Berkeley Daily Planet Election Recommendations

Okay, folks, it’s crunch time. Those of you who are sure of what you’re doing might already have voted, along with a lot of others who just like to get it out of the way. But for anyone who’s still agonizing about how to vote, Hurry Up, Please—It’s Time.

To help you out, here’s what we think.

**Ballot Measures**

**State Propositions**

These come first, because they’re the hardest to figure out.

We’ve decided just to rely on our friend Oakland attorney Stu Flashman, who spends a lot of time on this. His abridged recommendations are below, with our comments if any added in square brackets:

**Proposition 19** — Marijuana Legalization – YES. Prohibition didn’t work in the 1920s and 1930s. Marijuana prohibition hasn’t worked either. All it’s done is provide extra income to drug dealers and made it easier for people to transition from MJ to harder drugs. I think we’d do far better to legalize, regulate, and tax MJ. That’s not to say that I think MJ is a great thing. I know some people who went overboard on MJ and got really messed up; but nothing like what happens with hard drugs, and not as badly as some people I’ve known have gotten messed up on alcohol or cigarettes.

**Prop. 20** — Congressional Redistricting Commission — NO…While in principle having congressional redistricting done by an impartial redistricting commission would be a big improvement, we haven’t even seen whether it’ll succeed for the state legislature. Let’s give the new system a chance to work and see how it does before we jump in with both feet. [and some think it isn’t even working for the legislature.]

**Prop. 21** — State Parks Vehicle License Fee — YES…. this measure matches new income to an existing need. It seems particularly fitting to use the vehicle license fee, because most people access state parks with their car, and the fee will be tied to allowing free park admission for California registered vehicles. [And they’re shutting the parks down because of lack of funds!]
Prop. 22 — Local Funds Protection — NO. While redevelopment agencies can do some good — Emeryville’s agency being a notable example — they also can do a lot of mischief, and Emeryville has provided just as good examples of that too. They also take money away from other local agencies, so when they complain about a state takeaway, it’s the pot calling the kettle black.

Prop. 23 — Global Warming Suspension — NO. If we could actually suspend global warming by a ballot measure, I’d be 100% for it, but this measure is to suspend AB 32, the California legislature’s recently-enacted measure to try to reduce CO2 emissions and limit global warming impacts. This measure is funded almost entirely by out of state big oil and big coal interests, who want to keep fiddling while the whole world burns (or at least gets way too hot). If this measure passes, it’ll tell the whole world that Californians can’t see beyond the nose on their face.

Prop. 24 — Repeal of Corporate Tax Breaks — YES. So, part of the 2008-2009 budget “deal” that the legislature passed was a set of corporate tax breaks that were supposed to stimulate the economy. … If I was going to stimulate California’s economy, I’d do it by keeping teachers, firemen, police, and other public employees from getting laid off. That means giving government enough money to keep running. You don’t do that by handing out corporate tax breaks to your friends at the expense of state revenue.

Prop. 25 — Majority Vote on State Budget — YES. Speaking of extortion and the state budget, the reason a Republican minority is able to exercise disproportionate control is largely because passing a budget requires a 2/3 vote in both houses.

Prop. 26 — 2/3 vote for all fees — NO. This is another one of those deceptive special interest sponsored ballot measures, like Prop.23 on this ballot and PG&E’s measure on the June ballot. This one’s sponsored primarily by the tobacco and alcholic beverage industries, who don’t like having fees placed on their products to help pay for the health damage they cause. This measure would also protect polluters from fees intended to clean up the damage they cause.

Prop. 27 – Send Redistricting Back to the Legislature — NO. So, How much confidence do you have in California’s legislature? If you’re like most Californians (including me), the answer is, “Not much!” This measure would kill the California Citizens’ Redistricting Commission before it even gets fully formed. All the money spent thus far on getting it set up would be wasted, and instead we’d hand the control back to the legislature so they can re-gerrymander the districts and continue to get themselves re-elected.

Local Measures

Measure R (Berkeley): NO. This is an “advisory measure”, not the “downtown plan” it’s often claimed to be. It would give the Mayor and the City Council, which he’s trying to purge of all opponents, a blank check for developing downtown to provide maximum profits for his builder buddies. Although some civic groups like the Sierra Club were suckered into endorsing it, the campaign is being financed by Chicago developer Sam
Zell’s Equitable Residential corporation, which is well on its way to buying up all of downtown Berkeley. Poison pill provisions make it easier to demolish old buildings, too.

**Measure T** (Berkeley): NO. Informed critics say it’s an okay idea, but very sloppily drafted. It should go back to the drawing board to be re-written. **Measure S** is okay.

**Measure H** (Berkeley Unified School District): YES. It’s a maintenance tax, and it’s needed.

**Measure I** (BUSD): A qualified YES. If you vote for it, keep an eye on how it’s spent. Since it’s mostly for construction bonds, a reader’s report that the building industry has supplied the main financial backing so far is cause for concern. Nevertheless, voting down bond issues in the current economic climate is a poor way to show concern.

**Candidates**

Since the Republican Party, or what’s left of it, seems to have been completely transformed, just in time for Halloween, by the Invasion of the Body Snatchers, you have no choice but to hold your nose and pull the Democratic lever. Or, since California doesn’t offer the straight ticket voting option, just color in the little ovals next to:

**National**

**Senate:** **Barbara Boxer.** The pride of Brooklyn—she’s always done a good job for us Californians. Carly Fiorina, among other things, almost destroyed Hewlett Packard, firing a lot of key employees before she was fired herself.

**State**

**Governor:** **Jerry Brown.** We never thought the time would come when Jerry Brown would look good to us, but next to Meg Whitman, he does. She’s a perfect parody of the clueless corporate executive, and while he’s Jesuitical, that does mean smart, which is good, given what we have to figure out in the next four years.

**Attorney General:** **Kamala Harris.** Bright, simpatico and she’s from Berkeley.

**Controller:** **John Chiang.**

**Insurance Commissioner:** **Dave Jones**

**Lieutenant Governor:** San Francisco Mayor **Gavin Newsom.** A low-key job for a guy with one big moment which we’re proud of, the gay marriage event. If he gets this seat, he’s out of San Francisco, and that leaves an opening as Mayor of SF for Aaron Peskin, who went to Berkeley High, so it’s all good.
Secretary of State: Debra Bowen. She got voting machines under some sort of control, no mean feat.

State Superintendent of Schools: Larry Aceves

Treasurer: Bill Lockyer

Local

Superior Court Judge: Victoria Kolakowski.

Berkeley City Council District 1: Incumbent Linda Maio is mesmerized by the Mayor to the point where she seems to fear independent action. Problems with Pacific Steel Casting, which is flacked by the PR firm run by Bates’ former aides, persist, and she does nothing to solve them. Jasper Kingeter is a lively young man, and Merrillie Mitchell keeps her eye on the ball when all about her have lost their heads. Since it’s Instant Runoff Voting this time, Kingeter should be #1 and Mitchell #2, but vice-versa wouldn’t be bad. Just don’t choose anyone as #3.

Berkeley City Council District 4: Jesse Arreguin has again and again proved his leadership skills and sound judgment, even though he’s only been on the City Council for 2 years as the late lamented Dona Spring’s designated successor. The rest seem to be naïve, shills for the building industry, eccentrics, or all of the above.

Berkeley City Council District 7: Kriss Worthington continues to do a stellar job. Two mediocre candidates oppose him, one backed by hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign financing and personal money, and both fronting for the Mayor, who wants all votes on the Berkeley City Council to be 9-0. That’s not even healthy.

Berkeley City Council District 8: It’s time for UC retiree to retire from the City Council as well. Either of his two opponents would do a better job for residents. Stewart Emmington Jones grew up in Berkeley and knows it problems very well. Jacquelyn McCormick has extensive management experience. Jones #1, McCormick #2, but again, the reverse would also work.

Berkeley School Board (You can vote for 3.): Priscilla Myrick has an unusual grasp of numbers, a skill often lacking in elected officeholders, so we’re endorsing her. She’s suspicious of Measure I, but if it passes, as it seems likely to do, she’ll keep an eye on how it’s spent. Incumbent Karen Hemphill deserves to continue the projects she’s gotten well underway. Leah Wilson has some impressive backing. But most of the rest seem fine too.

Rent Board (Tenants’ Slate) Stephens, Blake, Webster, Harr, Townley, Dodsworth.

Learn more online. A list of all articles about the election which have appeared in the Planet can be found at http://berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2010-10-27/article/36555.