

Jonathan claims in [this post](#) that Prop. 23 — the California ballot initiative that would prohibit the state from implementing its climate change legislation — is NOT the most important environmental initiative on the California ballot this fall. That honor, he says, goes to Prop. 25. Prop. 25 reforms California's rules for passing a state budget. I agree with Jonathan that Prop. 25 is crucial for restoring a modicum of budget sanity to the Golden State. But he's just plain wrong that budget reform is more important for the environment than defeating Prop. 23. Here's why:

1) If California defeats the big oil/Koch brothers' backed anti-climate change proposition, we send a loud and important signal across the land and across the globe that we can and will begin to tackle the most important environmental problem of our lifetimes and do so with public support.

2) If the opposite happens and Prop. 23 passes, well, the signal is about as ugly as it gets. Even a progressive state like California will be seen as opposed to climate change legislation. I admit that it isn't as though Prop. 23's defeat would encourage Congress to get in line and adopt a climate bill but if the proposition passes? Forget about it. Indeed if Prop. 23 passes and Democrats lose a large number of Congressional seats the EPA's efforts to regulate greenhouse gas emissions may be in serious jeopardy.

3) California's climate legislation is sweeping, serious and ambitious. In contrast, efforts like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), while laudable, are modest and small scale. RGGI is the first up and running cap and trade program in the U.S. aimed at greenhouse gases. But it covers only electric utilities and requires only a 10 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2018 from current levels. California's legislation cuts its emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and applies to the state's entire economy. If Prop. 23 passes, the country will have no serious climate change regulation in place except for regulations that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles. And of course those regulations would never be in place [but for](#) California's leadership.

4) Successful state experience with environmental regulation can demonstrate to the rest of the country that they should follow our lead. We've shown that repeatedly — most notably with the regulation of pollution from automobiles but also in implementing aggressive energy efficiency standards for buildings, efficiency standards for appliances and so forth. No other state is attempting to regulate greenhouse gas emissions as ambitiously as California so if our efforts go by the wayside the country will have no experiential basis to draw on (other than RGGI) in designing climate policy.

5) Indeed there's a whole school of thought that the most effective — indeed perhaps only

— reason Congress will pass federal environmental legislation is to preempt state environmental regulation. If California is no longer in the business of economy wide climate regulation Congress will face much less pressure to pass a federal bill.

6) If Prop. 23 loses and California continues to implement its climate legislation, other states may follow suit. Even without federal legislation, we could have a significant percentage of the national economy covered by climate legislation. If Prop. 23 loses, no states will go it alone. They lack the economic power of California and need its leadership to regulate.

So Jonathan, you're just wrong. Prop. 23 is the most important environmental initiative on the ballot, not Prop. 25.