

Californians Say Yes to Taxes

EDITORIAL

Of all the state election results across the nation, few can top the shocking good sense of California voters in approving temporary tax increases to raise \$6 billion a year to shore up the state's tattered public schools and university system. That's right: There were voters in these hard times agreeing to be taxed despite the "no new taxes" mantra of simplistic conservative politicians.

The ballot measure, Proposition 30, was an audacious gamble by Gov. Jerry Brown. It was thoroughly derided by a well-financed opposition led by antitax conservative groups with undisclosed donors. It raises the state sales tax by one-fourth of 1 percent for four years and increases income taxes for seven years on those making more than \$250,000 a year.

California's serial budget crises over many years have resulted in increased class sizes in schools, reduced instruction time and layoffs of thousands of teachers across the state. Meanwhile, students in the state's public colleges and universities have faced rising tuition, fewer campus resources and shrinking chances for enrollment. Officials say the ballot measure's approval will mean that public school systems will not have to reduce the length of school years and colleges will not have to raise tuition. It will also allow community colleges to restore thousands of classes and add 20,000 students.

As is so often the case in California, where the 1978 property tax revolt led by Howard Jarvis became the stuff of political folklore, a new and unpredictable chapter may be opening. This week, voters also gave the Democrats, led by Governor Brown, two-third majorities in both houses of the State Legislature. This means that they will have "supermajority" control and the ability to raise taxes and pass other measures without Republican approval.

Mr. Brown, aware that single-party control can lead to trouble, quickly promised no new "spending binges." Keeping that promise will require vigilance from voters. It will be interesting to see if in raising taxes for education, California will initiate another national movement.
