

Proposition 25 is simple reform that will break the gridlock and ensure that budgets will be passed on time. This is important because when last year's budget ran late, the state issued 450,000 IOUs to small businesses, state workers, and other who do business with the state. This ended up costing taxpayers over \$8 million in interest payments alone. Passing Proposition 25 will discourage this from happening again, as it holds legislators accountable when they don't do their jobs (actually docking their salaries every day the budget is late). **Opponents of this proposition scream that this is misleading because politicians would never support an initiative that would cost them money from their own wallets.** They are wrong. The language of the budget clearly states they will have their pay reduced, and what's more, they cannot legally recover any of this lost money after a budget is finally passed. Because of this possible loss of personal income, Proposition 25 will motivate lawmakers to agree on a timely budget.

Those who oppose Prop 25 claim that passing it will give lawmakers more of an opportunity to raise our taxes. Without a required two-thirds majority, they argue, we will be much more endangered by higher taxes. This argument, however, does not hold water. If you read the initiative closely, you will notice that the two-thirds requirement to raise taxes is actually still in place. That will not change. What does change is that lawmakers will be able to pass budgets without having to get a two-thirds majority. This is needed under the current system because no one is held accountable when a budget the gridlocked. Schools suffer. Businesses suffer. But lawmakers continue getting paid. Prop 25 will change this by hitting lawmakers where it hurts—their wallets. The people who oppose this initiative are using the prospect of higher taxes as a scare tactic. "Higher taxes" is a red herring designed to get people to take their eyes off the real issues.

Another benefit to passing Prop 25 is that it removes power from the small number of legislators who hold the budget for "ransom" every year. Because two-thirds vote is needed, some lawmakers hold out for special perks for themselves, often spending our money on their pet projects, or by giving billions in tax breaks to narrow corporate interests. **Opponents argue that passing Prop 25 will not eliminate this problem, that there will still be lawmakers who will attempt to hold the budget ransom.** Changing the law to a simple majority law will not change this, they argue. Though there is some truth to this argument, common sense says this problem will be lessened when budgets are easier to pass. There may be some situations where this remains a problem, but, clearly, passing Prop 25 will make it far less likely this "hostage taking" will occur.

According to the voting guide, "Late budgets waste tax money and inflate the costs of building schools and roads." Last year, for example "when the budget was late, road projects were shut down then restarted days later, costing taxpayers millions of dollars and further damaging California's credit rating." **Some might argue this is the price we have to pay to ensure that a reasonable budget gets passed,** but I disagree. As the voter's guide states, "Real people suffer when legislators play games with the budget." Taxpayers are punished, funding for schools is delayed, public safety is underfunded, and health care and services for seniors are used as bargaining chips. Prop 25 won't make all of these issues disappear, but it will certainly encourage lawmakers to address them in a more timely manner.

Figure 7.4 My Model Essay for Taking a Stand (Counterarguments in Bold)

Are we really going to go down this same, tired road again? Another hopelessly deadlocked budget? Lawmakers who can't agree? Taxpayers penalized by this legislative paralysis? If we do not rally and pass Proposition 25, we will end up exactly where we started—budget hell. Fortunately, it doesn't have to end this way. Proposition 25 offers hope to all Californians who are sick of the yearly budget paralysis. The system is clearly broken, Proposition 25 is the remedy, and the time to pass it is now.