The 2020 Elections Through the Eyes of an 8th Grader

*Information and insights on national, statewide, and local races and propositions for the city of Piedmont.*

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2020 has been a year of complete chaos. I was looking forward to summer but then, COVID-19 struck. So, instead of going to summer camps, I stayed home and found a great book, Alexander Hamilton by Ron Chernow. This got me interested in the early days of American history, the Revolutionary War and the creation of the U.S. Constitution. As I began reading more about our history, I also became interested in the current elections. I became curious as to why so many people were talking about how this would be the most important election in American history. So, I did some research on the key races and the propositions just to educate myself and other kids like me. I even emailed a few candidates in the local elections to ask for interviews, so I could understand their positions and views. To my surprise, many of them responded and shared their thoughts with me. Thank you so much to those candidates, Elena Condes and Mark Fickes for Alameda County Superior Court, and Jen Cavenaugh and Connie Herrick for Piedmont City Council. I hope you find this informative and I hope it gets other kids like me interested in our elections.

Presidential Race: Joe Biden vs Donald Trump

The Presidential race is the most important political race in America and occurs every four years. Although there are many candidates from different parties, I will only be going over the two most likely to win.

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| Joe Biden (Democratic) | Donald Trump (Republican) |
| * Senator from Delaware who served from 1973 to 2009 * Served as Vice President under Barack Obama from 2009 to 2017 * Top priority is improving affordability and accessibility of HealthCare * Plans to make testing and vaccines for COVID-19 free * Wants to defend America’s role as leader on the global stage * Plans to raise $5.3 Tr in taxes in the next decade to fund education ($1.9 Tr), infrastructure ($1.6 Tr), and HealthCare ($1.6 Tr) * Plans to raise $50 Bn in venture capital funding and $100 Bn in loans for minority businesses in order to advance the economic well-being of under-privileged racial groups * Wants to follow the Green New Deal which is a plan that has the goal of ending all fossil fuel emissions by 2050, which will provide for a better planet * Plans to increase public school teachers’ income by 25% and make it so that all children get a good education. | * Incumbent President of the United State * Was a businessman and a television personality before he was elected President in 2016 * Plans to lower taxes in order to create new jobs and boost the economy. His hope is to create 10 million jobs and 1 million small businesses over 10 months * Will put lots of money into finding a vaccine for COVID-19, he hopes to find one by the end of 2020 and drive a return to normal in 2021 * Wants to end reliance on China by creating 1 million manufacturing jobs in United States * Plans to lower cost of HealthCare and making it more accessible to people with pre-existing conditions * Wants to give every child in America school choice and teach them American exceptionalism * Plans to end all corruption in America by putting an end to all organization that harm American citizens |

House of Representatives Race: Barbara Lee vs Nikka Pitterman

Each of the 435 congressional districts in the United States has one representative that is either reelected or replaced every two years. Piedmont is a part of California’s 13th Congressional District.

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| Barbara Lee (Democratic) | Nikka Pitterman (Republican) |
| * Has been serving as the Representative for California’s 9th and now 13th Congressional District since 1998 and is currently in her 12th term * Before that, she served in the California State Senate and State Assembly * Started her career as staff of Congressman Ron Dellums, where she eventually rose from an intern to chief of staff * Supports legislation restricting the availability of guns and participated in the 2016 sit-in against gun violence in the House of Representatives * Has made affordable housing in the East Bay area and beyond her top priority * Has backed legislation meant to expand home ownership opportunities, improve public housing quality, and assist the homeless * Is a strong advocate for ending HIV and ensuring an AIDS-free generations * Has authored or co-authored every major piece of HIV/AIDS legislation during her time in Congress | * Graduated from Piedmont High in 2012. So glad to see that! * Majored in rhetoric and minored in music at UC Berkeley, where he received his degree in 2016 * Is the founder of Piano Castle, a piano and chess academy * Is associated with Silicon Valley Young Republicans, Alameda County Republican Party, Afterschool Enrichment Solutions, and Everipedia * Is currently a teacher and a software engineer * Supports Statehood for Puerto Rico * Wants to broadly reduce taxes to spur increased economic development and job growth * Wants to fund research into novel technologies for space exploration, and lunar and mars colonization * Will push for the creation of the U.S. Space Academy * Strongly supports the adoption of the metric system in the United States of America |

California State Senate Race - Nancy Skinner vs Jamie Dluzak

The California State Senate (the upper branch of the state legislature) has 40 members that serve four year terms. Each of the 40 state senate districts has one representative in the state senate. Piedmont is a part of California’s 9th State Senate District.

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| Nancy Skinner (Democratic) | Jamie Dluzak (Libertarian) |
| * Served on the Berkeley City Council from 1984 to 1992 * Member of the East Bay Regional Park Board from 2006 to 2008 * Served in the California State Assembly from 2008 to 2014 * Represented California’s 14th State Assembly district from 2008 to 2012 and California’s 15th State Assembly District from 2012 to 2014 * Has been representing California’s 9th State Senate District since 2016 * Prioritizes low-income groups, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Is a social justice advocate * Supports taking actions to slow down climate change * Highly prioritizes improving equity and housing in the state of California * Also protizes reform in the criminal justice system | * Went to UC Berkeley for college and majored in literature * Is currently a book publisher and the owner of the East Oakland Times * Prioritizes the working class * Believes that California must support jobs for all, especially during the pandemic * Wants California to cut its spending and build more infrastructure * Believes in clean and safe city streets * Thinks that to secure safety and order, people must know their laws and work together in a good manner * Strongly supports participation of citizens in the government of the California * Wants to increase the productivity of California |

California State Assembly Race: Buffy Wicks vs Sara Brink

The California State Assembly (the lower branch of the state legislature) has 80 members that serve two year terms. Each of the 80 state assembly districts has one representative in the state assembly. Piedmont is a part of California’s 15th State Assembly District.

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| Buffy Wicks (Democratic) | Sara Brink (No Party Preference) |
| * Graduated from University of Washington in 1999 with a degree in political science and history * Organized rallies against the Iraq War in the early 2000’s * Was a part of Howard Dean’s presidential campaign in 2004 and Barack Obama’s campaigns in 2008 and 2012 * Has been representing California’s 15th State Assembly District since 2018 * 8 of her bills were signed into law by Gavin Newsom, the governor of California, in her first year of office * Advocates for criminal justice reform and gun violence prevention * Strong supporter of fixing the homelessness and housing crisis * Cares a lot about increasing funding for healthcare and food programs and making sure that all children get a good education, no matter where they live or what their parents’ wealth is * Champions the advancement of women’s rights | * Went to DePaul University and got a Bachelor of Science in science, business management, and entrepreneurship * After working in retail sales, she moved to Oakland in 2013 to pursue filmmaking * Taught herself video editing and animation and developed many organizational skills * Is currently working for an organization that makes science education videos * Co-founded and organized Empowering Progressive Initiatives + Candidates and Bay Area for Bernie * Believes in centering marginalized people when making decisions and formulating policies * Wants to make political power more accessible to everyone in the community * Plans to build more community resilience in the district |

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Race: Elena Condes vs Mark Fickes

The Alameda County Superior Court has over 70 judges, however, there are not many elections for this position. But this year, there is an election for the Alameda County Superior Court Seat #2.

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| Elena Condes | Mark Fickes |
| * Has a Bachelor of Science in Business administration and Finance from the University of Arizona * Studied law at Golden Gate University Law School * Has been a criminal defense attorney in Alameda County for over 25 years * Prioritizes easier access to the justice system in the county * Supports and wants to help expand alternatives for incarceration, for example, putting non-violent offenders in diversion or rehabilitation programs instead of jail * Cares a lot about increasing diversity in the legal field and can do this by supporting and mentoring young people interested in law * Wants to ensure that all people be equally treated in the courtroom * Believes it is important to take all points of view into account when making decisions | * Has a bachelor’s and master’s degree in French Literature from UC Berkeley and John Hopkins University respectively * Studied Law at UC Hastings College of Law * Has been a civil rights attorney for 24 years and is currently a partner at Cannata, O'Toole, Fickes, and Olson LLP * Stands up for low-income citizens * Wants to make it so that accessing the judicial system is more affordable for low to middle income people * Supports increase in the funding for trial courts because there are not enough courts for the amount of cases in the county * Plans to work on expanding the number of drug and mental help courts * Wants to make sure that peoples’ rights and dignity are respected in court |

Piedmont City Council Race: Jen Cavenaugh vs Connie Herrick vs Nancy “Sunny” Bostrom-Fleming vs Conna McCarthy (2 Spots)

The Piedmont City Council has 5 members; Mayor, Vice Mayor and 3 council members. This year, 2 spots in the council are up for election. Each citizen can vote for 2 of the 4 candidates.

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| Jen Cavenuagh | Connie Herrick |
| * Earned an MBA from the University of Chicago and a BS from the University of Illinois * Is a former business executive and IT management consultant * Was a member of 2 Piedmont city commissions * Is now a part of the Piedmont City Council and was elected in 2016 * Is also a Legislative Policy member in the League of California Cities * Prioritizes improvement of the city infrastructure * Cares a lot about disaster preparedness, wildfire prevention, and community safety in the city of Piedmont * Believes in increasing equity, inclusion, and diversity * In talking to her, I found that she likes to make strategic and fact-based decisions that also take everyone’s point of view into account * Wants to make sure that the city of Piedmont budgets are set conservatively | * Has a BS in Traditional Chinese Medicine from Academy of Chinese Culture and Health Science * Also has a BA in Communications and Media Studies and an MBA in Corporate Finance and Statistics * Has worked in Finance and in Marketing and is now a licensed Acupuncturist * Wants city infrastructure updates to be made to the police and fire departments, recreational centers and the community pool * Cares a lot about public safety, public health, and emergency readiness * Strong supporter of diversity and Black Lives Matter * Wants Piedmont to be a cleaner and more sustainable city to help fight against climate change * In talking to her, I found that she keeps an open mind and takes the time to think when making decisions |
| Conna McCarthy | Nancy “Sunny” Bostrom-Fleming |
| * Went to Santa Clara University and earned an English and Law degree for both undergraduate school and graduate school * Is an attorney at Craigie, McCarthy, and Clow and has been there for 25 years * Has served on 2 Piedmont city commissions * Has spent 25 years volunteering for city and school projects * Wants the city of Piedmont to do its part in protection the earth’s climate * Believes that safety in any city is extremely important and should be prioritized * Supports keeping a highly trained police and fire department * Wants to improve the infrastructure of the city * Will help people from diverse background to feel more welcome and wanted | * Went to school in four different countries, Canada, England, Switzerland, and the US (Piedmont) * Has been to New York, London, Paris, Canada, Asia, and Africa to study and collect art * Has traveled the world six times and witnessed the negative effects of problems like overpopulation and climate change * Is a lecturer, art historian, and collector of books and art * Also the Director of the Bostrom-Fleming Institute for the Future * Believes in the need to fight against climate change * Wants to promote understanding of the hardships of homeless people in the city of Oakland * Believes in the crisp and clear motto, “Be Kind” |

California Propositions

There are 12 propositions on the ballot for all citizens of California during this election. While there are tons of other resources that have information on these propositions, here is a quick summary along with my takes on the pros and cons.

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| **Proposition Title and Description** | **Pros** | **Cons** |
| **Proposition 14:** Calls for $5.5 billion to be issued in bonds for the state stem cell research institute. | This proposition would help develop treatments for diseases like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. | $5.5 billion is a huge amount of money to spend, especially during an economic and budget crisis |
| **Proposition 15**: Increases funding for public schools, community colleges, local governments, by requiring commercial and industrial properties to be taxed on market value instead of purchase price. | This proposition would fund billions of dollars for schools and governments. | This proposition would make a lot of the things we buy in our everyday life such as food, gas, utilities, day care, and health care more expensive. |
| **Proposition 16**: Allows governments and public institutions to consider race, sex, color, and ethnicity by repealing Proposition 209 (1996.) | This proposition would expand opportunities by increasing access to public schools and jobs for minorities | This proposition would allow governments and public institutions to give preferential treatment to people based on race and sex, possibly sidestepping other qualified candidates. |
| **Proposition 17**: Allows people on state parole in California to vote as long as they are U.S. citizens, residents of California, and above the age of 18. | This proposition would lower crime rates in California. A recent parole commission report showed that those on parole who have their voting rights restored are less likely to commit crimes in the future. | This proposition would allow all criminals, even very violent ones to vote before completing their parole terms. |
| **Proposition 18:** Permits 17 year olds that will be 18 by the time of the next general election to vote in special elections and primaries. | This proposition would allow those that will be 18 by the time of the next general election to participate in a full election cycle. It would also encourage more young people to be involved in society. | This proposition would allow people that are not fully mature to vote. |
| **Proposition 19**: Allows people who are over 55, disabled, or wildfire victims to transfer primary residence’s tax base to replacement residence. It requires inherited homes that are not primary residences to be taxed based on market value, and establishes a fire protection services fund. | This proposition would lower property taxes for seniors, disabled people, and wildfire victims, and would set up a fund for fire departments. | This proposition would cause a huge tax increase on inherited properties and would take away the right in California’s Constitution to pass on property to others without any increase in property tax. |
| **Proposition 20:** Reduces access to the state parole system for non-violent felons by eliminating eligibility for certain offenses, authorizes felony sentences for some offenses currently treated as misdemeanors, and creates a state database that would contain DNA samples from those convicted of certain misdemeanors. | This proposition would require the collection of DNA samples from those convicted of certain misdemeanors which could help to reduce the rate of crime in California. | This proposition would force California to spend tens of millions of dollars on prisons which would reduce the amount of money available for rehabilitation, schools, mental health, and homelessness in California. |
| **Proposition 21**: Expands local governments’ power to control rent on residential properties and allows local limits on annual rent increase to differ from the statewide limit. | This proposition would help to tackle the issue of homelessness by keeping housing affordable. | This proposition would reduce home values and stop new housing from being built which would worsen California’s housing crisis. |
| **Proposition 22**: Classifies app-based drivers as “independent contractors” instead of “employees.” | This proposition would make companies hire drivers as independent contractors instead of employees. Drivers would have more independence and could have more control over when, where, and how much they work. | This proposition would take away standard benefits and protections of employees from app-based drivers. |
| **Proposition 23**: Requires a physician to be on-site during dialysis treatment, prevents clinics from closing without state approval, and prohibits clinics from refusing to treat patients based on their payment source or insurance. | This proposition would improve the staff at dialysis clinics by requiring a physician to be on-site during treatment and would stop the clinics’ ability to discriminate based on patients’ payment source or insurance. | This proposition would cause many community dialysis clinics to shut down and would make our doctor shortage worse. |
| **Proposition 24**: Establishes the California Privacy Protection Agency to enforce and implement the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) and expands the provisions of the CCPA. | This proposition would strengthen privacy rights and protect kids and adults online. | This proposition would allow “pay for privacy” plans that organizations could implement. |
| **Proposition 25**: Replaces money bail with a system based on public safety and flight risk. This new system would release people based on their assessed risk of committing another crime. | This proposition would allow lower income people to get out of jail because there would be no money involved for the defendant in the new system. | This proposition would replace the bail system with a new system that is very costly and could, in some cases, make mistakes. |

Alameda County and Piedmont City Propositions

There are two countywide and two municipal propositions in the 2020 elections. Here is a quick overview.

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| **Proposition Title and Description** | **Pros** | **Cons** |
| **Alameda County, Proposition V**: Authorizes an extension of a 6.5% sales tax on utility users until June 30, 2033 to be collected in unincorporated areas; if voted no, this tax will expire on June 30, 2021 | This proposition would generate an estimated value of $12 million per year which would fund county services. | This proposition would impose a 6.5% tax on many for the next 12 years, which may be hard for some to pay, especially during an economic crisis. |
| **Alameda County, Proposition W**: Authorizes an additional 0.5% sales tax for 10 years increasing Alameda County’s 3sales tax from 9.25% to 9.75%. | This proposition would generate an estimated value of $150 million per year which would fund county services. | This proposition would raise the sales tax in the county to almost 10%, which is a lot, for less fortunate citizens. |
| **Piedmont City, Proposition TT**: Increases real estate transfer tax from $13.00 to $17.50 per $1000 of transfer price. | This proposition would generate close to $1 million annually which would fund city services and infrastructure. | This proposition would make Piedmont the highest transfer tax rate city in California and could cost buyers and sellers tens of thousands of dollars for each transfer. |
| **Piedmont City, Proposition UU**: Prevents the permanent closure of the Piedmont Community Pool by constructing two new pools along with facilities related to it; will authorizes Piedmont to issue $19.5 million dollars in bonds. | This proposition would build two new pools which would prevent the permanent closure of the pools the swim team and many other people in the city of Piedmont use. | This proposition would allow Piedmont to spend nearly $20 million dollars, which is a huge amount, especially during the current economic recession. |

Credits

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* Official Voter Information Guide California General Election Tuesday, November 3, 2020
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