

CALIFORNIA PROP 38

Funds Immunology and Immunotherapy Research in California

Purpose

Proposition 38 is a citizen-initiated measure that would authorize the state to issue \$8.4 billion in general obligation bonds to support medical research on immunology and immunotherapy.¹

Research Assistant: Sarah Chavez '29

Background

Immunology is the study of the body's immune system, while immunotherapy consists of medical treatments that use the body's immune system to fight diseases.² California currently has 10 research centers that study immunology and immunotherapy.³

This proposition is similar to two prior voter-approved bonds for health care research in California. In 2004 and 2020, voters passed Propositions 71 and 14, respectively, which approved bonds for stem cell research. Both initiatives used general obligation (GO) bonds, a form of long-term borrowing that the state repays with interest over time, and that typically requires voter approval.⁴

Proposal

Proposition 38 would allow the state to issue \$8.4 billion in general obligation bonds to fund medical research related to immunology and immunotherapy. Half of the funds would be allocated to a single unnamed research institute that meets the measure's specific criteria, including affiliation with the University of California. It appears the only institute that would qualify for these funds is the California Institute for Immunology and Immunotherapy at UCLA, which was co-founded by Prop. 38's leading proponent, Gary K. Michelson, who chairs the Institute's Board. The rest of the funds would be allocated to various public or nonprofit medical research institutes following an application process. Half of all funds distributed would be targeted to research on cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and heart disease. The proposition would require that less than 2% of the funds be used for state administrative costs. It also would require regular public reporting on the use of funds as well as independent financial audits and periodic review by the California Department of Public Health.⁵

Fiscal Impact

According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, this bond would cost \$500 million to \$600 million per year over a 40-year period. The annual cost is equivalent to about 0.25% of California's General Fund, which funds most public services. However, the proposition has the potential to generate state revenue, as it would require 10% of any revenue from the research discoveries of the primary institute benefiting from the bond issue to go back into California's general fund.⁶

SUPPORT FOR PROPOSITION 38

Supporters of Proposition 38 Include:⁷

- Gary K. Michelson, co-founder of the California Institute for Immunology and Immunotherapy
- Meyer Luskin
- Californians for Immunology Research and Cures
- ALS Association
- Alzheimer's Association
- California Democratic Party
- California Republican Party

As of September 19, 2026, supporters of Proposition 38 had contributed \$38,201,947.⁸

Arguments for Proposition 38⁹

Supporters argue that Proposition 38 would:

- Accelerate development of breakthrough treatments and cures for diseases including cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer's.
- Lower health care costs.
- Help offset federal funding cuts for medical research.
- Pay for itself, with no net cost to taxpayers.

OPPOSITION TO PROPOSITION 38

Opponents of Proposition 38 Include:¹⁰

- Dr. Robert M. Kaplan, Stanford University School of Medicine
- League of Women Voters of California
- *Orange County Register* Editorial Board

As of September 19, 2026, opponents of Proposition 38 had contributed \$640.¹¹

Arguments Against Proposition 38¹²

Opponents argue that Proposition 38 would:

- Commit taxpayers to decades of new bond debt while limiting California's flexibility to address changing health priorities.
- Use "ballot box budgeting," rather than the normal budget process, to allocate funding for health care research.
- Likely not pay for itself, since universities typically do not commercialize new therapies on their own and would not generate sufficient revenue to offset costs.

A YES VOTE ON PROPOSITION 38

A YES vote on Proposition 38 would authorize the state to issue \$8.4 billion in general obligation bonds to fund research on immunology and immunotherapy.

A NO VOTE ON PROPOSITION 38

A NO vote on Proposition 38 would not authorize the state to issue bonds for this purpose.

Endnotes

- 1 The text of the measure is at California Secretary of State, *Official Voter Information Guide, General Election, November 3, 2026*, pp. 123-133, <https://vig.cdn.sos.ca.gov/2026/general/pdf/complete-vig.pdf>.
- 2 "Immunotherapy," Cleveland Clinic, last reviewed November 29, 2022, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/11582-immunotherapy>.
- 3 Mikhail Zinshteyn, "This CA Proposition Will Send \$4 Billion to a Single Nonprofit. Who's Behind It?" CalMatters, July 31, 2026, <https://calmatters.org/politics/elections/2026/07/proposition-38-california/>.
- 4 California Department of General Services, "Section 6842: Electronic Records Management," State Administrative Manual (SAM), accessed August 9, 2026, <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/Resources/SAM/TOC/6800/6842>.
- 5 Ballotpedia, "California Proposition 38, Immunology and Immunotherapy Research Funding Initiative (2026)," accessed September 2, 2026, [https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_38.Immunology_and_Immunotherapy_Research_Funding_Initiative\(2026\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_38.Immunology_and_Immunotherapy_Research_Funding_Initiative(2026)).
- 6 California Office of the Attorney General, Authorizes Bonds for Immunology Research (Initiative 25-0026A1), Title and Summary, January 2, 2026, <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/initiatives/pdfs/25-0026A1%20%28Immunology%29.pdf>.
- 7 Ballotpedia, "Proposition 38."
- 8 Ballotpedia, "Proposition 38."
- 9 Yes on 38, official campaign website, accessed September 2, 2026, <https://yeson38.com/>.
- 10 California Secretary of State, *Official Voter Information Guide: Proposition 38*, 2026, <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/public-display/prop38.pdf>.
- 11 Ballotpedia, "Proposition 38."
- 12 CA Secretary of State, *Official Voter Information Guide*, p. 8.

