

Props. 7 and 10 aren't good green initiatives

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TWO measures on the Nov. 4 California ballot - Propositions 7 and 10 - purport to push California in a green direction. But both are financed by wealthy men with an agenda, and neither makes the best environmental sense for California. We urge voters to reject both.

The worst thing about Proposition 7 is that one must be an energy wonk - or at least briefed by one - to fully understand its implications. The measure's backers hope the feel-good sound of the initiative will hook voters who aren't experts enough to recognize its flaws.

On its face, Proposition 7 appears to be a straightforward push for California's utilities to generate 20 percent of their own power from renewable sources, such as solar or wind, by 2010, and 50 percent by 2025.

Sounds like something the environmentalists might celebrate, right?

Actually, no. Along with the state's big utilities - Edison and Pacific Gas & Electric - the Sierra Club, the League of Conservation Voters, the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Union of Concerned Scientists strongly oppose this measure. They say it will actually harm green efforts already under way by the state's utilities.

It's got nonpartisan opposition as well; Both the Democratic and Republican parties are against the measure. Who likes this bill? The father-and-son Arizona billionaires who are backing it.

Local publicly owned utilities already have green goals established, and they are working. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power already has a 20 percent renewable energy target for 2010. It's in the best interests of every one in California to have cleaner energy. But this proposition won't get us there.

The first thing voters need to know about Proposition 10, the alternative-fuel vehicle bond measure, is that it is the baby of another billionaire, T. Boone Pickens. He's the Texas oil tycoon who financed the signature-gathering to put this measure on the ballot. And it's no coincidence that his company is a major supplier of natural gas for alternative-fuel vehicles.

The proposition would offer \$3.4 billion in rebates to fund the development of renewable energy and help consumers purchase alternative-fuel vehicles, such as those powered by the natural gas Pickens sells.

It would also earmark \$1.25 billion for research and production of solar and other renewable energy technology. Over 30 years, however, this bond measure would cost taxpayers \$10 billion or \$335 million annually. That's a sizable commitment.

Proposition 10 would give subsidies of up to \$50,000 per vehicle to corporate fleet operators to purchase or lease natural gas trucks - at taxpayers' expense, using bond funding that would siphon general fund money from education, health care and public safety.

Say no to both these billionaire-backed propositions.