that "the state legislature" shall decide the procedure for choosing electors. However, previous rulings have treated the initiative votes as a constitutional equivalent of the legislature. The measure could also conflict with federal election law requiring election procedures to be set down in advance.

COLORADO

Clean Energy

Amendment 37, another initiative, would require large Colorado utilities to generate or purchase at least 10% of their electricity from renewable sources by 2015. Currently, about 2% of state electricity comes from clean sources. Energy sources could include solar, hydro, wind, and biomass. At the same time, the measure would cap at 50 cents the amount that monthly residential rates can rise in response to higher power costs from the clean sources. Customers of a utility can vote to exempt the utility from the renewable energy requirement.

The measure is sponsored by Coloradans for Clean Energy, co-chaired by U.S. Representative Mark Udall (D) and State House Speaker Lola Spradley (R), and various environmental groups. It is opposed by local governments in the power business and energy firms.

WASHINGTON

Sales Tax for Education

Initiative 884 would increase the sales tax by 1% and dedicate the funds for preschool through college

education. The state sales tax would rise to 7.5%, making it the highest in the country. Education spending would rise by a projected \$1 billion per year, a huge increase from its current level of almost \$13 billion. The spending would go for K-12 (\$500 million), higher education (\$400 million), and preschool (\$100 million). The measure also raises the base pay for teachers and provides large bonuses to teachers who acquire certain certification.

The measure is supported by Gov. Gary Locke (D), the teachers union, the state PTA, the AFL-CIO, Democratic Party organizations, and a variety of local school boards. Small businesses are opposed. Both major party candidates for governor have expressed skepticism about the tax increase.

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