

March 5th California Voter Guide

The Lutheran Office of Public Policy- California is charged with researching and interpreting issues being discussed in the public square in California in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the social teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. One expression of this responsibility is found in our ballot proposition recommendations that we produce ahead of statewide elections featuring questions of social justice which have been put to the voters.

California Proposition 1, the Behavioral Health Services Program and Bond Measure is on the ballot in California as a legislatively referred state statute¹ on March 5, 2024.

We typically give ballot measures a rating of: Strong Support, Support, Neutral, Oppose, Strong Opposition.

LOPP Position: Oppose

A “yes” vote supports:

- Renaming the mental health services act of 2004 to the behavioral health services act and expanding its purpose to include substance use disorders including for persons without mental illness;
- Changing how revenue from the 1% tax on income above \$1 million is spent under the law including requiring 30% of the behavioral health services fund be allocated to housing intervention programs;
- Increasing the size of the oversight Commission from 16 to 27 voting members and
- Issuing \$6.38 billion in bonds to fund housing for homeless individuals and veterans including up to \$4.4 billion in mental health care and drug or alcohol treatment facilities and \$2 billion for housing for homeless persons

A “no” vote opposes changing the mental health services act and issuing \$6.38 billion in bonds for homeless individuals and veterans.

Explanation of LOPP’s Position

ELCA social statements emphasize the commitment to justice and equity. We have considered whether Ballot Measure 1 aligns with principles of justice and fairness and promotes equal opportunities and protections for all individuals. We recognize that housing and mental health services are crucial issues in our state. We urge the governor and legislature to find funds for these services in his budget without

¹ In California, a legislatively referred state statute refers to a proposal for a new state law or amendment to existing law that is put forward by the state legislature and is then placed on the ballot for voter approval. In order for the legislatively referred statute to appear on the ballot, it must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of both the State Assembly and State Senate. Once the legislature approves the measure, it is placed on the ballot during a statewide election allowing California voters to decide whether to adopt or reject the proposed statute.

diverting funds from other worthy causes. We also note with disapproval that abrogation of environmental protections found in the measure. Our social statement on economic life clearly states:

Instead of being stewards who care for the long-term wellbeing of creation, we confess that we have depleted non-renewable resources, eroded topsoil, and polluted the air, ground, and water. Without appropriate environmental care, economic growth cannot be sustained. Caring for creation means that economic processes should respect environmental limits. “When we act interdependently and in solidarity with creation, we do justice. We serve and keep the earth, trusting its bounty can be sufficient for all, and sustainable.” [A Social Statement on Sufficient Sustainable Livelihood for All, pg. 15, 1999.]

LOPP also hesitates to recommend measures that amount to budgeting through the ballot measure process. Budgeting by ballot measure can pose several challenges and concerns for effective long-term financial management. Such measures limit flexibility, especially in economic downturns, and can prevent long-term financial planning and oversight. We do not object to such measures in all cases. But we advocate for their limited use and don’t feel Proposition 1 meets the threshold to recommend a yes vote.

Key Points on Prop 1 (per the Legislative Analyst’s Office)

- Just over half of the \$2 billion set aside for housing for homeless people would be designated for veterans.
- There are no changes to the Mental Health Services Act tax, however, more of that money would go to the state and away from county services, which could mean increased costs for counties to continue their current mental health services.
- Bond would increase state costs \$310 million annually for 30 years to repay the bond.
- LAO also projects that the bond would reduce statewide homelessness by a small amount.

Additional Resources on Prop 1

[https://ballotpedia.org/California Proposition 1, Behavioral Health Services Program and Bond Measure \(March 2024\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_1,_Behavioral_Health_Services_Program_and_Bond_Measure_(March_2024)) (Ballotpedia site explaining Prop 1, including arguments from supporters and opponents, lists of official supporters/opponents, and more)

<https://lao.ca.gov/BallotAnalysis/Proposition?number=1&year=2024> (Legislative Analyst’s Office analysis on Prop 1)