

Prop. 5 a sword with a double edge

Measure would make it easier to pass bonds — and raise taxes — for public services.

BY LIAM DILLON

Money for new fire stations, repaved roads, renovated libraries and more is on the ballot in the city of Santa Clara next month. Voters in the Silicon Valley suburb of 127,000 will decide if they'll pony up for a \$400-million bond measure to finance the improvements.

Californians have made hundreds of decisions like these over the decades, but this time there's a twist. No one knows how many votes it will take to win.

The uncertainty comes from a quirk of California's complicated electoral system. In years past, local bond campaigns like Santa Clara's Measure I needed two-thirds support for passage. Now, a statewide ballot measure, Proposition 5, may change that.

If approved by a majority of California voters, Proposition 5 would decrease the approval threshold for local bonds from two-thirds to 55%, making it easier to fund low-income housing, expand roads and transit, renovate parks and construct other public infrastructure projects.

Should Proposition 5 win, Measure I and 17 other local bond measures on the November ballot would concurrently benefit from the lower threshold. That means their fate could depend not only on local voters but on those across California.

"It is kind of like going down a black hole and holding your breath," said Santa Clara City Councilmember Karen Hardy, a backer of Measure I.

On its face, Proposition 5 might seem like a dry, bureaucratic change to how communities pay for public improvements. But it has the potential to unleash a flood of new projects — and tax increases to finance them.

Since 2002, local governments and special districts in California have put 151 bond measures before voters, according to Michael Coleman, a municipal finance consultant who tracks the issue. Just more [See Taxation, A9]



FARMER Mark McBroom walks across a water gate next to alfalfa fields he has left dry near Calipatria. Less irrigation of Imperial Valley crops means less runoff flowing into the Salton Sea, which is already drying up.

ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

WILL SAVING WATER DRY UP A SEA?

As Imperial Valley farmers cut use to ease shortage, Salton Sea continues to shrink.

BY IAN JAMES

CALIPATRIA, Calif. — It was 113 degrees when Mark McBroom stepped from his air-conditioned pickup and onto a dry alfalfa field. Remnants of desiccated hay crunched underfoot, and the sun-baked soil was fragmented with deep cracks.

McBroom and other Imperial Valley farmers agreed to leave many hay fields unwatered for seven weeks this year in exchange for cash payments from a federally funded program designed to alleviate the water shortage on the Colorado River.

Many farmers decided that the payments — \$300 per acre-foot of water conserved — would pencil out for them this year, in part because hay prices have recently fallen.

"Most of the farming community felt like our water is worth a lot more than that, but we wanted to help," McBroom said. "We want to be good neighbors."

But while the three-year deal is helping to save water in the river's reservoirs, some people in the Imperial Valley say they're concerned it's also accelerating the decline of the Salton Sea and worsening environmental problems along its retreating shores.

With less water running off fields and into the sea, growing stretches of dry lakebed are being exposed to desert winds that kick up lung-damaging dust. At the same time, the lake is growing saltier as it shrinks, bringing changes to a habitat that is a vital stopover for migratory birds.

"This three-year deal is accelerating the receding of the sea," said Eric Montoya Reyes, executive director of the nonprofit group Los Amigos de la Comunidad. "It's going to impact our community."

The voluntary water-saving program is an unusual effort by farmers who receive the single largest share of Colorado River water. While the growers adamantly oppose leaving farmland permanently dry, they decided that shutting off water temporarily to hay fields would help conserve supplies and minimize effects on crop production and the local economy.

Leaders of the Imperial Irrigation District say their agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will save up to 700,000 acre-feet of water — enough to raise the level of Lake Mead, the country's largest reservoir, more than 10 feet.

But environmental advocates have argued that the irrigation district's deal with the federal government fails to adequately address the effects on the shrinking lake.

The Salton Sea, California's largest lake, has long been fed by agricultural runoff. The lake has been drying up over the last two decades as a result of a 2003 deal in which the Imperial Irrigation District, or IID, transferred a portion of the valley's water to growing urban areas.

[See Water, A12]

COLUMN ONE

'Locally hated' hairstylist battles Christian right in Texas town

Lone elected Democrat can't beat Republicans, but she does rile them

BY JEFFREY FLEISHMAN
REPORTING FROM GRANBURY, TEXAS

One might wonder how Adrienne Quinn Martin, a hairdresser, former belly dancer, mother of two and long-ago brand girl for a liquor distributor, a woman who celebrated her husband's birthday on TikTok by swaying against him

while listening to Al Green, became the lone elected Democrat in one of the reddest towns in Texas.

"Oh," Martin says, "I've had lives."

Fluent in social media, she is an array of personas: a hard-to-quantify free spirit, who in one instant can offer fashion tips ("I'm having a Britney moment") and, in another, analyze voter registration data. She is a fierce political operative, a guileless influencer and a relent-

less voice against the far right in this Christian, white, cattle-talking town of about 12,600.

"Wait," she said, when asked to call up a Twitter post about a constable who once had ties to the militant Proud Boys. "I have that."

Click, scroll, click. "Here it is," she said. "I have, like, 33,000 screenshots."

She smiled and swiped through more images on her phone.

[See Martin, A7]



ADRIENNE Quinn Martin helped organize a Black Lives Matter protest in Granbury, Texas, and welcomed drag queens for an HBO series. "I like the fight," she says. "It gets me passionate."

CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

Not everyone on Harris' street in L.A. feels neighborly

BY DANIEL MILLER

The protesters lugged the charred couch into the middle of the two-lane street, depositing it directly in front of Vice President Kamala Harris' Brentwood residence.

The activists, from the Sunrise Movement, were there Sept. 23 to beseech

Harris to stop promoting the extraction of fossil fuels. The ruined couch had come from a house destroyed last month in a Riverside County wildfire.

"BIG OIL CAUSED THE FIRES," read signs that some protesters carried while chanting slogans and marching past the foliage-shrouded home that Harris shares with Second Gentle-

man Doug Emhoff.

This went on for about 45 minutes, and traffic occasionally built up as drivers negotiated the disruption. Eventually, a neighbor across the street had seen enough, coming out of his house to shout, "She's not here, you know! This is stupid! Get off my driveway."

Such are the occasional aggravations and annoy-

ances that bedevil the tiny section of Los Angeles that Harris calls home.

Though her street is dotted with lawn signs championing her candidacy, some residents are frustrated by the attention and security that come with having the vice president in their midst. And they fear what the future will hold if Harris wins the presidency.

"Every time she comes, we have to go through security. The street becomes one-way. If she's about to leave or enter, we have to wait outside 45 minutes," said a woman who lives on the same block as Harris, adding that she's heard neighbors suggest they would put their property up for sale if Harris defeats Donald Trump. [See Neighbors, A8]

U.S. threatens Israel over aid

The country risks losing military support if it does not allow food into Gaza. **WORLD, A3**

Walgreens will shut 1,200 stores

The company has not specified which of its 8,600 U.S. sites would close. **BUSINESS, A10**

Ohtani tries to rediscover stroke

Dodgers star struggling at plate as team heads to New York tied in the NLCS. **SPORTS, B10**

Weather

Low clouds clearing. L.A. Basin: 72/60. **B5**
For the latest news, go to **latimes.com**.

Printed with soy inks on partially recycled paper.



Every story. Every section. Every feature.
Subscribers get unlimited app access. Download now.

