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WHY DID PROPOSITION 227 PASS?

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On June 2, 1998, Proposition 227, the “English Language in Public Schools Initiative”, was passed in California with 60.88% votes in support of this initiative. Proposition 227, as officially summarized by the Attorney General’s office, required “all public school instruction to be conducted in English”, although this could “be waived if parents or guardian show that (the) child already knows English, or has special needs, or would learn English faster through alternative instructional technique.” Despite official opposition by California’s teachers unions and many Latino organizations, who argued that this initiative would scrap existing bilingual educations which were successful as well as those which did not teach students English, Proposition 227 passed in 56 of the 58 California counties (San Francisco and Alameda counties were the only areas in California where Proposition 227 did not achieve at least majority support). In only three other California counties did opposition to Proposition 227 get as high as 45% voting against this initiative (Marin County [47.76% no], Santa Cruz County [47.61% no], and Yolo County [48.18% no]). Thus, not only did Proposition 227 pass by a wide margin, it was supported in virtually all geographic corners of California.

My purpose in this paper is to answer the question, “why did Proposition 227 pass”? What factors drove almost 61% of those who voted on this initiative in a primary election to cast ballots in favor of passage of Proposition 227? Under what conditions might Proposition 227 have failed? My study of Proposition 227 is grounded in earlier research on two similar initiative campaigns: Propositions 187 (1994) and 209 (1996). These two earlier initiative campaigns both concerned important social and economic issues in California (immigration reform and affirmation action policies), both were highly controversial, and both were widely perceived to be racially and ethnically divisive. I use this earlier research to provide theoretical hypotheses for why Proposition 227 passed in the June 1998 primary election. In the end, I find that unlike the Proposition 187 campaign there is little support for the hypothesis that economic concerns or economic competition provided the foundation for the passage of Proposition 227. But I do find, similar to Propositions 187 and 209, that racial/ethnic and partisan/ideological identifications played a role in the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998. I also find that opinions about the efficacy of bilingual education programs played

a strong role in determining support or opposition to this initiative, independent of the effects of racial or ethnic identification.

1. Voting on Initiatives

While much has been written in the academic literature on candidate elections, there is a striking lack of studies of voting in initiative elections. In part, this is due to the fact that there are many fewer initiative elections relative to candidate elections in any given electoral season; in part, this lack of attention is due to the fact that initiative elections do not fit well into the standard theoretical frameworks of voter decisionmaking. Those frameworks of voter decisionmaking assert that standard voter shortcuts, like party identification or past experience with the candidates or parties, form the basis for the votes which are cast for candidates on election day (Downs 1957; Key 1966; Fiorina 1981). But many scholars who work in the area of initiative politics assert that these kinds of shortcuts are generally unavailable or irrelevant for initiative voting, which means that initiative elections do not fit comfortably into the standard theoretical models used by academics to study voting behavior.

Not surprisingly, voter behavior in initiative elections has not been found to be a consistent function of voter characteristics like partisanship, education, race, income, or other voter attributes which generally strongly predict candidate choice (Magleby 1984). Due to the relative complexity of most initiatives and since the information provided in most voter pamphlets is presented in small font, in confusing and complicated prose, and in long, lengthy arguments, voters must turn to some shortcuts to simplify their decisionmaking costs. The few studies which have been done on initiative elections all agree that voters rely heavily on media and elite endorsements of initiatives, as well as on their general ideological assessments of the initiative when appropriate, to reduce the information costs of voting on initiatives (Magleby 1984; Cronin 1989; Lupia 1994).

Thus, understanding the reasons behind voter support for any initiative is quite complicated, since the typical explanatory variables used in candidate election studies are not generally relevant and since we must closely examine the context of each initiative

campaign to ascertain which cues voters received from the media, political elites, and from politicians competing for votes (Alvarez and Butterfield 1999a, 1999b). In the two previous election cycles, California voters had been presented with two other initiatives which targeted different types of social policy: Proposition 187 in 1994, which focused on benefits for illegal immigrants; Proposition 209 in 1996, which aimed to eliminate affirmative action programs in California.

The first of these two prior initiatives, Proposition 187, had its origins in the severe economic recession which Californians endured during the early 1990's. During the early 1990's, California suffered many different economic setbacks, arising from changes in federal expenditures (largely felt in California in the form of military base closures and defense industry cutbacks) and from shifts in the national and global economy. By 1994, California was in the midst of the state's worst recession since the 1930's --- and during this one year 30 bills were introduced into the state legislature concerning legal or illegal immigration and two ballot initiatives on this issue were introduced, one of them Proposition 187.

Proposition 187 was designed to deny many publicly funded social and health care services to illegal immigrants and to prevent their enrollment in tax-supported educational institutions. The arguments by the authors and major proponents of Proposition 187 were that California had become an illegal immigration magnet, whereby illegal immigrants were costing California taxpayers an estimated \$5 billion per year in public services. Proposition 187 was intended to stop illegal immigration by making it an unattractive alternative for potential immigrants.

In the end, in the context of gubernatorial and U.S. Senate campaigns in which illegal immigration was a critical issue differentiating Democratic and Republican candidates, Proposition 187 became a lightning rod for voter discontent with the state's economy. On one hand, there is evidence that racial and ethnic polarization in California drove some to support Proposition 187 (Alvarez and Butterfield 1999a; Wang 1997; Tolbert and Hero 1996). But it is also clear that California's poor economic situation in 1994 played a strong, if not predominant role, in influencing voters to support this ballot measure (Alvarez and Butterfield 1999a).

Proposition 209 followed two years later, and was designed to end most public affirmative action programs in California. Called the “California Civil Rights Initiative” by proponents and supporters, Proposition 209 was framed at a series of proposals which would end quotas and race-based hiring, promotion, and educational programs throughout the state’s public sector. Coming closely on the heels of California’s severe economy recession in the early 1990’s, Proposition 209 quickly became a hot-button issue in both state and national electoral politics in 1996. Governor Pete Wilson, in his putative presidential campaign, used the issue of affirmative action as a central component of his campaign. The national Republican party endorsed Proposition 209 in their national policy platform, and their nominee, Bob Dole, openly supported Proposition 209. Incumbent President Clinton, on the other hand, clearly voiced his opposition to this initiative, thus opening a strong division between the two national political parties on the issue of affirmative action.

The passage of Proposition 209, however, was driven much more fundamentally by partisan and ideological forces, stemming from the sharp divide between the state and national parties on the issue of affirmative action, and by racial and ethnic divisions in the electorate (Alvarez and Butterfield 1999b). However, economic discontent or economic competition were not factors driving voter support for passage of Proposition 209 (Alvarez and Butterfield 1999b). Thus, passage of Proposition 209 differed from passage of Proposition 187, mainly on the role of economic discontent and competition in driving voters to support each ballot measure. But passage of both of these initiatives was driven by racial and ethnic divisiveness and by partisan and ideological factors originating in the politicization of each initiative by strategic politicians and political parties.

2. Why Did Voters Support Proposition 227?

Less than two years after the passage of Proposition 209, however, yet another initiative qualified for the statewide ballot, one which was seen by many political observers and pundits as a third racially-divisive ballot measure, Proposition 227. Proponents of Proposition 227 argued against this characterization of their proposal,

stating that the intention of this initiative which would end existing bilingual education programs in California's public schools was designed to better educate children who were from non-English speaking families. But opponents did try to characterize Proposition 227 as a racial and ethnic issue, especially many in the Latino community.

But in other ways, the context surrounding the Proposition 227 campaign differed importantly from the context in 1994 for Proposition 187 and in 1996 for Proposition 209. First, the political context of Proposition 227 was different than these earlier initiative campaigns in two ways: Proposition 227 was contested in a primary election campaign while the earlier initiatives both occurred in general election campaigns; Proposition 227 did not form the centerpiece of the campaigns of strategic politicians or parties. The differences in political context, importantly, produce contradictory implications for how partisan and ideological factors might have influenced passage of Proposition 227. On the one hand, the primary election context insures that those who turned out to vote in the June 1998 election would be those California voters most attuned to politics, and thus those voters who would be the most partisan and ideological. On the other hand, without strategic politicians and parties using Proposition 227 as a political wedge issue, these same voters will not have simple partisan and ideological cues at hand from the political campaigns to help them decide whether to support or to oppose Proposition 227.

Also the political economic context in June 1998 was markedly different from 1994 and 1996. By June 1998 California had finally emerged from the long recession of the early 1990's --- and the effects of economic expansion were being felt statewide. Jobs were increasingly plentiful, the real estate market was beginning to expand, prices seemed to be relatively stable, and there were even signs that economic growth was beginning to impact the inner city areas of Los Angeles. Thus, economic concerns and economic competition seem less likely to be factors driving voters to the polls to support Proposition 227 than they were factors in the case of Proposition 187.

Thus, the primary question motivating this paper is to understand what factors drove voters to support Proposition 227. Building on the studies of Propositions 187 and 209 discussed above, there are three primary factors which I hypothesize to have been

potential sources of voter support for Proposition 227: first, like Proposition 187, economic discontent and competition might have driven voters to support Proposition 227; second, like Propositions 187 and 209, partisan and ideological factors might have driven voters to support Proposition 227; third, like Propositions 187 and 209, racial and ethnic divisiveness might have been causes underlying voter passage of Proposition 227.

To study the underlying reasons for why Proposition 227 passed in the 1998 primary election in California, I will use two different data sources. The first is an exit poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*, which was their statewide exit poll containing 5143 voters, from roughly 100 voting precincts across the state. The second is an exit poll conducted by Alvarez and Nagler Political Research Group, as part of their project focusing on the first open primary conducted in California in the wake of the passage of an earlier electoral reform initiative, the “open primary” initiative (Proposition 198) in 1996 (Alvarez and Nagler 1999). The ANPRG exit poll was conducted in five Assembly districts in California (Assembly districts 9, 49, 53, 61 and 75), with each Assembly district selected for inclusion in the study due to important dynamics in the Assembly primary election races. The ANPRG poll was conducted in 10-15 voting precincts in each Assembly district, and in the end, contained 2977 voters in the sample. An important reason to use the ANPRG exit poll, though, is the oversampling in their exit poll of Latino voters, given that one of the Assembly districts in their sample (AD 49) is a heavily Latino Assembly district in East Los Angeles, and that some of the other Assembly districts in their sample contained numerous Latino voters.

First, I wish to know the extent of support for Proposition 227. As I noted in the introduction of this paper, support for Proposition 227 was widespread throughout California. This proposition passed by a large margin statewide, 60.88% to 39.12%. The support margins from the two exit polls are provided in Table 1, with the proportion voting “yes” in the left column and the proportion voting “no” in the right column. The first row provides the statewide election outcomes for comparison, while in the second row we see that the ANPRG exit poll quite closely matched the electoral outcome: in the ANPRG poll, 59.94% of the voters claimed to have supported Proposition 227 and 40.06% were opposed. The *Los Angeles Times* exit poll, however, was not quite as

accurate in predicting the actual election outcome on Proposition 227, since that exit poll predicted that 52.49% of voters supported Proposition 227 and that 47.51% were opposed.

Again, one of the strengths of the ANPRG exit poll for studying support for Proposition 227 was the fact that the ANPRG had a large sample of Latino voters, which enables us to examine Latino support for and opposition against this initiative to end bilingual education. In the last row of Table 1 I report the support and opposition percentages for Latino voters in the ANPRG sample. Interestingly, in the ANPRG sample, Latino voters were overwhelmingly in opposition to Proposition 227, with 44.13% of Latino voters supporting Proposition 227 and with 55.87% in opposition. This indicates that, contrary to some polling results reported in the media before the election, Latino voters were strongly opposed to the passage of Proposition 227. This also provides early evidence in support of the hypothesis that racial divisiveness drove voters to support or oppose Proposition 227.

Next, the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll contained a lengthy battery of questions specifically designed to elicit opinions about bilingual education. Examination of voter opinions about bilingual education should shed some light on the arguments which might have led voters to support or to oppose this initiative. In Table 2 I provide each of the arguments listed in the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll, followed by the percentage of voters in that exit poll sample who agreed with each argument. The arguments are listed in the order of their apparent importance to California voters.

The argument receiving the most agreement was that “Americans should speak English”, with 40.1% of voters agreeing that this was an important factor driving their opinions about bilingual education. Next, two other arguments received some agreement, “Proposition 227 removes local authority” and “Bilingual education is not effective”: 14.5% of voters agreed with the first and 12.4% of voters agreed with the second. After those arguments, three came next in apparent importance to the electorate: “Proposition 227 is poorly written”, “Proposition 227 discriminates against non-English speakers”, and “Bilingual education works”, with each receiving between 6 and 7% agreement in the electorate. Last, four arguments saw little support from voters: “Children should speak

their native language”, “Proposition 227 hurts English speakers”, “Wilson supports Proposition 227”, and “Proposition 227 costs too much.” Each of these last four arguments obtained less than 4% agreement from voters in the Los Angeles exit poll sample.

Next, I want to understand more specifically what factors, including these arguments for and against bilingual education and Proposition 227, drove voters to support or to oppose Proposition 227. Importantly, the goal is to determine whether the same factors that drove voters to support Propositions 187 and 209 in prior elections also drove voters to support Proposition 227 in 1998; so I wish to find out whether economic discontent, racial resentment, or political factors were the determinants of voter support for Proposition 227. This goal can only be reached through a multivariate analysis of voter support for Proposition 227.

The multivariate analysis is relatively straightforward. I specify a statistical model which predicts voter support for Proposition 227 as a function of a number of factors: voter partisanship, ideology, economy evaluations, income levels, race or ethnic identification, union membership, and issue preferences and priorities. I use both the *Los Angeles Times* and ANPRG exit polls, since each exit poll contains slightly different sets of questions which can be used to predict voter support for Proposition 227.

Unfortunately, given that all I observe in these exit polls is a simple yes or no indication of whether a particular voter supported or opposed this proposition, this multivariate analysis is slightly complicated. To predict Proposition 227 support using this simple yes or no indicator variable, I employ a nonlinear probit model. The probit model produces estimates of the independent impact of each predictor variable on the probability that voters supported the proposition; to make these estimates more intuitive for readers, instead of reporting the estimated impacts themselves, I report them after translating the probit coefficients into estimates of the effect each predictor variable has on voting for Proposition 227 for a hypothetical (average) California voter in this election.¹

¹ I do not report the actual coefficients or summary statistics from the probit model in this paper for simplicity. If readers are interested in examining the coefficients or summary statistics they can contact the author directly.

The probability effects are presented in Tables 3 and 4. I begin with Table 3, where I present the estimated importance of partisanship and ideology, economic perceptions and income, race or ethnic identifications, and union membership. The effects produced from the multivariate probit model using the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll data are in the first column, those from the ANPRG are in the second column, and those for only Latino voters in the ANPRG sample are found in the third column of Table 3. Each of the entries reported in this table is directly interpreted as the impact of the particular factor on the probability of voting for Proposition 227.

Beginning with the political and ideological factors, it is clear that both partisanship and ideology did influence voter support for passage of Proposition 227. In the first few rows of Table 3, we see that in the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll results, were a voter a Democratic identifier that he or she would be .07 less likely to vote for Proposition 227; if this same voter had liberal ideological identifications, he or she would be .11 less likely to vote for Proposition 227, all other factors held constant. Interestingly, the effects of Republican or conservative self-identifications were roughly identical in the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll data. Roughly similar results are found in the ANPRG exit poll, except in that poll the effects of Republican identification were not large. Surprisingly, though, when we focus only on the Latino voters in the ANPRG exit poll, we see that the overall apparent effects of partisanship and ideology on voter support for Proposition 227 were somewhat more muted, since the estimated impact of Democratic and liberal self-identifications were less than for the full sample of voters in either exit poll.

There are two different sets of economic factors used to examine the impact of economic status or perceptions on support for Proposition 227. In the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll, voters were asked to give their family income, in ranges of less than \$20,000 per year, between \$20,000 and \$39,000 per year, between \$40,000 and \$59,000 per year, between \$60,000 and \$74,000, between \$75,000 and \$100,000, and more than \$100,000. If economic competition or discontent were driving voter support for Proposition 227, then I anticipate that those at the lower rungs of the income ladder should be more likely

to vote for Proposition 227, while those at the higher rungs of the income ladder should be more likely to vote for Proposition 227, all else held constant.

I present the results of income on voter support for Proposition 227 in the first column of Table 3; each probability estimate here is interpreted as the probability that a voter in the particular income category would support this proposition relative to the highest income category (which is the baseline or comparison category). In Table 3, we see that voters in the two lowest categories of the income scale were actually less likely to support Proposition 227 than very high income voters. Voters in the \$40,000 through \$74,000 income range were slightly more likely to support Proposition, while those in the next income range (\$75,000 through \$100,000) were actually slightly less likely to support Proposition 227 than the voters in the highest income category. Also, each of the estimated probability effects in Table 3 for income is quite small in magnitude, each .05 or less. Thus, the effects of income on support for Proposition 227 were weak and not in the anticipated direction.

The ANPRG exit poll did not ask voters to provide their income, but it did ask them about their perceptions of the California economy --- was it better, worse, or the same than a year before. I present in Table 3 the probability effect for perceptions of the California economy, with the comparison category being a perception that the California economy was the same as a year before. The expectation is that if economic discontent were a factor driving voters to support Proposition 227, that those feeling that the economy had grown worse over the past year should be strongly more likely to support passage of Proposition 227. However, in the full sample of ANPRG voters, we see that this expectation is not supported, since voters who perceived the California economy to be worse than a year ago were .02 less likely to support Proposition 227 than voters who thought the economy was unchanged in the past year. The direction of the effect of economic perceptions is the same in the AD 49 ANPRG sample. In neither case do we see a strong effect. Thus, like the income effects in the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll, the effects of economic perceptions in the ANPRG exit poll is small and is not in the anticipated direction. The only conclusion here is that like in the case of voting for

Proposition 209, economic factors were not strong forces driving voters to support Proposition 227.

The third major factor to examine here is racial and ethnic self-identifications. To examine whether racial or ethnic factors led voters to support or to oppose Proposition 227, I present in Table 3 the estimated probability impacts of white, Black, Latino or Asian identification, relative to other racial or ethnic self-identification. If racial and ethnic divisiveness was a factor driving voter support for Proposition, I expect to find that whites were more likely to favor passage of Proposition 227, while Latinos should be less likely to favor passage.

In Table 3, this expectation is clearly supported. In the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll data, whites were .06 more likely to support passage while Latinos were .13 less likely to support passage. In the ANPRG exit poll, the effects of race and ethnicity are more pronounced, with whites .18 more likely to support passage and Latinos .12 less likely to support passage. When we move to Assembly district 49, the effects for whites become even stronger (.27 more likely to support passage) while the effects for Latinos drop somewhat (to .04).

Interestingly, the effects for Blacks and Asians deserve discussion. While in the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll the effects of Black or Asian identification were not present, in the ANPRG exit poll it is clear that both Blacks and Asians supported passage of Proposition 227. This is true in the full ANPRG sample, and in the Assembly district 49 sample, with the impact of Black or Asian identification much more substantial in Assembly district 49. This demonstrates a strong racial and ethnic divide on the issue of bilingual education, with only Latino voters opposing passage of this initiative and with whites, Blacks and Asians favoring passage of Proposition 227. Thus, racial and ethnic divisiveness did drive voter support for Proposition 227.

The *Los Angeles Times* exit poll also asked voters whether they were a union member, whether they were a member of a teacher's union, or whether someone in their household was a union member. In Table 3 I include estimates of the impact of union membership on voting for Proposition 227, in order to examine whether union mobilization in this election and teacher union mobilization, impacted at all on the

passage of Proposition 227. In Table 3 it is clear that unionization did push voters to oppose Proposition 227, especially if the voter was a union member (.06 less likely to support this initiative) or a teacher union member (.17 less likely to vote for this initiative).

Both the *Los Angeles Times* and ANPRG exit polls included questions asking for specific voter opinions on bilingual education (the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll) or for their issue priorities (the ANPRG exit poll). I included these bilingual education opinions or issue priorities in the multivariate predictive models --- the results are reported in Table 4.

Beginning with the opinions about bilingual education in the *Los Angeles Times* Exit poll, two factors strongly drove voter support: believing that bilingual education is not effective or that Americans should speak English (making voters .34 or .32 more likely to support this initiative). Two factors drove voters to oppose the initiative, believing that Proposition 227 removes local authority (.32 less likely to support the initiative) or that Proposition 227 is poorly worded (.24 less likely to support this initiative). Two other opinions worked to prod voters to oppose Proposition 227, that bilingual education works (.14 less likely) or that Proposition 227 discriminates against non-English speakers (.10 less likely).

These results, in combination with those reported earlier in Table 2, shed a great deal of light into how the campaigns for and against Proposition 227 influenced the outcome of the election. In Table 2, I showed that the most prevalent opinion about bilingual education was that Americans should speak English, since 40.1% of the electorate supported that statement; in Table 4, I demonstrated that this opinion would lead a voter to be .32 more likely to support Proposition 227, all other factors held constant. Also, 12.4% of voters in Table 2 believed that bilingual education is not effective --- and this opinion would lead a voter to be .34 more likely to support Proposition 227. A majority of voters held one of these two opinions, and these two opinions led to strong voter support for Proposition 227.

On the other hand, the two opinions leading to strong voter opposition to Proposition 227 were that this proposition removes local authority or that it was poorly

written. In Table 2, though, I showed that 14.5% of voters held the first opinion and that 7.7% of voters held the second opinion. Thus, while these two arguments did lead to voter opposition to Proposition 227, these two opinions were not widely held. Since these two opinions against Proposition 227 were not widely held, they could not produce enough voter opposition to Proposition 227 to keep this initiative from passage.

In Table 4, I also included voter issue preferences from the ANPRG exit poll in the multivariate predictive model. In the full sample of ANPRG voters, if a voter thought that bilingual education was an important issue, they were .07 less likely to vote for Proposition 227 --- also, if a voter thought that improving education was an important issue they were .03 less likely to support passage. These two factors were somewhat more important in Assembly district 49, since a voter who felt that bilingual education was an important factor was .19 less likely to support passage and a voter who felt that improving education was an important issue was .04 less likely to support passage of this initiative. Therefore, persuading a voter that bilingual education or improving education generally were important issues, did lead them to oppose the passage of Proposition 227, especially in Assembly district 49. But the impacts of these issue priorities were not very strong.

An better way to understand the potential impact of opinions about bilingual education on the passage of Proposition 227 is through a “counterfactual analysis”. This type of statistical simulation has been recently used in studies of electoral behavior to see what the impact of different issues and perceptions are in presidential elections (Alvarez and Nagler 1995, 1998). A “counterfactual analysis” employs the estimated impacts of the variables which are believed to predict support for Proposition 227 (these variables and their estimated impacts are given in Table 4). Given the estimated impact of each independent variable on the probability that each voter in our sample supported Proposition 227, I can alter the underlying distribution of “yes” or “no” answers for each opinion about bilingual education, recompute the probability that each voter supports Proposition 227, and then compute an estimated vote share for Proposition 227 for each new distribution of opinions about bilingual education.

For example, let's say that I start by assuming that only 10% of the sample of voters in the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll thought that bilingual education was not effective (12% had this opinion in the actual data). I randomly set 10% of the sample of voters to say "yes" to this question and 90% to say "no"; combining these changed opinions, answers to the other survey questions, and the estimated impacts of all of the predictor variables, I then estimate that under this scenario 49% of the electorate would have voted for Proposition 227. To continue, I perform this simulation again, but setting 20% of the sample to have a "yes" opinion and 80% to have a "no" opinion --- recomputing the vote outcome for Proposition 227 shows that 52% of the electorate now supports this initiative. I repeat this process for each issue, setting the proportions of "yes" and "no" opinions on each issue from 10 to 100. The results from this "counterfactual" analysis for each issue are given in Figure 1.

In Figure 1, an upward sloping line (as seen for the statements that bilingual education works and Americans should speak English) indicates that these are opinions which successfully could **mobilize voters to support Proposition 227**; downward sloping lines (bilingual education discriminates against non-English speakers, Proposition 227 is poorly written, bilingual education works, and Proposition 227 removes local authority) indicate opinions which lead voters to **oppose Proposition 227**. Beginning with the two issues with upward sloping lines, it is clear that getting enough voters to support Proposition 227, holding all other factors constant, required that the proponents persuade at roughly 20% of the electorate to believe that bilingual education is not effective (12% did so in the actual data) and that nearly 40% believe that Americans should speak English (40% did so in the survey data).

On the other hand, in order to persuade enough voters to insure that Proposition 227 did not pass, opponents of the initiative would have needed to persuade at least 20% or more of the electorate that bilingual education discriminates against non-English speakers (only 6.7% did so in the data), holding all other factors constant. Or, opponents would have needed to persuade more than 10% of the electorate that Proposition 227 was poorly written (7.7% held this opinion in the survey data) or that Proposition 227 removes local authority (14% did so in the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll). The task would have

been more difficult regarding the argument that bilingual education works, since opponents would have had to get somewhere between 20 to 30% of the electorate to hold this opinion to insure that Proposition 227 would have failed.

3. Why Did Proposition 227 Pass?

So, why did Proposition 227 pass so strongly in June 1998? Following in the wake of earlier anti-immigrant (Proposition 187) and anti-affirmative (Proposition 209) initiatives, any analysis of the passage of Proposition 227 draws strength from the explicit comparison of voter support for each of these three ballot measures. Some factors --- racial/ethnic divisiveness and partisan/ideological competition --- were common undercurrents driving the passage of Propositions 187 and 209. The one set of factors which operated in different manners between the two earlier initiative campaigns was the relative role of economic discontent and competition, with these factors strongly influencing the passage of Proposition 187 but not 209.

Not surprisingly, with the state economy robust in 1998, economic discontent and competition were not driving factors in the passage of Proposition 227. But just like Propositions 187 and 209, the passage of 227 was also facilitated by racial/ethnic divisiveness and by partisan/ideological factors. Thus, to understand the passage of this triplet of social legislation initiatives in the 1990's, we need to look primarily at how these three initiatives were framed in racial/ethnic and partisan/ideological terms by both their supporters and opponents. By framing these three ballot measures in these terms, supporters of each measure seemingly insured passage of each initiative.

But in the specific case of Proposition 227, I presented evidence showing that the anti-bilingual education initiative could have been defeated. Had opponents of Proposition 227 successfully persuaded more California voters that this initiative removed local school authority, that existing bilingual education programs were effective, or that this initiative was poorly drafted, then the seeds of defeat for Proposition 227 might have been sown. The opponents of Proposition 227 would have had to work very hard to convince voters of the accuracy of these arguments --- and they would have had to

convince a great number of voters that it removed local school authority, that existing bilingual education programs were effective, or that it was poorly drafted --- but it is clear that defeat was possible.

In addition to changing how Proposition 227 was framed to the public, the other way in which Proposition 227 might not have passed would have been the construction of strong cross-racial coalitions. The fact that both Black and Asian voters were strong supporters of Proposition 227 points out the deep racial/ethnic divide in California on the issue of bilingual education. It is particularly interesting to speculate on the motivations for Asians to support Proposition 227, since Asians are a racial/ethnic group in California which also has a stake in preserving their unique racial/ethnic group identities. By demonstrating that Proposition 227 was not just a “Latino” issue, that it was an issue influencing other racial/ethnic groups in California who also have strong stakes in preserving their own group identities, could another possible path leading to the defeat of this initiative be found.

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Table 1
Support for Proposition 227

<u>Source</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Actual Vote	60.88	39.12
ANPRG	59.94	40.06
LA Times	52.49	47.51
ANPRG - AD 49	44.13	55.87

Table 2
Opinions About Bilingual Education

<u>Opinion</u>	<u>Percent in Agreement</u>
American should speak English	40.1
Prop 227 removes local authority	14.5
Bilingual education is not effective	12.4
Prop 227 is poorly written	7.7
Discriminates against non-English speakers	6.7
Bilingual education works	6.1
Children should speak native language	4.0
Prop 227 hurts English speakers	3.9
Wilson support Prop 227	2.8
Prop 227 costs too much	1.9

Table 3
Factors Driving Voter Support for Proposition 227

<u>Factor</u>	<u>LA Times</u>	<u>ANPRG</u>	<u>ANPRG - AD 49</u>
Democrats	-.07	-.13	-.04
Republicans	.07	.01	.07
Liberals	-.11	-.10	.01
Conservatives	.10	.09	.09
California Economy Better		.01	.06
California Economy Worse		-.02	-.00
Income < \$20 k	-.05		
Income \$20-\$30 k	-.04		
Income \$40-\$59 k	.03		
Income \$60-\$74 k	.04		
Income \$75-\$100 k	-.02		
Whites	.06	.18	.27
Blacks	.00	.06	.16
Latinos	-.13	-.12	-.04
Asians	-.00	.12	.28
Union Member	-.06		
Teacher Union Member	-.17		
Union Household	-.04		

Table 4
Opinions and Voter Support for Proposition 227

Opinion	ANPRG	ANPRG - AD 49	LA Times
<u>Important Issues:</u>			
Jobs & Economy	.05	.03	
Reducing crime	.06	.07	
Electing exp. leaders	-.03	-.04	
Abortion	.04	.14	
Bilingual Education	-.07	-.19	
Special Interests	.02	-.20	
Health Care	-.03	-.07	
Environment	-.08	.00	
Improving Education	-.03	-.04	
<u>Bilingual Education:</u>			
Bilingual Education not effective			.34
American should speak English			.32
Discriminates against non-English speakers			-.10
Prop 227 is poorly written			-.24
Bilingual education works			-.14
Prop 227 removes local authority			-.32

Figure 1: Simulated Proposition 227 Vote

