

## Editorial: Chronicle recommends Yes on Prop. 4, for children's hospitals

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Once again, Californians are being asked to support a large bond measure by children's hospitals that would receive the proceeds. There is a principled argument to oppose Proposition 4, and a very practical reason to support the \$1.6 billion bond.

First, the principled opposition: The initiative process is the wrong place to set budget priorities and encumber future legislators with repayment obligations that will narrow their discretion to fund education, public safety and other programs in lean times. Supporters of Prop. 4 spent \$2.6 million in gathering signatures to qualify for the ballot — more than \$7 for each one required — and will pour millions more into the campaign.

Yet the California Children's Hospital Association's appeal has worked before: voters approved a \$750 million bond (Prop. 61) in 2004 and a \$980 million bond (Prop. 3) in 2008.

So they're back, with a plan to expand and upgrade seven private nonprofit hospitals (72 percent of the funds), five University of California children's hospitals (18 percent of the funds) and assorted other private and public hospitals that treat children for certain diseases or health issues under a state program (10 percent of the funds). Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford and UCSF Children's Hospital would be among the recipients.

Here is the compelling practical argument in favor of Prop. 4: The goal of the bond is to acquire the latest technology and life-saving medical equipment. It makes a difference. Children's hospitals are on the cutting edge of pediatric research; perform 97 percent of pediatric organ transplants and 96 percent of all pediatric heart surgeries; and oversee 76 percent of all pediatric cancer treatments, according to the association.

Who among us would not want the best for our children when they face a dire medical condition — or even if they are experiencing a less serious injury or illness that needs specialized equipment and the sensitive bedside manner for which the children's hospitals are famous?

One more practical case for Prop. 4: These hospitals take in children from low-income families for often subpar government reimbursement.