

Rio Grande

GUARDIAN

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TIC: PROPOSITIONS 6, 7, AND 8: INVESTING IN WATER, ELECTRICITY AND BROADBAND FOR TEXAS' FUTURE

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A guest column penned jointly by Justin Yancy, Tony Bennett, and Walt Baum. The three are members of the Texas Infrastructure Coalition.

Texas is the fastest growing state in the nation, with a 43 percent increase in population since 2000. And our population is projected to increase 70 percent in the next 50 years. Today, no less than 30 million Texans are raising families and running businesses, building the ninth largest economy in the world. Critical infrastructure is essential to maintain continued growth and economic global dominance for the Lone Star State. This Election Day, voters have an opportunity to vote yes on Propositions 6, 7, and 8, which, if passed, will increase our water supply, strengthen our electric grid, and expand broadband access—all of which are vital to ensure a bright and strong future for a growing Texas.

Propositions 6, 7, and 8 will not burden taxpayers in any way as they will be funded by the state's \$32 billion budget surplus made possible by our strong economy. A vote for these propositions is a vote to continue investing in our economic future.

Proposition 6 would support the creation of the Texas Water Fund to develop new water supplies to meet the needs of our growing population. Currently, our existing water supply will not be adequate to support the new population, especially during an extended drought. The Fund would help repair and replace leaky pipes, which is important considering that Texas' water lines leak an average of 572,000 acre-feet of water per year—equal to the annual water use of Austin, Fort Worth, El Paso, Laredo and Lubbock. The Fund will also help expand water and wastewater infrastructure in local communities and support conservation efforts and awareness programs.

Like water, reliable, affordable electricity is essential for all Texans. Proposition 7 will create a Texas Energy Fund that will expand electricity infrastructure, increase our supply of electricity, and modernize electric generation facilities to be more resilient, no matter the weather. In addition to bolstering reliability, increasing the supply of generation will help keep prices in check for all consumers by reducing the frequency of expensive power shortage events.

Finally, Proposition 8 will authorize the creation of a Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund to expand access to high-speed internet in Texas and enhance public safety through next-generation 9-1-1 services. Expanding connectivity must be a priority because two million Texas homes do not have access to broadband today. Expanded broadband access will help continue to grow our economy, close the digital divide for millions of Texas students, expand telemedicine services in areas that face healthcare shortages, and equip first responders with state-of-the-art technology to keep themselves and our communities safe.

Texas families, students, businesses, and our communities at large will need expanded water, electricity, and broadband infrastructure as more and more people call Texas home. We have a historic opportunity on Election Day to invest in our future through Propositions 6, 7 and 8 and solidify Texas as the best place to live, work, play and raise a family. We ask Texans to join us and vote yes on Props 6, 7 and 8.

Editor's Note: The above guest column was penned jointly by three members of the Texas Infrastructure Coalition (TIA). Namely, Justin Yancy, president of the Texas Business Leadership Council, Tony Bennett, president and CEO of the Texas Association of Manufacturers, and Walt Baum, president of the Texas Cable Association.