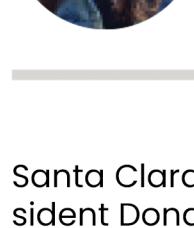


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Santa Clara County's Measure A appears to be heading to victory

Measure A is expected to generate \$330 million if passed



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Santa Clara County's eleventh hour ballot initiative to combat the massive federal cuts laid out in President Donald Trump's landmark tax and spending bill appears to be heading to victory — much to the relief of local officials and advocates who feared the cuts would decimate the county budget and force critical health care services to close.

The county, which operates the second-largest public hospital and health care system in the state, is projecting it will lose roughly \$1 billion in federal revenues annually due to the cuts. Measure A — a proposed 0.625% increase to the local sales tax rate — is expected to fill a third of that budget gap, generating \$330 million annually if passed. It will last five years, helping the county weather the worst of the fiscal storm.

"We've shown yet again how special Santa Clara County is," County Executive James Williams told The Mercury News. "This is a community that for generations has invested in a public health care delivery system that provides healthcare with excellence that is accessible to everyone. That commitment has been reaffirmed tonight."

As of 9:30 p.m., 57% of ballots cast were in favor of Measure A. The initiative needs a simple majority to pass.

The ballot initiative is a key part of the county's efforts to combat the funding loss, which they said could lead to shuttering health services or hospitals entirely as more than 50% of the Santa Clara Valley Healthcare system's revenues come from Medi-Cal — California's Medicaid program for low-income and disabled residents.

Santa Clara County currently operates four hospitals and 15 clinics, with its flagship hospital, Valley Medical Center, the only dual trauma center and certified burn center in the entire Bay Area.

Michael Elliott, the executive director of the Valley Health Foundation — the health system's philanthropic arm — said in a statement that the results prove "what's possible when a community stands together around a shared purpose."

"Measure A is more than just policy," he said. "It's about people — our neighbors, our loved ones, the patients who depend on these hospitals every single day. It's about coming together as a community and saying that access to quality, local health care isn't a privilege — it's a right that the federal government cannot take away from us."

Opponents of Measure A, including the Silicon Valley Taxpayers Association and the Silicon Valley Business Alliance, have decried the measure, saying that taxes are already too high. The local sales tax rate is currently 9.125% countywide, and the 0.625% increase would put Campbell, Milpitas and San Jose at a 10% sales tax rate or higher.

The opposition, which was led by former Saratoga Councilmember Rishi Kumar, has also decried the county's decision to make it a general sales tax — the revenue raised isn't restricted to any one use so the county could use it on other priorities instead of health care.

Kumar said in a statement Tuesday night that "the people have spoken, and I hope the county will spend the money judiciously."

Santa Clara County officials said that they were on track to have 50 to 60% voter turnout, which Registrar of Voters Matt Moreles said is "high for a special election and may even exceed some regularly-scheduled statewide elections."

Political observers previously predicted that the county's local special election could see turnout boosted by Proposition 50 — California's partisan redistricting measure — at the top of the ticket. The Gov. Gavin Newsom-backed initiative quickly sailed to victory after initial returns.

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