

CONGRESS or PROGRESS?

Listen to the ROOM 2B podcast **CONGRESS or PROGRESS** at mrreview.org and complete the following exercise. Be prepared to discuss with your classmates.

1. Define and explain the difference between initiatives, referendums and recalls.
2. Investigate your state's use of initiatives, referendums and recalls. What are the current rules and regulations regarding direct democracy? List two or three recent examples of referendums in your state.
3. Imagine you are a delegate to a new constitutional convention. What are the best arguments for and against the use of direct democracy tools like initiatives, referendums and recalls? What is your own opinion? Explain.
4. Read the scenario below and answer the prompts that follow:

Disneyland, whose property tax is still based on its assessment when Proposition 13 passed, would have to pay more. In fact, the USC study found that most of the increase in state revenues would come from properties worth at least \$5 million. A study released by Proposition 15 supporters this week shows that just 10% of the state's corporate properties — that is, the biggest ones — would generate 92% of the revenue raised by the initiative.

Besides improving the state's bottom line, passage of Proposition 15 would have a huge symbolic effect. Before 1978, California invested generously in its future, and earned big dividends for its residents. Between the 1940s and the 1970s, the state-built highways, dams and aqueducts, and its educational system earned a reputation for excellence. But Proposition 13 marked a retreat from public investment. Now California's infrastructure is outdated, the state is ranked as the fourth-most-unequal state in the union and its school expenditures-per-pupil have dropped from 14th in 1978 to 39th. Proposition 15's passage would mark the end of an era of magical thinking: You can't have the benefits of government without revenues to pay for them.

Source: Jacques Leslie, "The reform of Proposition 13 is needed now more than ever," *LA TIMES*, July 16, 2020.

- A. Describe the intent of Proposition 13, a California initiative passed in 1978.
- B. In the context of the scenario, explain how the claim discussed in (A) has triggered Proposition 15.
- C. Explain how the original U.S. Constitution limited popular sovereignty.