

# Viewpoints: Prop. 25 won't fix state's budget mess

**Special to The Bee**

**Published Friday, Jul. 23, 2010**

In 2009, California voters overwhelmingly rejected a measure placed on the ballot by the Legislature that would have extended recent tax increases of \$18 billion. The message from voters to our elected officials was clear – stop trying to raise our taxes to solve the budget mess you created.

Apparently, that message was not received, because this November, California voters will be faced with another tax-and-spend proposal – Proposition 25.

The Bee's recent "Head to Head" discussion of this initiative featured two columns supporting the measure, but neither one described to readers what Proposition 25 really would do. A close reading of Proposition 25 shows that it is much more onerous and damaging than its sponsors contend.

The public employee labor unions behind the measure claim it will simply allow the Legislature to pass the budget with a bare majority vote, instead of the two-thirds vote required by the California Constitution. They also claim it will discipline legislators by taking away lawmakers' pay for every day the budget is late. Both of these claims are disingenuous at best, dishonest at worst.

The fact is Proposition 25 represents a huge tax threat facing California taxpayers. Beware of three provisions buried in this initiative impacting your wallet and your rights.

First, Proposition 25 would eliminate voters' constitutional right to repeal hidden taxes and other damaging laws before they take effect. When elected officials fail to represent their constituents, and instead adopt legislation that isn't supported by the public, Californians are given one more crucial check on government – the referendum process. Proposition 25 effectively eliminates that right by allowing majority-vote budget appropriation bills to take effect immediately, not allowing the public an opportunity to challenge the legislation.

The second major concern with Proposition 25 is that it would make it easier for legislators to increase borrowing, and even increase their own travel and expense accounts. State legislators already receive tens of thousands of dollars in tax-free per diem each year, not to mention their travel expense accounts and state cars. Proposition 25 would make it easier for them to increase those perks, meaning legislators could increase their expense reimbursements to more than make up for any pay they might forfeit under Proposition 25 for passing a late budget.

Perhaps the most concerning provisions of Proposition 25 would allow the Legislature to enact taxes with a bare majority vote, as long as the taxes are characterized as being part of an appropriation related to the budget. This would allow the Legislature to circumvent the constitution's two-thirds vote requirement for passing new or increased taxes.

Even though voters and taxpayers have made it very clear that they do not want the Legislature to raise our taxes, Proposition 25 asks voters to make it easier for the Legislature to do just that.

Proposition 25 will do nothing to fix the budget mess in Sacramento. Instead, if Proposition 25 is successful, future budgets will be balanced on the backs of the California taxpayer. Proposition 25 promises more imprudent spending, higher taxes and ongoing future deficits – with limited input from taxpayers as to what they are willing to pay for state services and programs.

Shrewd California voters will see right through the ruse. Don't be fooled – vote "No" on Proposition 25.

*© Copyright The Sacramento Bee. All rights reserved.*

---

*Teresa Casazza is president of the California Taxpayers' Association, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization.*