Opinion: Time to talk about Prop. 13

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No single politician is going to change Proposition 13, the iconic 1978 initiative that slashed property taxes, anytime soon.

It's easy to understand why. A Field Poll last September showed that 34 years after its passage, voters by a ratio of more than 2-to-1, 63 percent to 29 percent, support Proposition 13. However, support narrows when the question is limited to altering commercial property taxes.

Starting today, a handful of political leaders and advocates are reopening a conversation about aspects of the system of assessing property taxes on businesses. That's an important step.

This coming November, Gov. Jerry Brown will ask Californians to approve a ballot measure to raise income and sales taxes by about $5 billion a year for five years. That initiative would help the state close the budget deficit.

But to fix California's system of financing government, thoughtful people must devise a fair restructuring of the state and local tax system. Proposition 13 ought to be part of that discussion.

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