

# Opinion: Reasons to vote no on Prop. 63

By Joe Harn and Nathan Black

California voters will be faced with an unprecedented variety of issues, including several lengthy propositions, on Nov. 8. Many of the wordy and complex propositions will leave you scratching your head about what to do. There is, however, an easy answer for dealing with at least one of them, Proposition 63, and that is to vote no.

Proposition 63 has a deceptive name, the “Safety for All Act”, but do not be fooled. It will add another significant bill for taxpayers at the state and local levels. The expensive new program won’t give the public any benefit, according to the experts. Not a single law enforcement group supports Proposition 63, while numerous oppose it, including the California Police Chiefs Association and the California State Sheriffs Association.

Proposition 63 is not a simple gun control measure merely asking whether there should be background checks on ammunition purchasers. It is 34 pages of complex legalese that requires, among other things, the creation of new court processes and duties for local law enforcement. This means more work for district attorneys, public defenders, court staff, probation officers, and police and sheriffs, all of whom already are overworked and have stressed budgets.

The price tag for these new duties under Proposition 63, according to the non-partisan Legislative Analyst’s Office, is estimated to be somewhere in the tens of millions of dollars annually, year-after-year. And, Proposition 63 provides no mechanism for most of these costs to be recouped.

So who pays for all this additional work? Your county

government will shoulder a good portion, if not most, of it. The result could be budget cuts and shifting focus away from vital resources, including health services and family services, in order to pay for these costly new programs. This is because these costs would be mandatory under Proposition 63. Counties will not have the option to cut spending on its provisions. They will have to find the money from existing funds.

Proposition 63 is simply not good fiscal policy. The irony is that the California State Sheriffs Association has warned that Proposition 63's diversion of funds from critical law enforcement needs could actually make the public less safe. Prop. 63, therefore, is a dangerous bureaucratic mandate on already over-burdened local governments.

Regardless of your view on guns, listen to the many law enforcement officials and fiscally responsible Californians who are urging you to vote no on Proposition 63.

*Joe Harn is a CPA and the El Dorado County auditor-controller. Nathan Black is a CPA and the Sutter County auditor-controller.*