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California Votes To Keep Gas Tax Hike To Fund Road Repairs

The Republican-backed Proposition 6 campaign failed Tuesday night.



By [Lydia O'Connor](#)

California voters struck down Prop 6 on Tuesday, blocking a Republican effort to repeal a gas tax hike that's funding much-needed transportation improvement

projects in the state.

The election results preserve legislation signed into law last year by California Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) that increased the state's gasoline taxes for the first time in decades, adding 12 cents to the 28-cents-per-gallon excise tax on gasoline and 20 cents to the diesel tax over the course of 10 years. That's on top of the 18 cents per gallon paid in federal taxes, making California the state with the second highest gas tax.

The majority of the tens of billions in funds generated by the tax hike are slated for road rehabilitation projects with the goal of bringing at least 98 percent of state highway pavement into good or fair condition. [68 percent](#) of major roads and highways in California are in poor or mediocre condition — more than [twice the national average](#), according to a recent report by TRIP, a nonpartisan, nonprofit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C.

About a quarter of the money is slated for other projects, including improvements to public transportation systems and traffic reduction.

With Prop. 6 a failure, such transit improvement projects already in the works will be able to continue with the same funding.

Prop. 6's largely Republican advocates argued that money for those projects should have come from elsewhere in California's massive budget and that hiking up the tax was an unfair burden on drivers. Brown's office estimated it would cost drivers \$10 more a month in gas costs, though an in-depth analysis by [The Sacramento Bee](#) found that cost could be slightly higher.



ASSOCIATED PRESS Prop. 6 supporters say the money for road repairs shouldn't be paid for by additional taxes.

But the bill's opponents point to findings, like those from TRIP, that found motorists are incurring significant costs by driving on bad roads, such as needing to pay for damages caused by potholes or wasting gas by driving on poorly designed, congested roadways.

With the improvements generated by paying the gas tax, drivers can expect a net savings, California politics analyst Larry Gerston, professor emeritus of political science at San Jose State University, [told HuffPost](#) in October.

The campaign came into play in a few of California's swing districts. Republican donors, including a PAC linked to House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), pumped money into the Yes on Prop. 6 campaign partly in hopes of driving GOP voters to the polls.

A handful of Democrats running to unseat House Republicans broke from their party to say they supported the repeal effort.

The issue emerged most strongly in the Orange County race between Katie Porter — one of the Democrats who supported the repeal — and GOP Rep. Mimi Walters, who accused her opponent of flip-flopping on the issue in an attack ad.