

## DON'T FORGET

Thanks to the passing of 2020's Proposition 17, nearly **50,000 Californians on parole now have the right to vote!**



You can also check out our "How do I register to vote?" zine for more!

# What is a ballot measure?

Also known as a proposition!

*Initiate Justice zines break down complex topics into accessible, easy-to-understand content.*



## What is a ballot proposition?

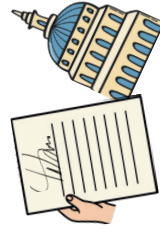
A ballot measure, also called a proposition, is a proposed law that California voters decide to approve or reject during an election.

### Types of ballot measures:

- **Initiatives:** Proposed by voters through signature gathering (can create new laws or amend the state constitution).
- **Referendums:** Allow voters to approve or reject laws already passed by the Legislature.
- **Legislative Measures:** Placed on the ballot directly by the Legislature (often constitutional amendments or bonds).

## Two main ways a ballot measure can appear on a California ballot:

1. **The California Legislature passes a bill or resolution.** If it is approved by both the Assembly and Senate, it can be placed on the ballot for voters to decide.
2. **Citizens can propose a measure by collecting enough valid voter signatures** to qualify it for the ballot.



## What are some examples of ballot measures?

1. **Proposition 47 (2014):** Voters approved this measure, which reduced certain nonviolent crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. The savings from lower incarceration costs were redirected to programs such as mental health and substance use treatment, K-12 services for vulnerable youth, and support for crime victims.
2. **Proposition 36 (2024):** Ten years later, voters passed this measure, which reversed parts of Proposition 47. It increased penalties for certain crimes by reclassifying them as felonies and introduced a new felony category that includes mandatory treatment.

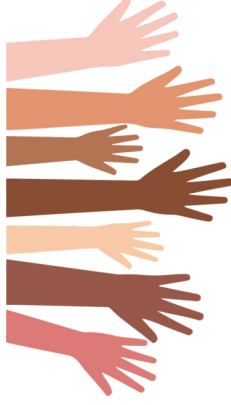
## What are some examples of ballot measures? cont.

3. **Proposition 50 (2025):** This measure originated in the California Legislature and was placed on the ballot to amend the state constitution, changing district boundaries in response to redistricting efforts in other states aimed at gaining more seats in Congress.



## Why do ballot measures matter?

- They allow voters to make laws directly, without having to go through our elected officials
- They can have long-term effects, especially constitutional amendments, which are harder to change later
- They often decide major issues like criminal justice, taxes, housing, and education



## "Follow the money"

- Some people argue that ballot measures are more likely to pass when they have strong financial backing. Campaigns supporting or opposing propositions are often funded by interest groups, businesses, labor unions, or advocacy organizations.
- This funding can shape how widely a measure is seen. For example, through TV ads, mailers, or billboards compared to others that rely more on word of mouth or social media.
- As a result, funding influences public opinion. The rules around how ballot measures are promoted allow for persuasive messaging with few restrictions.