Some context on Proposition 5

Back in 2021 the legislature held joint committee hearings to consider some recall reform proposals. Now on the November 3, 2026 ballot is Proposition 5, a legislative constitutional amendment that would implement some of the ideas the legislature considered in those hearings.

Proposition 5 would make two key changes to California's recall:

- Under existing law the voters choose all replacement officials. Proposition 5 abolishes voter replacement for some offices. All recalled offices would instead be filled by whatever procedure exists for vacancies in that office. For legislative offices that procedure is a special election. For nearly all state constitutional officers the replacement will be whoever the state constitution or the legislature names as next in order of succession for a vacancy in office. In the governor's case this automatic replacement procedure only applies in the last two years of the term; if a governor is recalled before nominations close for the general election in the governor's first two years a special election is held.
- Under existing law the voters decide on the recall and the replacement on the same ballot. For those seats that are still filled by special election Proposition 5 would split the replacement question from the recall question, doing each in a separate election.

Right now the voters choose who will fill a recalled official's seat, and the voters make both choices on the same ballot. If it is adopted Proposition 5 will change both those things: some recalled offices will automatically be filled by law, and those left for the voters to fill will happen in a separate special election.

On October 28, 2021 recall expert Joshua Spivak and his colleagues presented an analysis of those proposals for changing California's recall process. It is reprinted here for context on the arguments in favor and opposed. This article takes no position on whether anyone should vote for or against Proposition 5.

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