

■ **ONLY SIX STATEWIDE SPECIAL ELECTIONS CALLED SINCE 1973—HALF OF THEM SINCE 2003.**

In California, statewide special elections may be called by the governor, state legislature, or both, although in recent decades most have been called by governors; they may be held at any time and for any reason. Governors have called special elections to expedite voting on a qualified initiative or to keep an initiative off a general election ballot. If a petition to recall an elected official qualifies, a special election is required unless the petition qualifies within 180 days of a regular election. If the recall involves the governor, as it did in 2003, the lieutenant governor is responsible for calling a special election. Prior to 2009, California's five most recent special elections were called in 1973, 1979, 1993, 2003, and 2005; of the 22 propositions in these elections, 16 failed and six passed.

■ **1973, 1979: TAXATION, SCHOOL BUSING, SPENDING LIMITS.**

Governor Ronald Reagan called a special election for November 6, 1973. Proposition 1, the lone ballot measure, failed. This citizens' initiative would have cut property and income taxes and placed spending limits on budget surpluses. Fewer than half of registered voters went to the polls. Governor Jerry Brown called a special election for November 6, 1979, primarily to address school busing (Proposition 1) and spending limits (Proposition 4). These measures, along with two other propositions, passed with only 37% of registered voters participating in the election.

■ **1993: BALANCING THE BUDGET.**

Facing a two-year state budget deficit and the expiration of a half-cent state sales tax, Governor Pete Wilson called a special election for November 2, 1993. The 36% of registered voters who turned out passed two of seven initiatives, including Proposition 172, which made permanent the half-cent state sales tax dedicated to local public safety programs.

■ **2003, 2005, 2009: RECALL, GOVERNANCE REFORM, BALANCING THE BUDGET.**

Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante called a special election for October 7, 2003, after a petition to recall Governor Gray Davis qualified for the ballot. With a relatively large voter turnout (61% of registered voters), Davis was recalled and Arnold Schwarzenegger was elected to replace him. After campaigning to reform state government, Governor Schwarzenegger called a special election for November 8, 2005, for voters to decide on measures that would limit state spending and establish an independent redistricting commission, among other reforms. Half of registered voters cast ballots, rejecting all eight ballot initiatives.

■ **MAY 2009: FATE OF THE STATE BUDGET HANGS IN THE BALANCE.**

In February, the governor and legislature approved a state budget and called for a May 19 special election seeking required voter approval of six measures to resolve a deficit of more than \$40 billion. Proposition *IA* would affect future budgets by establishing a spending limit and rainy day fund, *IB* would provide supplemental payments to education starting in 2011–12, *IC* would borrow funds from the voter-established state lottery for the general fund, *ID* and *IE* would shift past voter-approved targeted special funding into the general fund, and *IF* would prohibit pay increases for elected officials during budget deficit years. If Propositions *IC*, *ID*, and *IE* fail, the 2009–2010 budget will be out of balance and require alternative solutions by elected officials.



Special Elections in California

1973—Governor Ronald Reagan

Turnout: 47.6% of registered voters, 32% of eligible adults

Ballot Measure	Title	Result	Yes	No
Proposition 1	Tax and Expenditure Limitations	Failed	46%	54%

1979—Governor Jerry Brown

Turnout: 37.4% of registered voters, 24.8% of eligible adults

Ballot Measure	Title	Result	Yes	No
Proposition 1	School Assignment and Transportation of Pupils	Passed	69%	31%
Proposition 2	Loan Interest Rates	Passed	65	35
Proposition 3	Property Taxation – Veteran’s Exemption	Passed	76	24
Proposition 4	Limitation of Government Appropriations	Passed	74	26

1993—Governor Pete Wilson

Turnout: 36.4% of registered voters, 27.7% of eligible adults

Ballot Measure	Title	Result	Yes	No
Proposition 168	Low-Rent Housing Projects	Failed	40%	60%
Proposition 169	Budget Implementation	Failed	39	61
Proposition 170	Property Taxes. Schools. Majority Vote. Development-Fee Limits	Failed	31	69
Proposition 171	Property Taxation. Transfer of Base Year Value	Passed	52	48
Proposition 172	Local Public Safety Protection and Improvement Act of 1993	Passed	58	42
Proposition 173	California Housing and Jobs Investment Bond Act. \$185 Million Legislative Bond Act	Failed	42	58
Proposition 174	Education. Vouchers	Failed	30	70

2003—Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante

Turnout: 61.2% of registered voters, 43.1% of eligible adults

Ballot Measure	Title	Result	Yes	No
Governor Recall	Shall Gray Davis be recalled from the office of Governor?	Passed	55%	45%
Governor	Arnold Schwarzenegger	Won	49	–
Proposition 53	Funds Dedicated for State and Local Infrastructure	Failed	36	64
Proposition 54	Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, or National Origin	Failed	36	64

2005—Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

Turnout: 50.1% of registered voters, 35.4% of eligible adults

Ballot Measure	Title	Result	Yes	No
Proposition 73	Waiting Period Before Termination of Minor’s Pregnancy	Failed	47%	53%
Proposition 74	Public School Teachers’ Waiting Period for Permanent Status	Failed	45	55
Proposition 75	Public Employee Union Dues. Employee Consent Requirement	Failed	47	53
Proposition 76	School Funding. State Spending	Failed	38	62
Proposition 77	Redistricting	Failed	40	60
Proposition 78	Prescription Drug Discount Program	Failed	42	58
Proposition 79	Prescription Drug Rebate Program	Failed	39	61
Proposition 80	Electric Service Providers. Regulation	Failed	34	66

Sources: Secretary of State, Statements of Vote: 1973, 1979, 1993, 2003, 2005.
Voter Information Guide, May 19, 2009, Special Election.

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