**Proposition 25 and Pat Brown for Governor**

Dear Friends,

We all have a lot to do in this month in order to have successful election results in November. I hope that you put activity around the November 2 election in California on the top of your “to-do” list.

In this election there are clearly two opposing camps - one that would continue to facilitate **corporate greed** and one that is determined to provide **public services** (including educational services) to the people of California.

As a prime example of corporate greed versus public service, consider the races for Governor and for the United States Senate. On one side we have two candidates from corporate management who are using their own money to buy the offices that they seek. They have both spent their time in the corporate world laying off workers, outsourcing jobs, and making lots of money for themselves. Both have been campaigning on vigorous anti-union, anti-public services, anti-public pensions platforms. Both are in favor of loosening California’s **Global Warming and Solutions Act of 2006.** We cannot afford to allow their money to buy this election.

Meg Whitman's policy agenda includes cutting $15 billion in state spending (almost 20% of the budget), eliminating 40,000 state employee jobs, reducing employee pension plans, cutting state taxes on the wealthiest Californians, reducing worker protections such as overtime and meal breaks, and decreasing or eliminating anti-pollution regulations.

On the other side we see two candidates, **Jerry Brown** and **Barbara Boxer,** who have spent their lives serving the people of California. Both are progressives who have spent years in the service of the people of California. They are both strong supporters of public education. Both believe that global warming is a critical issue for our state to address. Both support a woman’s right to choose.

A Governor Brown will not be everything we could wish for but he will be a strong advocate for the consumer and for our critical public services.

The rest of the statewide offices are also important and the Democrats have strong candidates for each office. It is really an outstanding list of candidates.

In particular, **Tom Torlakson** will make a great Superintendent of Public Instruction. He has been a teacher both at the high school and community college levels. He understands the difference between a current fad and real educational quality. He stands with educators against the constant assaults on teachers and their unions by the news media and the Bill Gates and Eli Broads of the world. His opponent served as a school administer and as president of their statewide organization called for contracting out classified employee jobs to non-union firms paying inferior contracts and not providing healthcare coverage to their employees. Tom is the good guy in this race.

The propositions on the ballot also pit good against evil. My recommendations are:

Proposition 19: I will vote YES to **decriminalize the use of marijuana** in California. Our prisons are crowded with people whose only crime was the smoking of marijuana. Taxing marijuana at the local level will help provide badly needed city and county services. The arguments about smoking on the job are just a smoke screen. The same provisions regarding the drinking of alcohol on the job can be applied to the smoking of marijuana on the job. The real question is how long can the alcohol industry keep marijuana illegal in order to increase their own profits.

Proposition 20: I will vote NO on allowing a randomly selected group to **draw the lines for congressional districts.** The commission that would decide is made up of 5 Democrats, 5 Republicans, and 4 Independents. This is clearly an attempt by the Republicans to have fewer Democratic districts. A change of four or five seats in Congress from California could change the balance of power in Washington. The idea that these 14 randomly selected people can adequately and fairly draw congressional lines does not pass any laugh test.

Proposition 21: I will vote YES to add a few dollars per year to the **Vehicle License Fee** in order to help restore our state public parks system.

Proposition 22: I will vote NO on Proposition 22. Even though on its face it seems fair to require funds approved by the voters to be spent locally and prohibiting the short-term borrowing of these funds in order to address vital state needs robs the legislature of one of its few avenues to a balanced budget - given the refusal of the Republicans to vote for any increases in revenue. The passage of Proposition 22 would take about $2 billion out of public school funding this coming year. I do, however, feel this is a close call.

Proposition 23: I will vote NO on the suspension of recently approved legislation that begins to address our global warming problem.

**Proposition 23** was put on the ballot by two Texas oil companies (Valero Energy Corporation and Tesoro - both of which are large polluters) in order to avoid responsible air quality guidelines. Again, **we cannot allow corporate money to trump the public good.**

Proposition 24: I will vote YES to eliminate some of the corporate tax breaks that were given to a few multi-state corporations in order to buy a Republican’s vote on the last state budget.

**Proposition 24** (sponsored by CTA) would **eliminate these tax breaks** averaging $23.5 million each for 6 multi-state corporations.

**Proposition 25** (sponsored by CFT and other unions) would allow for a **majority vote budget approval** and help to prevent the kind of backroom deals made in order to secure the few additional votes needed to reach the two-thirds vote threshold. It would stop the minority control of budget making. It would end attempts by conservative legislators to get changes in worker and public protections as the price of passing a budget.

Proposition 25 would also require that the legislature **not receive pay after June 15** until a budget is passed. While I am not sure that this provision is a good one, most voters believe that it is important for the legislators to feel the pain that is caused by the late budget. The late budget costs millions of dollars as vendors are paid interest on late payments, public services are disrupted, schools are unable to adequately plan for the next school year, and construction jobs are stopped and then restarted with the attendant extra costs. Proposition 25 does not address the issue of the two-thirds vote to increase taxes. Proposition 25 is a step forward but it will not solve the primary issue in California budgets - the very very rich are not paying their fair share of taxes.

People you talk to who believe there is some kind of a loophole in Proposition 25 that would allow for the raising of taxes by a majority vote should know that a three conservative judge panel has ruled that “Proposition 25 cannot be interpreted to operate as an end-run around the two-thirds requirement for raising taxes.”

Proposition 26: I will be voting NO on increasing the requirement to pass a fee from a fifty percent vote to a two-thirds vote requirement. Proposition 26 was put on the ballot by big oil, tobacco, and alcohol companies. **Fees are charges assessed on regulated industries that are intended to cover the cost of overseeing those industries.** For example, the fee on tobacco helps to address the health costs associated with smoking as well as educate people regarding the health hazzards associated with smoking. A fee on polluters help pay for the screening for lead poisoning due to lead contamination. The measure would shift the burden of cleaning up pollution or remedying harm to public health off of industry and onto the backs of California taxpayers.

If approved by voters, Proposition 26 would make it much tougher for state or local government to collect industry-specific mitigation fees on business activities that cause harm to the environment or public health. Proposition 26 will only further cripple our state's budget mess, making it harder to collect revenue owed to the state and regional jurisdictions, as well as putting at risk the implementation of regulatory fees to pay for such things as oil spill clean-up, air and water pollution, the health impacts of cigarettes and pesticides and much more

Proposition 27: I will be voting YES to eliminate the state commission on redistricting state legislative districts. This is the opposite direction of Proposition 20.

In short, this is an election **where the ideological lines are sharply drawn.** Who is elected and which initiatives are approved or defeated will determine the levels of support for public education and other vital public services for the next four to eight years.

In Solidarity,

Marty Hittelman

October 2010