

# Jonah Mann's Nov 2020 California Endorsements

My endorsements are informed by my personal research and opinions, and draw inspiration from, but sometimes disagree with, the following voter guides:

- [SPUR](#), the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association
- [Democratic Socialists of America - San Francisco Chapter](#)
- [SF Renters Alliance](#)
- [Tech Worker Voter Guide](#)
- [United Democratic Club](#)
- [This one](#) made by my friend Barak Gila
- [This one](#) made by [@pkober](#), a friend of a friend.
- [YIMBY Action](#), a pro-housing organization. YIMBY stands for “Yes in my back yard”.

I didn't research local races outside of SF, but if you're not in SF I strongly encourage you to vote for more housing and recommend taking a look at the YIMBY Action [voter guide](#).

## Quick summary

**President / VP: Biden / Harris**

**U.S. House D12: Nancy Pelosi.**

**U.S. House D14: Jackie Speier**

**U.S. House D17: Ro Khanna**

**State Senate (District 11): Scott Wiener**

**State Assembly (District 17): David Chiu**

**State Assembly (District 19): Phil Ting**

**SF Board of Education: Jenny Lam, Michelle Parker**

**BART Director (Districts 7 & 9): Lateefah Simon & Bevan Dufty**

**[CA Prop 14](#): Yes**

**[CA Prop 15](#): Enthusiastic Yes!**

**[CA Prop 16](#): Ambivalent Yes**

**[CA Prop 17](#): Yes**

**[CA Prop 18](#): Yes**

**[CA Prop 19](#): Yes**

**[CA Prop 20](#): No**

**[CA Prop 21](#): Ambivalent No**

**[CA Prop 22](#): No**

**[CA Prop 23](#): No**

**[CA Prop 24](#): No**

**[CA Prop 25](#): Yes**

**[District Prop RR](#): Yes**

**[SF Prop A](#): Yes**

**[SF Prop B](#): No**

**[SF Prop C](#): Yes**

**[SF Prop D](#): Yes**

[SF Prop E](#): Yes

[SF Prop F](#): Yes

[SF Prop G](#): Yes

[SF Prop H](#): Yes

[SF Prop I](#): No

[SF Prop J](#): Yes

[SF Prop K](#): Yes

[SF Prop L](#): Mild No

**SF Supervisor District 1: Marjan Philhour**

**SF Supervisor District 3: Danny Sauter**

**SF Supervisor District 5: Vallie Brown**

**SF Supervisor District 7: Myrna Melgar**

**SF Supervisor District 11: Ahsha Safai**

## Thorough explanations

### President / VP: Biden / Harris

- Our saviors from the corrupt, anti-science, anti-expertise, anti-immigrant, racist fascists currently occupying the White House.
- Pretty cool to be ousting a literal white supremacist by voting for a multiracial HBCU alumna.
- I'm excited to send a message to my immigrant friends and coworkers that I value their presence here.
- I do wish Warren were the nominee though.

### U.S. House D12: Nancy Pelosi.

- I wish Pelosi and the rest of Democratic leadership faced credible challenges from their left so they would feel pressure to take a more aggressive leftist and anti-Trump stance, which is why I voted for [Agatha Bacelar](#) in the primary. (Bacelar got 1.5% of the vote.)
- Pelosi's challenger in the general election is in fact to her left, but he faces some [troubling allegations](#).
- So I'm voting for [this strong lady](#).

### U.S. House D14: Jackie Speier

- The Democrat.

### U.S. House D17: Ro Khanna

- The Democrat.

### State Senate (District 11): Scott Wiener

- I couldn't endorse Scott Wiener more strongly. He's the best state legislator in the country! He proposes big, visionary solutions to problems like climate change and the housing shortage and is willing to compromise to actually get things passed. His solutions are realistic, effective, and guided by science rather than ideological purity or symbolism. He takes an "all of the above" approach rather than letting the perfect be the enemy of the good.
- Here's what Barak Gila had to say in [his endorsement](#):

Scott Wiener is the best legislator I've ever known. He's been tireless in advocating for more housing, our state's biggest issue. On housing, Wiener passed SB 35, which has led to [the under-construction 2000-home \(half market-rate and half-affordable\) project in Cupertino at the site of Vallco](#), and tens of thousands of other units. Another obscure but critical housing bill he passed is SB 828 requiring cities to zone for their actual housing needs. It [quintupled housing goals](#) in Southern California, and [doubled them](#) in the Bay Area.

Here are a few of the [many bills](#) Wiener's written that have been signed into law:

- [SB 288](#) to speed up approval of sustainable transportation projects, like bike lanes.
- SB 2, SB 3, and SB 1206 for affordable and homeless housing funding.
- SB 822, protecting net neutrality in California.
- SB 785, SB 54, and AB 291 on immigrant rights: protecting immigrants testifying in court and from being reported by their landlord to ICE, and making California a sanctuary state.

- Endorsed by [a jillion policymakers and organizations](#), including [Planned Parenthood of Northern California](#), the [SF Renters Alliance](#), the [California Democratic Party](#), and [SF YIMBY](#).
- The [Tech Worker Voter Guide](#) endorses Senator Wiener for his stance in favor of net neutrality and says “Senator Wiener stands alone among California elected officials in both his efficacy and his forward-thinking. He deserves your vote.”
- Unfortunately, the SF chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America—whom I typically agree with on most issues—has endorsed the challenger to Senator Wiener, Jackie Fielder. Jackie is running on a campaign of misguided ideological purity. The positions she takes would make California’s housing shortage worse. She tries to paint Senator Wiener as captured by the interests of housing developers, which is really a misapplication of socialist principles: Our anger should be directed at landlords (who profit from the scarcity of housing), not at developers (who actually build more of the thing we have a shortage of). The right approach—which Scott Wiener supports—is to let developers build housing subject to strong tenant protections and then tax their profits, not to prevent them from building any housing in the first place.
- I encourage you to check out Senator Wiener’s [Medium posts](#) and his [campaign website](#).

**State Assembly (District 17): David Chiu**

- The Democrat.

**State Assembly (District 19): Phil Ting**

- The Democrat.

**SF Board of Education: Jenny Lam, Michelle Parker**

- I only voted for 2 of 4.
- These are the two endorsed by Mayor London Breed (whom I like) and Scott Wiener (whom I love).

**BART Director (Districts 7 & 9): Lateefah Simon & Bevan Dufty**

- Endorsed by SF YIMBY
- Here’s what my friend Barak Gila had to say in [his endorsement](#):

**Lateefah Simon** and **Bevan Dufty** are both incumbent BART directors that have supported housing developments on BART land. Dufty also came out in support of controversial SB 50, which would have upzoned residential areas near transit.

### **CA Prop 14: Yes**

- Funds stem cell research with bonds.
- The funding goes to research institutions within California.
- When George W. Bush banned federal funds from going to stem cell research, California started funding stem cell research on its own. That money has just run out. This would replenish the funding.
- [Here](#)'s where the first batch of money went.
- Obama reversed the federal ban, so researchers can get money from the federal government now. Therefore one argument against this prop is that it's no longer necessary.
- There's been some criticism of how the initial funds were administered, and this prop adds to that bureaucracy.
- Interest rates are low so this is a good time to finance spending with debt.
- Medical research is something governments *should* fund. Private markets work best when the purchaser immediately consumes all the benefit of the good or service that they're buying. But medical research is the opposite of that: People who receive treatment today benefit from research that was started decades ago, that they probably didn't even know they'd consume. So this is an appropriate role for government to play.
- Is it absurd that we're relying on voters to make a call on this? Yes. Is that a reason to vote no? Not in my opinion.
- I personally know I am at very high risk for pancreatic cancer and I don't want to look back in 30 years and wish society had invested more in medical research.

### **CA Prop 15: Enthusiastic Yes!**

- California currently uses a property tax system that taxes the value of a property at the time it was purchased rather than at the current market value. This creates a system where the longtime landowners pay [dramatically lower](#) property taxes than their neighbors who bought land more recently. It also deprives schools and municipalities of funding.
- This prop would switch to taxing based on current market value for commercial properties valued at over \$3 million. It would maintain the current system for all residential properties and for commercial properties valued at under \$3 million.
- Vote yes to unlock \$8 billion to \$12 billion in funding for schools and local governments!
- Vote yes to stop penalizing newcomers and young people.
- Endorsed by [DSA-SF](#) and [SF YIMBY](#),

### **CA Prop 16: Ambivalent Yes**

- In 1996 California voters passed a ban on "preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, education, or contracting"
- This prop repeals that ban.
- I'm sympathetic to the argument that it's unfair for race to be singled out as the one thing that schools can't consider in admissions when they can consider literally any other factor like how good you are at squash, where your uncle went to college, and whether your family donated a library.

- I am also sympathetic to the argument that affirmative action unfairly penalizes (especially East Asian) students who come from families that have prioritized academic achievement.
- All else equal, is someone who got a 2100 on the SATs while facing American racism really a weaker applicant than someone who got a 2110 with no headwinds?
- A better public university setup wouldn't have zero-sum admissions. It would have the resources to admit all applicants, and not assume that all admitted students would graduate in four years.
- I voted yes.
- See [here](#) for my further contemplation on the meaning of "fairness".

#### **CA Prop 17: Yes**

- Currently in California people with felonies can't vote while on parole.
- This prop lets people with felonies vote while on parole.
- This is good. Even better would be letting people vote while in prison.

#### **CA Prop 18: Yes**

- This prop would let 17-year-olds vote in primary elections if they will be 18 by the general election.
- In general I like the way young people vote and I want them to make up more of the electorate, so I'm voting yes.
- TBH I don't buy the primary/general rigamarole. If a brain is mature enough to make a reasoned decision at 17 then it should be allowed to vote in the general at 17 too.

#### **CA Prop 19: Yes**

- California currently uses a property tax system that taxes the value of a property at the time it was purchased rather than at the current market value. This creates a system where the longtime landowners pay dramatically lower property taxes than their neighbors who bought land more recently. It also deprives schools and municipalities of funding.
- This prop does two things: First, it would let people over 55 keep their low tax rate if they move to a new home of equal or lesser value. It's not ideal to perpetuate these legacy tax rates, but at least this would encourage downsizing and increase real estate turnover. The sold house would then be reassessed at its current market value and generate more tax revenue for its municipality.
- Second, this prop would reassess a property's taxable value when it is inherited, unless the heir uses it as a primary residence. Currently the legacy tax rate is inherited along with the property, which is really feudalistic. Ending feudalism is good!
- This prop is expected to raise somewhere in the tens to hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue for schools and local governments.

#### **CA Prop 20: No**

- Here's the [ballot summary](#):

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limits access to parole programs established for non-violent offenders who have completed the full term of their primary offense by eliminating eligibility for certain offenses.</li> <li>● Changes standards and requirements governing parole decisions under this program.</li> <li>● Authorizes felony charges for specified theft crimes currently chargeable only as</li> </ul> |
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misdemeanors, including some theft crimes where the value is between \$250 and \$950.

- Requires persons convicted of specified misdemeanors to submit to collection of DNA samples for state database.

- Let's not needlessly force people to stay in prison longer.
- I do think the societal costs of certain crimes like thefts are generally underappreciated. I wish San Franciscans felt safe leaving their bikes unlocked and unattended for a few minutes while running errands, but instead people 1) stress about theft and 2) buy bike locks. Both of these are costs we shouldn't have to bear! But this prop is not the way to resolve that.
- Opposed by the ACLU, supported by Devin Nunes. I voted No.

#### **CA Prop 21: Ambivalent No**

- This prop would allow local governments to enact rent control on housing that was first occupied over 15 years ago, and limits rent increases even when a property has a new tenant.
- SPUR has [a very thorough writeup](#) of what this prop will do and why they endorse No.
- This prop will likely lead to a reduced supply of rental housing, which increases rents overall. The way to decrease rents is to increase the supply of rental housing.
- Rent control removes a landlord's incentive to maintain their properties. Why improve a building if you can't charge more rent despite your added investment? This problem is exacerbated by not letting rents reset to market rate when a new tenant moves in.
- Rent control encourages landlords to convert their rental units to condos, which they can sell off at market rate, instead of collecting rent below market rate. This reduces the supply of rental housing which drives up rents.
- One benefit of rent control is that it helps current tenants stay in their homes if they wouldn't be able to afford the future market rate of their unit.
- Another way rent control leads to increased rents overall is by disincentivizing the construction of new units, because it reduces the return a developer can collect from building new housing. This prop avoids that by giving developers 15 years to recoup their investment, which hopefully is enough time. This plus the previous point is enough to make me ambivalent about my position.

#### **CA Prop 22: No**

- In 2019, California passed [AB5](#) which made a well-meaning attempt to prevent companies from classifying their workers as independent contractors when they in spirit should have been full-time employees.
- In practice AB5 had some really negative effects for legitimate freelance workers, and I would probably support its repeal.
- This prop would classify app-based rideshare and delivery drivers as independent contractors while establishing [new protections](#) for them.
- This prop is heavily funded by Uber, Lyft, and Doordash.
- I would probably support this prop if it didn't include this horrible provision:

Amending Proposition 22 would require a seven-eighths (87.5%) vote in each chamber of the California State Legislature and the governor's signature, provided that the amendment is

consistent with, and furthers the purpose of, Proposition 22. Changes that are not considered consistent with, and furthering the purpose of, Proposition 22 would need voter approval.

A 7/8ths majority is essentially impossible. So if anything ever comes up and this law needs tweaking, it's unfixable.

- If this prop fails and the situation indeed becomes as dire as prop 22 proponents are predicting, the state legislature can always just pass a regular law similar to this prop but without the toxic 7/8ths clause.

#### **CA Prop 23: No**

- This prop would require dialysis clinics to have a physician on-site while patients are being treated.
- Dialysis is a low-risk, routine procedure that doesn't require a doctor. Mandating that a doctor be present would make dialysis more expensive and less available.
- The Service Employees International Union put this prop on our ballot as retaliation in a labor dispute with dialysis companies.
- It's absurd that this is being put to voters instead of being left to expert regulators. We do have regulatory bodies composed of medical care experts and if they wanted to impose this requirement, they would do so.
- This prop is [opposed by](#) the Renal Physicians Association, California Medical Association, American Nurses Association\California, California State Conference NAACP, and many other groups.
- [The dialysis industry is really really awful](#). Also what kind of society has a "dialysis industry"? May this be the only time I ever find myself aligned with their interests.

#### **CA Prop 24: No**

- This prop is an attempt to strengthen consumer data privacy laws.
- It's complex and the Electronic Frontier Foundation [described it](#) as "a mixed bag of partial steps backwards and forwards".
- The ACLU [opposes](#) it.
- The world isn't falling apart without this prop now; let's vote no and get a better privacy law passed instead, either by the legislature as a regular law or next election as a better-formulated ballot prop.

#### **CA Prop 25: Yes**

- This prop ends cash bail in California!
- Technically the legislature already passed this, but enough signatures were gathered in opposition that now the voters have to approve the bill before it becomes law.
- The bail system would be replaced with a risk assessment formula that some, including the ACLU, have found [questionable](#).
- The bail industry is vigorously fighting against this prop because it would put them out of business, and the ACLU has [clarified](#) that they "will never support any effort to keep the predatory bail industry in business".

#### **District Prop RR: Yes**

- This prop creates a 0.125% sales tax to fund Caltrain (estimated to raise \$100 million per year). From what I gather, Caltrain is in really dire straits with fare revenue plummeting during the pandemic and could literally halt service without this funding.

#### **SF Prop A: Yes**

- [Here's](#) how [@pkober](#) put it:

\$487.5 million bond to raise money for:

- Homelessness services (including housing and shelters), \$207M
- Parks, plazas, and playground improvements, \$239M
- City infrastructure like streets and sidewalks, \$41.5M

Requires  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote to pass

These are all good things that we should be paying for. And with interest rates low, it's a good time to be purchasing [sic, should be "issuing"] bonds.

- Endorsed by [SF YIMBY](#), [SPUR](#)

#### **SF Prop B: No**

- This prop would reorganize the city commissions responsible for sanitation.
- Apparently [SPUR](#), the [United Democratic Club](#), [SF YIMBY](#), and the [Tech Worker Voter Guide](#) all have the same take on this one: That it's a reorganization which creates yet another layer of SF bureaucracy but doesn't actually improve the execution of sanitation in the city.

#### **SF Prop C: Yes**

- This prop would let noncitizens serve on city boards, commissions, and advisory bodies.
- Noncitizens are part of our community and should be able to participate in it.
- Endorsed by [SF YIMBY](#), [SPUR](#)

#### **SF Prop D: Yes**

- Creates an oversight board for the sheriff's department
- Endorsed by [SPUR](#)

#### **SF Prop E: Yes**

- [Here's](#) how [@pkober](#) put it:

Eliminates the mandate in SF's charter that the Police Department must always have a minimum of 1,971 officers employed. Instead, SFPD would submit a staffing report every two years to the Police Commission rather than a fixed staffing requirement.

Mandates, such as minimum staffing levels or minimum budget requirements, hamper the ability for city officials to be flexible or responsive in changing times, which is why I generally think they're bad.

I'm supportive of removing these mandates in general, but especially for something like minimum police levels at a time when we're trying to rethink policing and how we can have more non-police responses. This is a necessary part of police reform for defunding and reallocation of resources.

- Endorsed by [SF YIMBY](#), [DSA-SF](#), [SPUR](#)

#### **SF Prop F: Yes**

- Changes to the business tax.
- Endorsed by [SF YIMBY](#), [SPUR](#)

#### **SF Prop G: Yes**

- Lowers the voting age for local elections to 16.
- In general I like the way young people vote and I want them to make up more of the electorate.
- I think my high school's curriculum would have included more discussion of civics and politics if most high schoolers were eligible to vote.
- Endorsed by [SPUR](#)



### **SF Prop H: Yes**

- Streamlines SF business permitting process.
- The process of starting a new business in SF is extremely burdensome, expensive, and prone to corruption. See [this recent article](#) for a deep-dive into a case where someone has been trying to open an ice cream shop for months, has spent over \$100k on rent and red tape so far, has had to fend off appeals filed by another ice cream shop in the neighborhood that is trying to prevent a competitor from opening, and still hasn't open yet. This story happens all the time in SF. How do we expect anything other than high-end businesses to be able to afford these barriers to entry?
- Endorsed by [SF YIMBY](#), [SPUR](#)

### **SF Prop I: No**

- This prop would increase the property *transfer* tax. (Note this is very different from the property tax, which should be increased.)
- Here's some of what SF YIMBY has to say:

The measure's author disingenuously claims that it is taxing wealthy homeowners, but what it is really doing is taxing apartment construction, including below market rate apartments, while letting multi-millionaire homeowners off the hook completely. Measure I increases the transfer tax when a property is sold for more than \$10 million. That might sound progressive, but the vast majority of transactions at that price are made by developers of apartment buildings — the most affordable type of housing. Apartment developers will have to pay this tax when they purchase the property and again have to pay it when they sell the building to a property manager (this is standard procedure for apartment builders who focus on construction and not on running the properties themselves). Economists estimate that Measure I will result in 20% fewer apartments being constructed per year — a huge decrease in the midst of the region's worst housing shortage.

- [SPUR](#) also opposes it.

### **SF Prop J: Yes**

- Unlocks funding for schools.
- Endorsed by [SF YIMBY](#), [SPUR](#)

### **SF Prop K: Yes**

- Authorizes the city build up to 10k units of affordable housing.
- Endorsed by [SF YIMBY](#), [DSA-SF](#), [SPUR](#)

### **SF Prop L: Mild No**

- Imposes a tax on companies whose highest-paid manager's pay is more than 100x that of the company's median employee.
- Might be a nice symbolic policy at the state or federal level, but for SF which is just a fraction of its metropolitan area, this will be yet another factor [driving businesses](#) into neighboring municipalities.

### **SF Supervisor:**

- For these I am voting in accordance with [SF YIMBY](#) and the [SF Renters Alliance](#). We need more housing!

**District 1: Marjan Philhour**

**District 3: Danny Sauter**

**District 5: Vallie Brown**

- Vallie Brown was briefly the D5 supervisor when London Breed vacated the position to become mayor. She very narrowly lost reelection to Dean Preston.

- Here's what SF YIMBY had to say:

Vallie supports building housing at all income levels. She grew up housing insecure, and has 10+ years experience working in the District 5 office. Vallie was instrumental in identifying, purchasing, and funding new affordable housing in the District, and upzoned the Divisadero corridor, paving the way for hundreds of new families to have a place to live in the city.

- Similarly to the case of the state senate race above, DSA-SF has unfortunately endorsed Vallie Brown's opponent, Dean Preston. Dean Preston has a track record of opposing letting new housing be built. For example, in the very same Divisadero project championed by Vallie Brown mentioned above, a car wash was replaced by a 186-unit housing development with 20% affordable housing. Dean Preston [opposed](#) the project because he wanted 33% affordable housing, which would have made the project unprofitable and killed it altogether. Dean would rather have 33% of 0 than 20% of 186. Worst of all, Dean Preston denies that high housing prices are related to low housing supply, which is a basic economic principle and the consensus of economists of all political leanings. Economic science is a legitimate science, and denying the relationship between supply and price is the same as denying the relationship between atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and average global temperature, or between cigarettes and lung cancer. It's one thing to prefer public housing to private, but denying science is another thing altogether. It is totally disqualifying.

**District 7: Myrna Melgar**

**District 11: Ahsha Safai**