

San Francisco Chronicle

EDITORIAL

THE CHRONICLE RECOMMENDS Fixing California for the future

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IF THE polls are correct, California voters are verging on re-electing Arnold Schwarzenegger, but wavering on \$37 billion in rebuilding bonds.

None of the four measures dealing with roads, housing, schools and levees is a sure thing. Voters may have "bond fatigue," that tapped out feeling of being asked too much, too often. Also, crowded airwaves filled with big-spending campaigns for candidates and issues are drowning out awareness of the bonds.

Whatever the reason, it's time to frame the argument: These bonds will prepare California for its future. With bipartisan consensus, Sacramento negotiated these bonds in a rare display of planning, thoroughness and balance.

Look who's aboard. The governor backs the bonds, and so does his opponent Phil Angelides and the Democratic leadership in the Legislature. Opposition is limited to anti-tax groups, who are instinctively averse to bond borrowing. This alignment doesn't come often.

In the final week of the campaign, the governor is finally grabbing voters' lapels to talk about the bonds. It's about time, because without the infrastructure package he risks becoming California's caretaker, not its visionary leader. The state's creaking, outdated facilities need updating.

Here's a summary of the bonds:

Proposition 1B calls for \$20 billion for roads and transit. Locally, there's potential money for new BART cars, updated freeway interchanges and a fourth Caldecott tunnel.

Proposition 1C will spend \$2.85 billion on housing. This money would put affordable units on underused city lots and areas near transit hubs. The measure supplies the money to bring down the state's notoriously high housing costs.

Proposition 1D contains \$10.4 billion for school construction. As California grows, it must expand its K-12 classrooms and universities. These bonds are an important step.

Proposition 1E puts \$4.1 billion into levee repairs. Flooding and earthquake threats jeopardize the bay and delta and much of the state's water supply. This bond meets these threats.

All should be approved. This state's political leaders came up with the omnibus package. Now it's up to the voters to approve this effort.

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