

Argument in Favor of Proposition 5 (Recall Reform)

California's recall process should protect our democracy by allowing for the removal of an elected official who is corrupt or abusing their power. It should never be used as a tactic to 'redo' an election as a political or partisan scheme. Proposition 5 will restore the recall to its original purpose by making it fair, democratic, and accountable to the will of the majority.

Under current law, a statewide recall ballot asks voters two questions in sequence:

(1) Should the official be recalled? **(2)** If so, who should replace them?

By being connected, these two questions create a dangerous loophole. An elected official can be removed by a narrow majority. Then, a candidate listed in question #2 can win the office with far less than 50% of the votes cast in the election. This encourages political actors to target officials they couldn't defeat in a regular election and to install replacements who lack broad public support.

We saw this play out in the 2021 gubernatorial recall. Voters rejected it decisively. The recall lost by nearly the same number of votes that the Governor won the regular election with. But California taxpayers were forced to spend more than \$200 million on an election whose outcome simply reconfirmed what voters had already decided. Nearly 70% of California likely voters called the effort a waste of taxpayer money. And had the recall succeeded, the leading replacement candidate would have taken office with support from only about 28% of all recall voters.

Proposition 5 makes a single, commonsense change: *it removes the second question from the recall ballot.*

Under Prop 5, in a state-level recall, voters would decide one very simple and important question: whether an officeholder should be removed. If a majority votes yes, that office becomes vacant and is filled under existing vacancy rules. If a Governor is recalled, the Lieutenant Governor would become Governor and if the recall occurs early enough, voters would elect a replacement at the next statewide election; other statewide officers would be filled by appointment under existing rules; legislative seats by special election. No shortcuts, no loopholes, and no replacement candidate winning office without majority voter support.

In most states with recalls, vacancies are already filled by succession or a separate election, not a same-day replacement contest.

By eliminating the second question, Proposition 5 removes the incentive and ability to weaponize recalls as a shortcut for partisan advantage. Recalls could not be gamed to overturn the results of regular elections or install candidates who couldn't win under normal conditions.

The framers of our recall process intended to safeguard voters against corrupt and unaccountable officials, not to provide a weapon for political operators to undo election results they don't like. Proposition 5 preserves the recall as a tool for accountability while preventing it from being used to sidestep regular elections and majority rule.

Vote YES on Proposition 5 to protect majority rule, defend taxpayers, and restore California's recall process back to the voters it was designed to serve.

Lorrel Plimier
Co-President, League of Women Voters of California.

SUBJECT TO COURT
ORDERED CHANGES

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