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*The Pros & Cons of Measure H*

*Sales Tax --- 2/3 Approval Required*

## Los Angeles County Plan to Prevent and Combat Homelessness

**The Question:** To fund mental health, substance abuse treatment, health care, education, job training, rental subsidies, emergency and affordable housing, transportation, outreach, prevention, and supportive services for homeless children, families, foster youth, veterans, battered women, seniors, disabled individuals, and other homeless adults, shall voters authorize Ordinance No. 2017-0001 to levy a ¼ cent sales tax for ten years, with independent annual audits and citizens' oversight?

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**The Situation:** According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), there were 115,738 homeless in California in 2015, over 20% of the nation's homeless, by far the most of any state. The estimate for one night in Los Angeles County was 46,874, up about 6% from 2014. Homelessness was named as one of the biggest problems in the County.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (a city agency) conducts counts of the homeless in Los Angeles County as well as in the city, counting both the sheltered and the unsheltered. Although the total dropped from 65,287 in 2005 to 38,602 in 2009, it has been climbing slowly since then. Estimates by the Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty at the Weingart Center are much higher: about 254,000 men, women, and children homeless at some point during a year in Los Angeles County and approximately 82,000 homeless on any given night.

**The Proposal:** Measure H would raise the county-wide Transaction and Use Tax (TUT) (i.e., the county sales tax) by ¼ cent for ten years, with the funds raised going to combat homelessness as specified in the measure. Application of Measure H funds would be under the direction of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors with oversight by a five-person Citizens' Oversight Advisory Board (COAB) that would semiannually review tax expenditures and annually publish an accounting. In addition, the County Auditor-Controller would prepare an annual audit of Measure H proceeds.

**Fiscal Impact:** The County estimates that the ¼-cent Homelessness TUT will bring in approximately \$373 million per year, e.g., 1¢ on a \$4 purchase or \$1 on a \$400 purchase. TUTs, whether general or specific, are capped at 2% countywide. With approval by the voters of Measure M, the county levies TUTs that total 1.5% countywide. However, cities also have the authority to levy TUTs. For example, La Mirada, Pico Rivera, and South Gate have their own 1% TUTs, but would not lose that income. If Measure H passes, they would receive the revenue from the countywide TUT to replace their own TUT income, and county income would be reduced accordingly. The \$373 million estimate of Measure H income takes into account the small amount that would be credited to those three cities.

### Supporters Say:

- Daily, over 47,000 in our county are homeless, including many women, children, and veterans,
- The growing homelessness crisis disrupts nearly every community in the county.
- The longer we wait, the more expensive it will be to deal with the issue.
- The homeless need more than housing; Measure H is a broad-based approach, urgently needed.

### Opponents Say:

- Taxes are already too high and should be reduced, not increased.
- A sales tax is a regressive tax that places the burden on those least able to pay.
- Localities are better equipped to deal with the problem than the county at large.
- Voters recently approved increases in county taxes and should not be asked for more so soon.