

# San Francisco Chronicle

## Measure to tell parents of abortion holds lead

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A California proposition calling for parental notification before an abortion can be performed on a minor is holding on to a slight edge among voters, although a large number of those surveyed say they haven't made up their mind, according to a new poll.

- The poll by the Public Policy Institute of California found that 46 percent of voters favor Proposition 4, while 44 percent say they will vote no. Ten percent said they were unsure of how they will vote.

"Voters are closely divided on this issue," said Mark Baldassare, the institute's president and chief executive. "There's been very little movement on it in the last few months."

In a Field Poll in July, 48 percent of voters said they favored **Prop. 4**, with 39 percent opposed; in September, 49 percent said they approved it and 41 percent were opposed.

### Similar initiatives failed

If those numbers hold up and **Prop. 4** passes on Nov. 4, it will mark a reversal of fortune for proponents of the measure, who have seen two similar notification initiatives narrowly rejected by state voters in recent years.

**Prop. 4** would amend the state Constitution to require doctors - with limited exceptions - to alert a pregnant minor's parent or legal guardian at least 48 hours before performing an abortion on the girl. The measure would allow a designated adult relative to be notified if the minor says she is from an abusive home.

A doctor who performs an abortion without first notifying a qualified adult could be sued by the family.

Under the measure, a minor would have to go to court for an order waiving notification.

The new survey showed far more support for the initiative among Republicans: 61 percent yes, 28 percent no, 11 percent don't know. A majority of Democrats opposed it, 54 percent to 35 percent.

"While Californians are overwhelmingly pro-choice, they have been closely divided and deeply split along party lines regarding parental notification," Baldassare said. "It gets down to issues of parental roles - people who might be pro-choice feel that parents have a responsibility to know what's going on with their minor children."

That's what persuaded Vivian Dudro to support the measure.

"This law is resonating with a lot of parents like me," said the San Francisco mother of four and volunteer spokeswoman for the measure. "We're raising kids, we know how hard it is. A lot of us see this as a commonsense proposition. No doctor should be able to perform a medical procedure on our children without our knowing about it."

### **Doctors warn of dangers**

Opponents say the measure would imperil pregnant minors.

On Wednesday, a group of Asian American community leaders and physicians gathered in San Francisco to protest the initiative.

"This law is very misleading," said Dr. Sophia Yen, a pediatrician at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. "Rather than tell their parents, young people will buy Internet drugs to end the pregnancy, they will go to Mexico for an abortion, they will throw themselves down the stairs, they will do desperate things."

Dr. Ricky Choi, a pediatrician with Asian Health Services, said reproductive issues are not readily discussed in some cultures.

"We are afraid that the measure will put a very big wedge between parents and their children," Choi said.

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