

Readers' letters

Give Prop. 13 argument a rest

Paul Krugman (Opinion, May 27) repeats two old shibboleths that "as California goes, so goes the nation," and that all of California's problems "began 30 years ago when voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 13." He then launches into his analysis of the national fiscal crisis by saying that "the problems that plague California politics apply at the national level too." Sorry, Mr. Krugman, that straw man just won't fly, for those of us who voted for Prop. 13 30 years ago remember runaway taxation by unrestrained government. Unless we've missed something, there's been no national Proposition 13 to blame for the national financial disaster.

Mary Thompson
Campbell

Prop. 13 staved off fiscal disaster

Paul Krugman (Opinion, May 27) has it right about the dangers of California's profligate spending combined with an ideological stalemate in our Legislature. However, he is wrong about the etiology of the problem and like too many he wants to use California's Proposition 13 tax revolt as the whipping boy.

It makes no sense to decry the doubling of the state's debt under Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and criticize a 1978 voter initiative that cut property taxes in California by more than 60 percent. Related voter initiatives have, as Krugman points out, required a two-thirds vote by the people to impose or increase almost any tax. And still California state spending increases under Democrats and Republicans alike as if they were drunken sailors.

Without Proposition 13 and its progeny, California's current financial disaster would have been upon us 20 or 25 years ago.

Jeffrey A. Schwartz
Saratoga

George Will's fears are not our own

George Will (Opinion, May

How to have your say

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27) surveys America from his ivory tower and sees a perfect rule of law in a colorblind system. Everything looks good on paper and the playing field is level. He is fearful of putting a minority like Sonia Sotomayor on the Supreme Court as she may be influenced by who she is.

However, we've had 100 years of slavery followed by 50 years of government-sanctioned discrimination. Women were not allowed to vote and Japanese-Americans were imprisoned during war. Even if the playing field really is equal now, there is still some catching up to do. As our laws

Written on the occasion of the approval of Prop. 8 in 2009.

Turning to the Napoleonic Code

With respect to the legal aspect of domestic relationships, America should follow the example of many other countries, such as Mexico, whose system of law is based on the Napoleonic Code. Any given couple can still initially exchange vows within their particular belief community, but only the state, and no individual, whether a church cleric or municipal mayor, carries the authority to subsequently consecrate civil union contracts between same- or opposite-sex couples. Whether

any particular couple wants to then publicly characterize their union as "married," "pair-ied" or "partner-ied," is simply to be left up to them.

Paul M. Grant
San Jose

No equality, no freedom

I grew up in Alabama where some folks excluded others from the mainstream because of the color of their skin. They passed laws to do this. Finally the Supreme Court (Brown v. the Board of Education) reminded them that we are equal under the law guaranteed by our "national" Constitution. The California Supreme Court makes me feel like I am back in Alabama in another time and place. When will we learn that unless we are truly equal none of us is truly free?

J. Benton White
San Jose

So much for equal protection

Civil rights should never, ever, ever be put to a popular vote. Now we have 18,000 members of a class of citizens who were allowed to marry, a right that was denied to the rest of us. Great. So much for the equal protection clause of the California Constitution. Is this really how we want to govern ourselves?

Vera M. Shadle
Palo Alto

Let's call this a spending revolt

This time it is Dan Walters (Opinion, May 27) who claims "any level of taxation is too high to those on the political right." He then goes on to invoke relativity with other states as a justification for high taxes. Most of the people I talk with have no argument with a just level of taxation — their issue is the intolerable level of spending. That was the reason for Proposition 13 in 1978, and that is the reason all of the budget propositions failed this month. You can call these both tax revolts, but they are truly spending revolts.

Dave Zittlow
San Jose