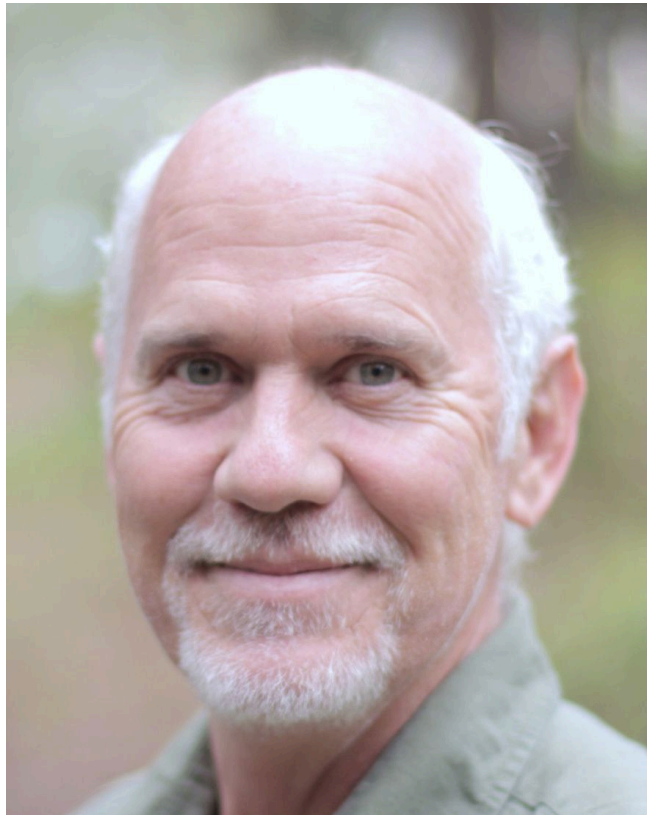


Guest Column: Propositions are pure democracy

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It seems like almost anyone can put a proposition on the California ballot, and in every election we have an assortment of ballot measures to vote on. There are seven propositions that have qualified for the November ballot, addressing issues such as reproductive freedom, sports wagering, funding for arts and music, kidney dialysis, greenhouse gas emissions and flavored tobacco products.

In many ways California propositions are pure democracy. If enough voters petition for an issue to be addressed, it must be placed on the ballot. Then it is up to the voters to decide.

I know most people do not even try to figure out how to vote on the propositions until they get their ballots, but proponents of these propositions started many months ago.

To qualify a proposition to be on the ballot, they must first collect hundreds of thousands of signatures of registered voters. Then they must run campaigns to get it passed. Often, they will seek the support of the California Democratic Party.

Earlier this month, when I attended the Executive Board meeting of the California Democratic Party, one of the endeavors was to hear testimony and adopt positions on all the ballot propositions that have qualified for the November ballot.

It is amazing to me how much money is spent on the campaigns just to gain the Democratic Party endorsement. I am only one voting Executive Board member, yet I was inundated with emails, texts, flyers, and postcards trying to convince me to vote one way or another.

Today, I want to highlight a couple of these upcoming propositions to give you a heads up on what's coming.

At the Executive Board meeting I listened to testimony on one proposition, Prop 27, which would allow out-of-state corporations to set up on-line sports wagering. This would effectively turn every cell phone, laptop, and tablet into a gambling device. Most of the money would get sucked out of the state with very little economic benefit to California.

At the hearing there was grave concern expressed by representatives of California gaming tribes that this would seriously infringe on their rights. In 2000, California voters passed Proposition 1A which amended the California Constitution to grant sovereign Native American California tribes exclusive gaming rights.

Our four local tribes: the Resighini Rancheria, Yurok Tribe, Elk Valley Rancheria, and Tolowa Dee-Ni' Nation, along with 30 other tribes, oppose Prop 27. I was happy to vote with the majority to oppose Prop 27.

Another proposition, Prop 1, gained unanimous support from the California Democratic Party. Prop 1 will enshrine women's reproductive freedom and rights into the California Constitution. Prop 1 was put on the ballot by Democratic legislators with more than two thirds of the State Senate and Assembly voting for it.

According to the Legislative Counsel's Digest, "Existing law, the Reproductive Privacy Act, declares that every individual possesses a fundamental right of privacy with respect to personal reproductive decisions and prohibits the state from denying or interfering with a person's right to choose or obtain an abortion before viability of the fetus, or when the abortion is necessary to protect the life or health of the person."

If approved Prop 1 would amend the California Constitution as follows:

"The state shall not deny or interfere with an individual's reproductive freedom in their most intimate decisions, which includes their fundamental right to choose to have an abortion and their fundamental right to choose or refuse contraceptives."

Last Monday, the Del Norte County Democratic Party decided to highlight Prop 1 in our outreach campaign over the coming months. Giving the voters of California the chance to vote on this important issue is our best recourse since six Supreme Court justices voted to leave this issue up to the states to decide. While other states are taking away reproductive rights and bodily autonomy, California is going a different direction.

A recent poll documented that 65 percent of people in America support a woman's right to make decisions about their own reproductive health care. This a chance for California voters to express their opinion through direct democratic voting. California again can lead the way for other states to follow.

If you are interested in getting involved with the campaign to support Prop 1, please send me an email.

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