

The golden state not  
for everyone



I. Summary The 1994 Proposition 187, nicknamed the "Save Our State" (SOS) initiative, was a measure that denied illegal immigrants access to virtually all public services. Although opponents of the initiative greatly outweighed the proponents in financial contributions, efforts by Candidate for Gov. Kathleen Brown in the November election alongside many prominent supporters from numerous health, law enforcement, religious and educational institutions resulted unsuccessful. Gov. Pete Wilson made supporting for Prop 187 the cornerstone of his successful re-election and financed his campaign to appeal the majority of actual voters "the older, whiter, more conservative population."

In the November 8, 1994 election the initiative passed by a vote of 59 percent to 41 percent. Soon after, immediate opposition to the initiative arose in numerous sectors of California, especially minorities. Court battles relentlessly continued questioning the constitutionality of the initiative until its measures were put to an end by the courts when Gov. Gray Davis took office in 1999.

II. Proposed Policy The provisions of Prop 187 made illegal aliens ineligible for public social services, health services and public education. It also required various state and local agencies to report persons who are suspected illegal aliens to the State Attorney General and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. And it also made it a felony to manufacture, distribute, sell or use false citizenship or resident documents . III.

Major Campaign Contributors and Supporters Contributions to the campaign against Prop 187 actually outweighed the proponents by millions, yet the

measure still passed by a wide margin. The report on Financing California??  
™s Statewide Ballot Measures, 1994 Primary and General Elections indicates that \$860, 432 was received in support of the Prop 187 effort and \$3, 214, 255 was received from its opponents. Although there was so much financial support funding the opposition campaign to the SOS initiative, the measure still passed 59 percent to 41 percent.

Support and Financing For Proposition 187 The major campaign supporters for Proposition 187 were Gov. Pete Wilson, Senate candidate Representative Mike Huffington , California Attorney General Dan Lungren and California Deputy Attorney General Stephanie Wald. Co-Chairwoman for the measure, Barbara Coe, expressed optimism early on that pro-187 forces would prove to be victorious, ??? we feel very good. We feel that loyal Americans will come forward and support??? Proposition 187. The six top contributors to the pro-187 effort were the California Republican Party, \$400, 286; Mountjoy for Assembly 1994 Committee, \$45, 538; Rogers for State Senate Committee, \$25, 000; Ron Prince, \$22, 000; Barbara Coe and the Container Supply Company each contributed \$15, 000. Americans for Illegal Immigration, the campaign committee of State Senator Jim Brulte, and the American Tax Reduction Movement were among the organizations supporting the initiative with contributions under \$25, 000.

However, there were no significant direct contributions from the manufacturing, construction, agribusiness or service industries, all of which depend on immigrants for much of their unskilled and semi-skilled labor . Walt Disney Co., E.&J. Gallo Winery and Chevron Corp.

all contributed to Wilson's re-election bid but took no position on specifically helping finance Prop 187. San Francisco-based Chevron alone contributed \$122, 625. Support and Financing Against Proposition 187 Running in opposition of Prop 187 was Gov.

Candidate Kathleen Brown and Senate Candidate Dianne Feinstein.

Prominent Republicans and conservative GOP Cabinet secretaries Jack Kemp and William J. Bennett were also against the measure and tried to support its opposition within the Republican Party. The initiative was opposed by many prominent such as Bank of America Vice Chairman Michael Rossi, J. P Morgan Securities Managing Director Michael George and Former President of Southern California Edison Michael R. Peeve. The Jewish Community Coalition Against Proposition 187 which represented more than 3, 300 San Fernando Valley families alongside other regional Jewish organizations representing another 50, 000 families fought against the initiative.

The California Medical Association, the California Association of Hospitals as well as L. A. Police Chief Willie L. Williams, County Sheriff Sherman Block and the L. A. Police Commission felt the initiative would not work, and would instead do more harm than good .

The largest contributions to the anti-187 campaign were filed by the California Teachers Association, \$660, 581; David Gelbaum, \$405, 000; California State Council of Services Employees, \$349, 853; Univision Television Group, Inc., \$300, 000 ; John Moores, \$100, 000 and Pace California School Employees, \$90, 371 . Among the organizations opposing the initiative with contributions under \$25, 000 were the American

Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) of the AFL-CIO, The Association of California School Administrators, the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), the California Trial Lawyers, the California Hospitals Committee on Issues, the California Latino PAC, the St. Joseph Health System and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union . Texas computer magnate John Moores with his wife Rebecca, were the largest individual contributor to the gubernatorial campaign of Brown and contributed \$100, 000 in last-minute funds into the ??? no??™ campaign. David Gelbaum of Sierra Partners in Newport Beach made a last-minute contribution of \$180, 000.

IV. Campaign Strategy and Outcome  
The Campaign For Proposition 187  
Pete Wilson™'s gubernatorial campaign was based on a platform that ran on two issues: immigration and voters fears of crime. His passionate support of Prop 184 ??? Three Strikes??? initiative and the so-called ??? Save Our State??? Prop187 initiative appealed to the white, suburban, middle-class workers who were anxious about their safety and economic stability in a state that was viewed then as too lenient on crime and ??? illegal aliens.??? Support for the proposition gradually increased among non-Hispanic white voters as the politicians and the media continued to publicize the initiative and polarized the public. Only two weeks before the election, supporters were confident that Proposition 187 would win and would sweep Pete Wilson to a second term as governor .

The proponents of Prop 187 aimed to send out a message of fear and injustice. Undocumented immigrants were described as a threat to organized labor and unions by accepting lower wages and more dangerous working

conditions. Undocumented laborers were accused of taking advantage of taxpaying legal residents by taking a free ride on the education, health care and public social services. Blaming opponents in the media, “ If he had done his job, there would have been no need for 187,???” Wilson said about President Clinton , ??? I think, frankly, his performance in this state has been pathetic.” The campaign for Prop 187 was characterized by its opponents as racist stereotypes, anti-immigration rhetoric and xenophobic charges reflecting the fears and the nativistic attitudes of the initiative??™s major supporters. The Republican Party and Gov. Wilson??™s Campaign Committee branded the slogan ??? Save Our State??? to the initiative early on and stayed on the message relentlessly throughout the campaign, coordinating their assault on illegal immigrants through campaign literature, media advertising, talk shows and political speeches. The major components of Wilson??™s messages argued that the state would save at least \$5 billion expended on the costs of education, welfare and health care for illegal immigrants.

Second, it would create more job opportunities for legal residents, who could not compete with undocumented workers for low-wage jobs. Third, it would discourage further waves of illegal immigrants who were attracted to the United States for benefits. Fourth, the supporters of Prop 187 intended to ??? send a message??? to the Clinton Administration that the costs of illegal immigrants should be borne by the federal government by reimbursing the state. The Campaign Against Proposition 187 Despite their superior fundraising efforts, the opponents of Proposition 187 were less successful at

coordinating their statewide campaign and disseminating a consistent message.

Civil Rights groups only focused on the provisions of the initiative that clearly violated the constitutional rights of immigrants due to the 1982 Supreme Court decision Plyer v. Doe, guaranteeing access to public education for the children of illegal immigrants. Rev. Jesse Jackson called on the gathering of 50 ministers at True Way Baptist Church in South-Central California to get their congregations to ??? organize, register (to vote) and resist??? Gov.

Wilson. Liberal politicians and social scientists challenged the \$5 billion expected cost savings of Prop187 and found it would actually cost the state as much as \$15 billion a year if the initiative passed. The Democratic political leaders and office holders anti-Prop 187 knew the initiative would have a desperate and negative impact on some of their primary constituencies??” labor workers, minorities and the disadvantaged. A number of labor unions, teachers??™ unions, health care professionals and lawyers sponsored an umbrella organization called ??? Taxpayers Against 187??? to demonstrate their opposition to what they considered discriminatory legislation.

Educators and Law Enforcement voiced their opinions in the media that excluding over 400, 000 immigrant children from school would inevitably increase juvenile delinquency with well-organized street gangs and criminal influences. Teachers??™ organizations joined ranks with health care professionals, social workers and lawyers to protest the legislation requiring them to report suspected undocumented persons and voiced their grave concern over the danger of epidemics other health escalated because of lack

of access to medical services. Just days before the election numerous rallies protesting broke out, including a rally in O. C. Fairgrounds of a few dozen people waving U.

S. and Mexico flags, chanting ??? Children yes, Wilson no!??? Although these themes were repeatedly stressed throughout the campaign by opponents of Proposition 187, a underlying message maybe??” that undocumented immigrants were a valuable resource in California society, an essential segment of the labor force and a group entitled to basic human and civil rights??” was never made explicit in a cohesive, coordinated strategy to win the hearts and minds of California voters. Outcome Hours after the initiative was approved, the Los Angeles School District, along with the San Francisco Unified School District and the California School Boards Assn., filed a lawsuit in San Francisco Superior Court questioning the measures constitutionality. On Nov. 10, in his first act after winning a second term, Gov. Pete Wilson issued an executive order to all instructed state offices to draft emergency regulations for implementing Prop 187. And in a hardball political move, Gov. Wilson began by suspending prenatal health care to illegal immigrants. More opponents immediately filed lawsuits to block implementation of Prop 187. Shortly after, a federal judge in L. A. scheduled a Nov. 16 hearing on a temporary restraining order for all sections of the proposition and a state judge in S.

F. issued a temporary restraining order preventing public schools from ousting undocumented children. Although the initiative passed, its



constitutionality had been aggressively challenged in state and federal courts for the next six years.

In 1995, Judge Mariana R. Pfaelzer of the U. S. District Court in L. A. ruled that most provisions of Prop 187 were unconstitutional, angering former Gov. Pete Wilson and prompting him to later file a formal appeal to this decision.

In March of 1999, Gov. Gray Davis was faced with the important decision of whether or not to continue Wilson's appeal or drop it and accept the judge's decisions. The state acknowledged compliance with all federal immigration laws essentially conceding that California had no legal authority to establish its own immigration policies. In a last attempt, proponents of Prop 187 began an unsuccessful campaign to recall Gov. Davis, complaining bitterly that the will of the people has been overturned by the governor's actions.

V. Conclusion Because of the targeted constituencies in the opposition of initiative were mostly low-skilled to semi-skilled workers or minorities, this may be one of the biggest explanations to the loss in the November 8, 1994 election. The opposition targeted unlikely voters and people who were not registered to vote at a time in the election process that was too late for targeted groups to register. Many of these residents are low-income legal immigrants and the people of color marginalized in society due to their unequal access to institutions of power and influence .

Another explanation for the Democratic loss may be a result in the timing of contributions to the opposition, which was too little in the beginning and too late at the end of the campaign. As of June 30, 1994 only \$2, 400 of

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opposition contributions were recorded for the SOS initiative; however, by this same date over \$350, 000 was received for support of Proposition 187. By June 30, 1994, the ??? Yes on Proposition 187??? campaign incurred \$540, 595 in expenditures compared with zero dollars spent by the opposition.

Even though the ??? No on Proposition 187??? forces raised almost four times as much, the opponents were not as well-organized as the proponents, nor did they mount an effective campaign to generate support and mobilize their constituents in a timely manner. Legal immigrants all over California voted for 187 because it appealed to the rich, white, conservative population that resented the idea that their children??™s education was being short-changed by federal mandates that take their state tax dollars to pay for services for illegal immigrants. This very appeal contributed greatly to the outcome of the election because it is that very population that has the highest voter turn-out and thus overwhelmed the Democratic constituent vote against Prop187. This initiative appealed to a sense of fairness that transcends Californias social, racial, economic and even partisan lines.

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