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Title

Release #2026-16 Billionaires Tax and Voter ID Initiatives

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2zw023kt>

Journal

Berkeley IGS Poll

Author

DiCamillo, Mark

Publication Date

2026-08-14



Institute of Governmental Studies
102 Philosophy Hall, #2370
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720-2370
Tel: 510-642-1473
Email: igs@berkeley.edu

Release #2026-16

Friday, August 14, 2026

Proposition 40, state's Billionaires Tax initiative, holds narrow lead among likely voters in the early going

- Californians now inclined to vote No on Proposition 39, the Voter ID initiative -

by Mark DiCamillo
Director, Berkeley IGS Poll

The state ballot initiative that is drawing the most attention in California's upcoming general election is Proposition 40, the Billionaires Tax initiative. Nearly three in four likely voters report having already heard of the initiative, and when presented with its official ballot title and summary slightly, slightly more are inclined to vote Yes (48%) than No (41%). The controversial initiative calls for imposing a one-time 5% tax on the assets of the state's billionaires, with most of its funds devoted to health care.

The poll finds voting preferences on Proposition 40 to be highly partisan and related to the ideological leanings of the electorate. Support is greatest among Democrats and strongly liberal voters, while Republicans and conservatives are solidly on the No side. On a regional basis, Proposition 40 is receiving strong support from voters in the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles County, but trails among voters in Orange County, the Central Valley, and the state's North Coast/Sierras region. Differences in support are also observed by age, gender and the race/ethnicity of voters, with majorities of younger voters, women and voters of color voting Yes, while pluralities of voters ages 65 or older, males, and whites are voting No.

Opponents of Proposition 40 have qualified two counter initiatives, Propositions 41 and 42, for the November election ballot that are primarily aimed at nullifying the Billionaires Tax should it pass. Yet, voter awareness of these two counter measures is low and when presented with the official ballot titles and summaries of each initiative voters are divided, with many undecided.

Another statewide ballot initiative that has been generating considerable attention is Proposition 39, the Voter ID initiative, with a 56% majority of voters reporting that they are aware of it. When presented with Proposition 39's official ballot title and summary, more voters say they would vote No (51%) than Yes (42%). The initiative calls for requiring proof of citizenship when registering to vote and presenting a government-issued identity card when voting in person or posting the last 4 digits of their Social Security number onto a mail ballot. Voters who are unable to provide such information would then be prevented from voting.

Voter reactions to Proposition 39 are also highly partisan and ideologically based, with 80% of Democrats and greater than eight in ten liberals voting No. By contrast, greater than nine in ten Republicans and voters identifying as strongly conservative in politics say they would vote Yes.

According to IGS co-Director Eric Schickler, “these results suggest that the Billionaires Tax initiative is shaping up to be a closely fought contest, with the key question being whether opponents can make big enough inroads among the state’s traditionally Democratic-leaning voters. By contrast, foes of the Voter ID initiative have already started to solidify making it a more typical Democratic-Republican fight, in which Democrats in California generally hold the advantage.”

High awareness of the Billionaires Tax initiative, but few have heard of its counter measures

A large majority of likely voters (72%) reports having heard of the Billionaires Tax initiative, Proposition 40, an unusually large proportion in the summer months prior to the start of serious election campaigning in the general election. And, according to press reports opponents of the Billionaires tax plan to spend heavily during the coming months to defeat the initiative. Awareness of the measure spans voters of all major demographic subgroups of the likely voter electorate, and includes 70% of Democrats, 75% of Republicans and 73% of No Party Preference or other non-partisans.

Yet, just 27% of the state’s voters have heard of the two counter initiatives to the Billionaires Tax, Propositions 41 and 42, although more Republicans than Democrats report some awareness.

Voters favor Proposition 40 by a narrow 48% - 41% No margin

When voters were presented with the official ballot title and summary of Proposition 40, as it will appear on the state’s November election ballot, slightly more say they are inclined to vote Yes on the initiative (48%) than No (41%). The state’s official title and summary of the initiative reads as follows:

PROPOSITION 40. IMPOSES ONE-TIME TAX ON CERTAIN TAXPAYERS. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND STATUTE. *Imposes 5% tax on certain taxpayers with assets over \$1 billion; revenue primarily for health care. Exempts revenues from constitutional requirements for school funding and spending limit. **Fiscal Impact:** Temporary increase of tens of billions of dollars spread over several years from wealth tax on billionaires. Possible ongoing decrease of less than \$1 billion per year in income tax revenue from billionaires. **Supporters:** U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders; SEIU United Healthcare Workers West. **Opponents:** California Primary Care Association; California Schools Boards Association; California Taxpayers Association.*

Vote support for Proposition 40 divides primarily on partisan and ideological grounds, with about seven in ten Democrats and 86% of strongly liberal voters on the Yes side, while eight in ten Republicans and conservative voters are lining up on the No side.

Given the partisan divide in voter preferences, it is not surprising that on a regional basis Proposition 40 receives its greatest support in the state’s two major Democratic-leaning strongholds of the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles County. On the other hand, the initiative trails among voters in Orange County, the Central Valley, and the large but sparsely populated North Coast/Sierras region.

There are also significant differences in voter support for Proposition 40 across a wide range of demographic subgroups of the likely electorate. For example, while 75% of likely voters under age 30 are backing Proposition 40, a plurality of seniors ages 65 or older are opposed. In addition, while Proposition 40 is backed by majorities of the state’s Latinos, Black voters, and Asian Americans, a plurality of whites opposes it. Women voters are initially backing Proposition 40 by a 53% to 34% margin, while men are narrowly opposed 48% to 42%. Voters who live in households where a union member resides are also more likely than non-union household voters to be supporting the initiative.

Voters’ household income also appears to play a role, as voters with lower levels of household income are more likely to be supporting backing the Billionaires tax than voters earning \$200,000 or more per year, a plurality of whom oppose the initiative.

<i>Table 1</i> California voter preferences on Proposition 40, the Billionaires Tax initiative <i>(among likely voters in the November general election)</i>			
	Voting Yes	Voting No	Undecided
	%	%	%
Total likely voters	48	41	11
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	70	16	14
Republicans	12	80	8
No Party Preference/other	50	39	11
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	13	81	6
Somewhat conservative	12	80	8
Moderate	39	48	13
Somewhat liberal	66	15	19
Strongly liberal	86	4	10
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	55	35	10
San Diego County	43	45	12
Orange County	39	52	9
Inland Empire	47	47	6
Central Coast	50	38	12
Sacramento/North Valley	40	45	15
San Joaquin Valley	39	47	13
San Francisco Bay Area	52	34	14
North Coast/ Sierras	36	53	11
<u>Annual household income</u>			
Less than \$40,000	56	30	14
\$40,000-\$99,999	50	37	13
\$100,000-\$199,999	48	41	11
\$200,000 or more	41	51	8
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	75	15	10
30-39	56	30	14
40-49	52	40	8
50-64	44	45	11
65 or older	40	47	13
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	42	48	10
Female	53	34	13
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	40	46	14
Latino	60	31	9
Asian American/Pacific Islander	56	36	8
Black/African American	60	25	15
<u>Union affiliation</u>			
Union member in household	56	37	7
Non-union household	45	42	13

Voters offer mixed opinions of the two counter measures to the Billionaires Tax, with many undecided

There is currently no clear consensus on how Californians will vote on either Proposition 41 or 42. When presented with the official ballot titles and summaries of the two counter measures voters are about evenly divided with large proportions undecided. The official ballot descriptions of Propositions 41 and 42 as presented to voters in the poll were as follows:

PROPOSITION 41. PROHIBITS NEW STATE TAXES THAT EXCLUDE REVENUES FROM STATE SPENDING LIMIT. REQUIRES AUDITS FOR NEW STATE SPECIAL TAXES. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Nullifies state taxes enacted after January 1, 2026 that exempt their revenues from voter-approved state spending limit. Requires pre-election and recurring audits of programs funded by new special taxes. ***Fiscal Impact:*** The net fiscal effect is unknown as it depends on future decisions by voters, the legislature, and other policymakers. ***Supporters:*** CA Society of Certified Public Accountants (CalCPAs); CalAsian Chamber of Commerce, California Taxpayers Association (CalTax). ***Opponents:*** U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, SEIU United Healthcare Workers West.

PROPOSITION 42. PROHIBITS NEW STATE PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES AND CERTAIN RETROACTIVE STATE TAXES. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Prohibits any new state tax (1) imposed on the ownership of personal property (all things people own other than real estate), or (2) that applies retroactively based on taxpayer's past activities. Nullifies taxes enacted after January 1, 2026 that conflict with this measure. ***Fiscal Impact:*** Possibility that tax revenues will not go up as much in the future. ***Supporters:*** CA Professional Firefighters; State Building & Construction Trades Council of CA; AMVETS Department of CA. ***Opponents:*** U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, SEIU United Healthcare Workers West.

The poll finds that 35% now are inclined to vote Yes on Proposition 41, while 37% are inclined to vote No. Another 28% are undecided. When regard to Proposition 42, 40% are initially backing the initiative, while 37% are opposed and 23% are undecided.

Voter reactions to both measures are highly partisan, with Democrats opposed to both measures by three-to-one margins or more, while greater than seven in ten Republicans are in favor.

There are also differences in preferences on Propositions 41 and 42 by income, with pluralities of voters with annual household incomes of less than \$40,000 voting No, while pluralities of voters living in households with annual incomes of \$200,000 or more are voting Yes.

Voters who reported some awareness of the two counter measures are also more likely to express support for each initiative than those who had no prior awareness.

Table 2 Voter reactions to Propositions 41 and 42, the two counter initiatives to the Billionaire Tax initiative <i>(among likely voters in the November general election)</i>						
	Proposition 41			Proposition 42		
	Voting Yes	Voting No	Undecided	Voting Yes	Voting No	Undecided
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total likely voters	35	37	28	40	37	23
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	15	53	32	18	53	29
Republicans	71	11	18	79	9	12
NPP/others	29	41	30	34	40	26
<u>Household income</u>						
Less than \$40,000	27	44	29	33	42	25
\$40,000-\$99,999	34	39	27	39	38	23
\$100,000-\$199,999	37	36	27	41	36	23
\$200,000 or more	39	35	26	45	34	21
<u>Prior awareness</u>						
Yes, have heard	51	35	14	56	33	11
No, haven't heard/not sure	30	38	32	35	38	27

A majority of California voters have heard of Proposition 39, the Voter ID initiative

Another statewide ballot initiative that has been generating a lot of early attention is Proposition 39, referred to as the Voter ID initiative. When likely voters are asked if they had any prior awareness of the initiative, a 56% majority of likely voters say they have. Awareness is considerably higher among the state's Republican voters (78%) than among Democrats (44%).

More voters now oppose than support Proposition 39

A 51% majority of likely voters in this survey (51%) are now lining up on the No side of Proposition 39, while 42% say they would vote Yes. The official ballot description of Proposition 39 as presented to voters in the election will be as follows:

PROPOSITION 39. PROHIBITS CITIZENS FROM VOTING UNLESS THEY PRESENT GOVERNMENT-ISSUED IDENTIFICATION. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT.

*Invalidates mail ballots that do not have last four digits of designated government-issued identification number written on envelope. Prohibits in-person voting without presenting government-issued identification. **Fiscal Impact:** Costs of between tens of millions of dollars and low hundreds of millions of dollars each year to implement new voting requirements. **Supporters:** The Transparency Foundation; Latino American Political Assn.; Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assn.; CA Women's Leadership Assn. **Opponents:** ACLU California Action; Common Cause; League of Women Voters of California.*

Voter reactions to the initiative are again highly partisan and tied to the political ideology of the state's electorate. For example, 80% of Democrats say they would vote No, as do greater than eight in ten liberals. By contrast, greater than nine in ten Republicans and voters identifying as strongly conservative in politics would vote Yes.

Regional variations in voter preferences on Proposition 39 are also evident in the poll. Opposition is strongest in the Democratic strongholds of the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles County and the

counties that comprise the state's Central Coast. On the other hand, majorities of voters in Orange County, the Inland Empire, San Joaquin Valley, and the state's North Coast/Sierras region are intending to vote Yes. When demographic characteristics of the state's electorate are examined, opposition to Proposition 39 is greatest among voters under age 40, women, Blacks and voters living in households where a union member resides.

<i>Table 3</i> California voter preferences regarding Proposition 39, the Voter ID initiative <i>(among likely voters in the November general election)</i>			
	Voting Yes	Voting No	Undecided
	%	%	%
Total likely voters	42	51	7
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	12	80	8
Republicans	93	4	3
No Party Preference/other	36	54	10
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	96	2	2
Somewhat conservative	85	8	7
Moderate	47	41	12
Somewhat liberal	8	84	8
Strongly liberal	3	90	7
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	36	58	6
San Diego County	45	47	8
Orange County	54	39	7
Inland Empire	53	40	7
Central Coast	38	55	7
Sacramento/North Valley	47	47	6
San Joaquin Valley	58	36	6
San Francisco Bay Area	31	60	9
North Coast/Sierras	54	34	12
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	28	60	12
30-39	35	59	6
40-49	46	44	10
50-64	46	48	6
65 or older	43	50	7
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	47	47	6
Female	37	54	9
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	43	49	8
Latino	42	52	6
Asian American/Pacific Islander	40	52	8
Black/African American	31	59	10
<u>Union affiliation</u>			
Union member in household	37	58	5
Non-union household	43	48	9

About the Survey

The findings in this report are based on a *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. The poll was conducted online in English and Spanish August 3 - 9, 2026 among 4,207 registered voters throughout California, of whom a weighted sample of 2,310 were considered likely voters in the November general election. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Data collection for the poll was completed by distributing email and text message invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Each email or text invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. Reminders were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further invitations.

Samples of the state's registered voters were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California and were derived from information contained on state and local voter registration rolls, which are public documents. The sample was stratified by age and gender to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents.

To protect the anonymity of respondents, the personally identifiable information of each voter that was listed on their voting record was purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. In addition, after the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the data file to align the overall sample to population characteristics of registered voters both statewide and within major regions of the state.

The sampling error associated with the survey results is difficult to calculate precisely because of sample stratification and post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that findings from the likely voter sample have a sampling error of about +/- 2.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Questions asked

California's November general election will include a number of statewide ballot propositions. Have you seen, read or heard anything about an initiative, Proposition 39, referred to as the California Voter ID initiative, on California's November general election ballot?

Below is the title and a summary of Proposition 39.

PROPOSITION 39. PROHIBITS CITIZENS FROM VOTING UNLESS THEY PRESENT GOVERNMENT-ISSUED IDENTIFICATION. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Invalidates mail ballots that do not have last four digits of designated government-issued identification number written on envelope. Prohibits in-person voting without presenting government-issued identification. **Fiscal Impact:** Costs of between tens of millions of dollars and low hundreds of millions of dollars each year to implement new voting requirements. **Supporters:** The Transparency Foundation; Latino American Political Assn.; Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assn.; CA Women's Leadership Assn. **Opponents:** ACLU California Action; Common Cause; League of Women Voters of California. If the election were held today, how would you vote on Proposition 39?

Have you seen, read or heard anything about an initiative, Proposition 40, referred to as the "Billionaire Tax Act," on California's November general election ballot?

Below is the title and a summary of Proposition 40.

PROPOSITION 40. IMPOSES ONE-TIME TAX ON CERTAIN TAXPAYERS. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND STATUTE. Imposes 5% tax on certain taxpayers with assets over \$1 billion; revenue primarily for health care. Exempts revenues from constitutional requirements for school funding and spending limit. **Fiscal Impact:** Temporary increase of tens of billions of dollars spread over several years from wealth tax on billionaires. Possible ongoing decrease of less than \$1 billion per year in income tax revenue from billionaires. **Supporters:** U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders; SEIU United Healthcare Workers West. **Opponents:** California Primary Care Association; California Schools Boards Association; California Taxpayers Association. If the election were held today, how would you vote on Proposition 40?

Have you seen, read or heard anything about two counter-initiatives to the Billionaire Tax Act, Propositions 41 and 42, on California's November general election ballot?

Below is the title and a summary of Proposition 41.

PROPOSITION 41. PROHIBITS NEW STATE TAXES THAT EXCLUDE REVENUES FROM STATE SPENDING LIMIT. REQUIRES AUDITS FOR NEW STATE SPECIAL TAXES. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Nullifies state taxes enacted after January 1, 2026 that exempt their revenues from voter-approved state spending limit. Requires pre-election and recurring audits of programs funded by new special taxes. **Fiscal Impact:** The net fiscal effect is unknown as it depends on future decisions by voters, the legislature, and other policymakers. **Supporters:** CA Society of Certified Public Accountants (CalCPAs); CalAsian Chamber of Commerce, California Taxpayers Association (CalTax). **Opponents:** U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, SEIU United Healthcare Workers West. If the election were held today, how would you vote on Proposition 41?

Below is the title and a summary of Proposition 42.

PROPOSITION 42. PROHIBITS NEW STATE PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES AND CERTAIN RETROACTIVE STATE TAXES. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Prohibits any new state tax (1) imposed on the ownership of personal property (all things people own other than real estate), or (2) that applies retroactively based on taxpayer's past activities. Nullifies taxes enacted after January 1, 2026 that conflict with this measure. **Fiscal Impact:** Possibility that tax revenues will not go up as much in the future. **Supporters:** CA Professional Firefighters; State Building & Construction Trades Council of CA; AMVETS Department of CA. **Opponents:** U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, SEIU United Healthcare Workers West. If the election were held today, how would you vote on Proposition 42?

About the Institute of Governmental Studies

The Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is an interdisciplinary organized research unit that pursues a vigorous program of research, education, publication and public service. A component of the University of California system's flagship Berkeley campus, IGS is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. IGS's co-directors are Professor Eric Schickler and Professor G. Cristina Mora.

IGS conducts periodic surveys of public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll, which is disseminated widely, seeks to provide a broad measure of contemporary public opinion, and to generate data for subsequent scholarly analysis. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll*. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.