

FULL TEXT OF BALLOT MEASURE HH

MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY SPECIAL TAX FOR LOCAL FIRE PREVENTION, WATER QUALITY AND OPEN SPACE

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority ("MRCA") is a local park agency whose members include the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, that is responsible for maintaining and improving open space, parkland and wildlife corridors and for providing fire protection and prevention services and park ranger patrols and services within the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Zone. The MRCA currently maintains over 1,850 acres of local open space, parkland and wildlife corridors, in the Santa Monica Mountains west of Griffith Park and east of Interstate 405 (the "405 Freeway"), (the "Eastern Santa Monica Mountains/Hollywood Hills Area" or the "Area").

Unlike most public agencies, the MRCA and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy do not receive permanent ongoing funding from local or state taxes. A major challenge the MRCA currently faces is that its revenues have decreased while costs to protect and maintain parks and open space and to prevent local wildfires have increased due to the greater use of public open space and parklands and warmer temperatures, which have increased the risk of wildfires. Additional park maintenance and expanded park ranger patrols and services are needed to maintain and protect MRCA lands, including unauthorized illegal encampments that create greater risks for wildfires.

Due to these factors, the fire risk and fire danger in the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains and Hollywood Hills Area is significantly higher. If this measure is approved, the MRCA would expand and improve its fire prevention services, including high fire alert patrols, and more extensive brush clearing on MRCA lands to reduce and eliminate fire hazards. This measure would also improve wildfire safety by funding new brush clearing services along Mulholland Drive in the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains and Hollywood Hills Area on lands that are owned by the City of Los Angeles and that are currently not being cleared of dry brush. This measure would also further improve local fire safety and visual aesthetics with new irrigated green areas around the Mulholland Overlooks.

The Santa Monica Mountains are home to many different plant and animal species. As human populations grow, it is critical that the wildlife corridors between the 405 Freeway and Griffith Park are permanently protected. These wildlife corridors are necessary to ensure mountain lions, deer and other remaining large animals can survive in the Area.

The MRCA is the only public agency that actively acquires and maintains open space and conservation easements for wildlife corridors in this Area. The MRCA also acquires and protects remaining open space lands from development in the Area.

Therefore, in order to maintain local fire protection and prevention services including brush clearing and improved fire prevention services such as new brush clearing and fire prevention services along Mulholland Drive on lands that are currently overgrown with dry flammable brush; responsibly removing illegal encampments; and new irrigation to maintain green vegetation around the Mulholland Overlooks which will improve fire safety and visual aesthetics; to continue to preserve and maintain extensive open space, parkland, wildlife corridors, natural habitats, lands, waters, and related facilities; to protect water quality in local creeks and streams; and to provide park ranger safety and security patrols and services, the MRCA is proposing a local special tax within a community facilities district located in a designated portion of the Santa Monica Mountains and Hollywood Hills located west of Griffith Park and east of the 405 Freeway, as shown on the map accompanying this proposition (the "Eastern Santa Monica Mountains/Hollywood Hills Area").

The summary of the proposed ballot proposition is:

To improve local wildfire prevention/ protection services including clearing dry brush/fire hazards; protect local open space and wildlife corridors; park ranger patrols for wildfires and to prevent arson, vandalism and responsibly remove illegal encampments; and to protect local water quality, shall the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority measure establishing a \$68 special tax for ten years only be adopted, providing \$1,940,000 annually with independent citizen oversight and all money spent in the Santa Monica Mountains/Hollywood Hills east of 405 freeway?

Janet H. ... 8/27/20

Developed parcels subject to the special tax are those parcels that appear on the annual secured Los Angeles County property tax rolls, and that have been improved for residential, commercial or other purposes. Unimproved parcels within the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains/Hollywood Hills Area shall be exempt from the special tax.

Also, developed parcels owned and occupied by a person or persons whose combined family income is at or below 50% of the median family income for the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale, CA United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Metro Fair Market Rents Area shall be exempt from the special tax. Property owners seeking a low-income exemption must submit an application and provide the required verification documentation by June 1 prior to the tax year. The Board shall establish administrative procedures for the administration of this exemption.

If approved by the voters, the special tax will be used for the purposes of maintaining, improving, servicing, protecting, and preserving open space, parkland, wildlife corridors, natural habitats, lands, waters, and facilities owned, managed or maintained by the MRCA within the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains/Hollywood Hills Area; for financing the acquisition of additional lands and protection of such lands from development in the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains/Hollywood Hills Area; for park ranger patrols and services; and for the reduction of the risk of wildfires including fire protection, prevention and suppression and brush clearing ("Services and Facilities"); and paying any administrative or incidental expenses thereto, including any costs related to the collection or use of the special tax. The Services and Facilities include, but are not limited to, the protection of water quality, the reduction of the risk of wildfires, park ranger safety and security services, and the collection and accumulation of reserves for the aforementioned purposes.

The special tax revenues shall be deposited into a separate account for exclusive use by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, in accordance with Government Code Section 50075.1, and shall be expended by the MRCA according to a plan developed annually by the MRCA's staff and approved and adopted by the MRCA's Board of Directors. A citizens' oversight committee appointed by the Board will review and report annually on the expenditure of the special tax revenues.

The MRCA will submit an annual report to its Board of Directors, which includes the amount of special tax revenues collected and expended, and fully complies with the accountability measures established in Government Code Sections 50075 et seq.

