

SCA 1 – Repeal of Constitutional Article 34

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FACT SHEET

SUMMARY

Senate Constitutional Amendment 1 places a measure on a future statewide ballot asking voters to repeal Article 34 of California's Constitution in its entirety. This provision, passed by voter in 1950, requires majority approval by the voters of a city or county for the development, construction, or acquisition of a publicly funded "low-rent housing project."

BACKGROUND

Article 34 was proposed and passed in direct response to the Federal Housing Act of 1949, part of President Harry Truman's "Fair Deal" to help lower-income post-war families move out of the slums and into better living situations.

The Golden State has changed considerably since 1950. Our society had very different attitudes about race and ethnicity, class and poverty. There were also far less tools providing residents with an opportunity to alter or block plans for new housing—no Environmental Quality Act, no Brown Act, no Coastal Act, and far fewer lawsuits. Today, Article 34 stands an anachronistic and expensive Constitutional barrier that subjects local governments to a web of regulations and costly elections that end up driving up the price of building publicly financed affordable housing.

California has only twenty-two affordable and available rental homes for every one hundred extremely low-income households. A majority of the state's renters spend more than thirty percent of their income on housing, and nearly one-third spend more than half of their income just for a place to live. Forty percent of Californians also live close to or below the poverty line. Burdened by high housing costs, a financial setback for such families can spell catastrophe. Too many of our neighbors are one missed paycheck away from homelessness.

In recent years California's voters have time and again made it clear that they want us, as their leaders, to do better by those who are homeless or struggling to find and afford housing—supporting state and local ballot measures that dedicate hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars to tackling our housing and homelessness crises. The state owes it to these taxpayers to use this money as cost-efficiently as possible.

SOLUTION

A vote for SCA 1 is in support of giving voters an opportunity to eliminate an obstacle, enshrined in our Constitution, which currently undermines the ability of their elected leadership to address California's acute housing and homelessness challenges.

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Western Center on Law and Poverty

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