

Comparing the Choices

Quality of life is important to Californians. But as times change and new problems appear, many California communities can't get a high quality of life, while others are losing theirs.

To have a high quality of life, we need a vital community. A vital community is one that is lively, healthy, and stable. It has the ability to stay a nice place to live for a long time.



CHOICE ONE

Build a Strong Economy: Create a Climate that Contributes to Economic Vitality

California has many successful industries, and our state plays a big role in the international economy. But in some communities the quality of life is low because the economy is poor. No community can survive if the people living in it don't have jobs. We need to attract businesses to our communities; once they move there, we must make it easier for them to grow and succeed. If a community has a strong economy, a high quality of life for all will follow.

Choice One supporters generally favor these measures:

- Cut down on the rules businesses have to follow and the fees they have to pay if they want to grow or if they want to move into a community.
- Attract businesses to a community by offering them services like good transportation for their workers.
- Support farming and industries that depend on farming by making sure farmers have enough water and protecting farmland from being turned into housing.

In favor of Choice One:

- When businesses in a community succeed, they pay more taxes and there is a better variety of stores and services.
- A strong economy means more money and opportunities in the community for improving quality of life.
- Successful businesses give back to the community by supporting sports, the arts and charities.

In opposition to Choice One:

- If businesses don't have to follow rules when they build, they do things that hurt the community's environment.
- This choice only works for awhile. The economy is always changing, and when it is weak again these efforts will have been wasted.
- Often businesses don't help their community at all, they just move in because land and labor are cheap.

A possible trade-off:

If we make successful businesses more important than anything else, we lose our protection of the environment and use up too many natural resources.



CHOICE TWO

Achieve Fairness: Provide Equity in Access to Opportunities and Resources

California offers a lot of freedom, and many opportunities for people to better their lives. But in some communities quality of life is low because people face barriers to success. No community can be strong when people are not treated fairly. We need to provide ways for people to get what they need to live and ways for people to make their lives better. If a community offers opportunities for everyone, everyone can find ways to have a high quality of life.

Choice Two supporters generally favor these measures:

- Start programs that provide everyone with their basic needs, and that help people learn new skills and get jobs.
- Look carefully at the justice system to make sure everyone is treated fairly; get citizens involved in monitoring police actions.
- Improve public education by increasing money from the state for schools and by letting each school decide the best way to spend it.

In favor of Choice Two:

- California already has lots of opportunities for people; we just need to make sure everyone can take advantage of them.
- When a lot of people don't have access to what they need to succeed, the community is not socially or economically stable.
- In the past, many groups of people have been treated unfairly; we have to change that and make it easier for them to succeed.

In opposition to Choice Two:

- This choice costs too much money and makes the government too involved in people's lives.
- Having special programs for some people just makes it unfair for other people; we already have laws in place to make sure everyone is treated the same.
- Instead of waiting for someone else to fix their problems, people should take responsibility for their own lives and take advantage of the opportunities already there.

A possible trade-off:

If we spend money to make sure everyone has access to opportunities, we take tax dollars away from other government commitments, such as fixing our highways or keeping our streets safe.

for a Vital Community



CHOICE THREE

Traditional Institutions: Promote Shared Responsibility for Our Community's Good

Social, religious and civic groups have the social values that connect everyone in a community. But in some communities quality of life is low because those groups are disappearing. No community can be stable if people don't work together and help each other. We need to help traditional institutions grow. If a community shares social values and works together, everyone can help each other to have a high quality of life.

Choice Three supporters generally favor these measures:

- Honoring religious and cultural traditions that provide the community with shared social values.
- Support of local groups that traditionally provide community services by helping them advertise, giving them money to grow, and giving them public spaces where they can do their work.
- Teaching youth to be proud of our country, to be good citizens and to volunteer to help in the community.

In favor of Choice Three:

- Communities only work when everyone helps; people need to join groups that provide services for the community.
- Supporting service groups takes the pressure off of government social service agencies that already have more work than they can handle.
- Religious and social groups are what make communities strong; they look for ways to support the community as it changes.

In opposition to Choice Three:

- Many traditional institutions only allow certain people to be members and cause division in the community.
- Doing anything that offers special favors to religious organizations is not allowed by our constitution; government and religion should be separate.
- Volunteers and social service groups should not have to take over what it is the responsibility of government to provide.

A possible trade-off:

If we encourage the return of traditional institutions, groups that have treated people unfairly in the past could become more powerful.



CHOICE FOUR

Safeguard Our Environment: Conserve Natural Resources and Guard Against Pollution

California is a beautiful place with a wealth of natural resources. But some communities are polluted or are rapidly using up their natural resources. No community can survive without clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. We need to make cleaning up our environment and protecting our resources our most important job. If a community is a healthy and attractive place to live, everyone in it will have a high quality of life.

Choice Four supporters generally favor these measures:

- Individual efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, clean up the environment, and make choices that stop air and water pollution.
- Protection from communities becoming too big and spread out by keeping open spaces around cities and towns for parks, farming, or natural habitat.
- State efforts to make sure laws that protect air quality, water quality and natural habitat are obeyed.

In favor of Choice Four:

- Our natural resources won't last forever; if we can use them wisely they will still be there for our children.
- Good health is important to everyone, and people need clean air, water and soil to be healthy.
- Parks and other open space in a community make it a nice place to live; communities will attract more businesses if they are pleasant.

In opposition to Choice Four:

- This choice costs too much and interferes with people's rights to use their private property the way they want to use it.
- The earth is huge and the people living on it small; it is not likely we could really use up all the earth's resources.
- Science and technology are making more and more progress—we will soon be able to fix any problems we create.

A possible trade-off:

If we prevent land from being developed and slow down on the amount of resources we use, we could hurt the economy by cutting down on jobs.

This discussion guide presents four different ways to build a vital community. Each way is presented as a choice. The choices are very distinct from each other so that people can discuss the differences. While you may find more to agree with in one choice, you may not totally agree with everything described in that choice. You may find that you do not like any of the choices completely, but instead like some parts of each one. No matter what you like or dislike, each choice is a building block for a vital community.