

Opinion: Prop. 26 will change Sacramento gridlock

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California voters have given the majority party the power to adopt a state budget on a majority vote. But in passing Prop. 26, they have stripped the same lawmakers of one of their chief budget-balancing tools.

Were California voters especially wise Tuesday when they adopted both Proposition 25, which erases the Legislature's crippling two-thirds vote requirement for adopting a budget, and Proposition 26, which imposes a new two-thirds mandate for imposing or raising a fee? End the gridlock, perhaps they were saying, but not at the expense of taxpaying families or businesses.

Or were they being especially clueless, telling Democratic lawmakers to adopt the budget they want, but without knowing or caring that they were simultaneously making the job close to impossible by depriving those same politicians of one of their chief budget-balancing tools?

It's tempting but in the end pointless to try to find a consistent voter philosophy among the confusing and often contradictory ballot measures. The electorate's role is to say "yes" or "no" to individual questions; it's up to their elected leaders and representatives to make those decisions work. In the coming year, lawmakers and the once-and-future Gov. Jerry Brown will be presented with an opportunity in Proposition 25, the majority-vote budget, possibly the most important reform adopted at the ballot box in a generation. They will have to demonstrate wisdom, leadership and self-restraint to take good advantage of it without being snared by

Proposition 26 and the other ballot-box budgeting mandates sent them by voters in this election and others over the last 30 years.

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