



September 25, 2019

Dear League leaders in California,

As you may already know the Schools & Communities First coalition filed an improved Schools & Communities First ballot measure/initiative last summer. LWVC is a member of this coalition. The refiling is a strategic decision to ensure a strong measure with the best possible chance of passing.

This letter explains:

- [the ballot measure and campaign](#)
- [the LWVC role in the campaign and coalition](#)
- [the refiling of the measure](#)
- [how local Leagues can participate in the campaign.](#)

The new filing must qualify for the November 2020 ballot through the usual process of gathering signatures. The original initiative is still officially on the November 2020 ballot and will remain there until the improved version qualifies.

I. Overview of Schools & Communities First

[Schools & Communities First \(SCF\)](#) is a ballot measure that will provide \$11 billion in new commercial property tax revenue annually. This money will provide increased funding for schools and local governments, providing more affordable housing, healthcare, parks, libraries, first responders, and public safety.

The goals of the measure are to:

1. **Reclaim \$11 billion every year** for our schools and local communities
2. **Make corporations pay their fair share**
3. **Make history:** Start a new legacy of investing in our future instead of starving schools and communities of needed resources.

What's the problem?

Forty years ago, Californians passed Prop 13 in reaction to rapidly rising property taxes. It helped homeowners, but the biggest winners have been large commercial property owners.

Under Prop 13, property is only reassessed when it changes hands. For residential property, that occurs on average every ten years. Commercial property – especially that owned by big companies – mostly avoids this reassessment. This can be because it just isn't sold or transferred, but also



happens because deals and/or the corporations that own property are specifically structured to avoid the reassessment.

Because large corporations are not paying their fair share, we lose \$11 billion per year for schools and local services – libraries, infrastructure repair, healthcare, and more.

Who's been benefiting from this? Big companies like Chevron, Shell, Exxon, Walmart, McDonalds, Blackstone.

Who is not benefiting from this? Schools and local services funded by property taxes do not receive money when commercial property changes hands. Over the past 40 years, California has dropped from 7th in the nation in per-pupil funding to 41st.

Our solution:

Under Schools & Communities First, all commercial and industrial property will be reassessed every three years. By reassessing commercial property on a regular basis, with no exceptions, we will generate \$11 billion every year to invest in our communities. We continue the Prop 13 protection for all residential property, and add relief for small businesses.

II. LWVC role in SCF

The League of Women Voters of California is a member of the coalition working for the passage of Schools & Communities First. We are one of the three proponents (signers) of the measure – along with California Calls, and PICO California.

Passing Schools & Communities First at the November 2020 election is a primary priority for the LWVC for 2019 and 2020.

III. SCF refiling

The original SCF measure qualified for the November 2020 ballot very early – just after the 2018 election. During the last year, we received important feedback. Because of this, the coalition decided to refile and requalify our measure, with these small changes:

- Increase the number of small businesses that will be exempt from reassessment
- Ensure that every school in every district in California receives increased funding
- Include more specifics about how the phase-in period will be managed, both statewide and in county assessors' offices.

The changes and refiling are a strategic decision to ensure that we have the strongest possible measure, with the best possible chance of winning.



We continue to have strong support from within the coalition, from our funders, and from the community members working on the campaign. The coalition continues to grow, with more organizations joining in.

We will begin signature gathering on the new measure in late October or early November of this year. Our deadline for collecting signatures is March 20, 2020. This will ensure us a top spot on the November 2020 ballot.

IV. How local Leagues can engage

Local Leagues are encouraged to:

- Help gather signatures for the refiled measure. More information on this effort will come later this fall.
- Provide opportunities for members of your League and of the community to learn about the measure. If you hold an event and would welcome the public, let us know so we can add it to the campaign calendar.
- Encourage your members to talk with their friends and neighbors about the measure, why the League supports it, and why it's important to your community.
- Join your regional coalition to network with other organizations supporting the measure.
- If there isn't a formal regional coalition in your area, look [here](#) to see other partners you can work with. Organizations that have people all over the state include California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), California Federation of Teachers (CFT), California Teachers Association (CTA), and the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC).
- Get endorsements of the measure from your local elected officials (examples of endorsements forms are available).

League members interested in knowing more, or in being active in the campaign, are encouraged to join the [Schools and Communities First Google group](#). If you have questions, we encourage you to send those to the [Schools and Communities First Google group](#) so that everyone gets the benefit of your questions and the responses to them.