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Statewide Report Criticizes Passage of School Bonds

July 24, 2015 | By Mackenzie Mays | www.fresnobee.com

Highlights:

- California Policy Network says bonds create massive debt, conflicts of interest

- School officials say bonds are necessary to build best facilities for students...

EXCERPT: More than 80% of proposed school bond measures - about \$110 billion - have passed in California since 2001 after Proposition 39 reduced the voter threshold required for approval, according to a new report from the [California Policy Center](#). *(Executive Summary)*

While bonds have allowed hundreds of districts to build and renovate facilities over the past decade, the California Policy Center - a nonprofit think tank - claims that in some cases, school bonds are unnecessary, and their increasing prevalence is leading to massive debt.

The report calls for more oversight and a push for transparency regarding bond issues, saying many voters don't have a clear picture of what they're approving. Bonds also perpetuate conflicts of interest with contractors who would benefit from their approval, according to the report.

"With each successive bond passage, California's fiscal situation worsens," said Ed Ring, executive director of the California Policy Center, who co-wrote the report. "Propped up by dark money, complexity and a political-industrial-financial complex, these bonds are passed off as free money 'for the kids.' But they are little more than massive fiscal obligations, meaning the only thing 'for the kids' is the massive tax bill that awaits."

The report urges state legislators to make campaign contribution reports related to bond measures more accessible to the public and to prohibit contractors and other potentially self-interested corporations from being involved in a bond's passage. ...

California voters could be asked next year to approve an additional statewide bond measure that would allow the state to borrow \$9 billion for K-12 and community college facilities. Gov. Jerry Brown has fought against the measure, calling for change in how state and local governments fund school construction. ...

To read the complete article please visit:

<http://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/education/article28674553.html>

For the Kids: California Voters Must Become Wary of Borrowing Billions More from Wealthy Investors for Educational Construction (Full Report):

http://californiapolicycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/07/CPC_School_Bond_Study_July_2015.pdf

Why LAUSD Wants Exemption from Low-Bidder Law for \$2 Billion in Construction Projects

July 11, 2015 | By Thomas Himes | [Los Angeles Daily News](#)

EXCERPT: As the Los Angeles Unified School District prepares to spend \$2 billion on construction projects, officials want state lawmakers to pass a bill that would exempt them from hiring the lowest bidder.

Supporters of [Assembly Bill 1185](#) say it will save money by letting the district pick the company it deems most suited for the job, while opponents say the proposal is designed by unions to exclude non-union contractors.

The bill's author, Assemblyman Sebastian Ridley-Thomas, D-Los Angeles and the son of Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas, said it has a great deal of support and could be signed into law as early as September, adding he believes it will make school district projects run more smoothly.

"In the public sector, we can't afford waste, and we can't afford delay," Ridley-Thomas said.

But the Associated Builders and Contractors of California has said the legislation "will make it even more difficult for nonunion contractors to participate" on school construction projects, highlighting a "skilled workforce" section of the legislation that, according to the bill's analysis, was designed by unions.

"The 'skilled workforce' requirement is proposed by building trade unions as a new way to block local, nonunion, minority and women-owned construction employers and their employees from participation in the LAUSD best value contracting process," the group is quoted as stating in the bill's analysis. If signed, the legislation would last for five years, exclusively allowing Los Angeles Unified to not adhere to state law that requires the district hire the lowest bidder. The exemption would apply only to contracts valued at more than \$1 million.

After about 4 1/2 years, the program would be reviewed. If the district has experienced success, Ridley-Thomas said he expects the law could be extended for additional years and to other public agencies.

In the upcoming two years, LAUSD will expend \$2 billion on projects, including major renovations of high schools. ...

Still, according to a senate staff analysis released earlier this month, the proposed savings are "speculative, and it is unclear whether potential savings would offset any increases in contracts."

It's not the first time the district has sought relief from low-bidder laws. A nearly identical bill, AB 1971, failed last year.

But in 2006, UC San Francisco was the beneficiary of a similar law, Senate Bill 667, that allowed it to skip the lowest bidder. ...

To read the complete article please visit:

<http://www.dailynews.com/social-affairs/20150711/why-laUSD-wants-exemption-from-low-bidder-law-for-2-billion-in-construction-projects>

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Mission Statement

To promote school district accountability by improving the training and resources available to California's Proposition 39 School Bond Oversight Committees and educating the state legislature, local school boards and the public about the oversight and reporting powers these Citizens' Bond Oversight Committees (CBOCs) have, and to advocate on a state level, where appropriate, on issues of common concern to all CBOCs.

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