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Voters know it's about the Cards

Promises of 200 new soccer fields aside, can there be any doubt about precisely what voters will be thinking when it comes time to cast a ballot for Proposition 302?

Are we to believe, as the television and radio commercials would persuade, that this measure and its tax hike on tourism activities is about making sure our children have a place to play? Sure, we can believe it, if they're talking about the overgrown, rich and spoiled variety who run around on Sunday afternoons in the fall.

All along, the campaign for Proposition 302 has been presented as a tax that not only will finance a new NFL-quality stadium for the Arizona Cardinals, but also new sports fields for kids, tourism promotion, Cactus League baseball efforts and guarantee Fiesta Bowl viability.

Make no mistake, the money would address all of these. Clearly, the campaign has been designed to emphasize those "other" reasons for skeptical voters to vote aye.

But now Tuesday looms, and most voters are finally focusing seriously on this and a host of other ballot measures. They will have to cut to the chase.

And that means one thing and one thing alone for Proposition 302: Do we want to tax Maricopa County tourists to build a stadium for the Cardinals, even though we don't know for sure where it will be built, or how much it actually will trigger other economic benefits?

On Friday, Cardinals' vice president Michael Bidwill, the team's front man on the topic, was interviewed on a local sports talk radio show espousing the benefits of the proposal beyond just a new stadium. But even Bidwill could not help but remind listeners to look beyond the team's recent dismal play and current record.

In recent days, the Cardinals also have been running local television commercials that do something once unthinkable amid a campaign such as this: They show team owner Bill Bidwill himself. Of course, those commercials don't talk about the stadium but rather the team's charitable efforts.

So what is the wavering voter to think walking into the ballot box Tuesday? Let's assume you will consider it a stadium vote first and foremost. Here are questions worth considering before filling in the ballot:

■ Do I really care if we are taxing tourists rather than myself or my neighbors for this?

■ Should money raised this way be used for other things? Or, is this an acceptable solution given the fact that health care proposals will benefit from the tobacco tax windfall and Proposition 302 requires school funding to be addressed before money can go for a stadium?

■ Why did every big city that has lost an NFL team in the past 20 years — Baltimore, St. Louis, Houston, Los Angeles, Oakland, Cleveland — fight like crazy to get a team back at a far greater cost? Did these places find out the hard way something was lost to the community beyond an actual game? Can it be the benefits — be they cultural or economic — hit home once they realized what was lost? Could that happen here?

■ What about those "other" things in Proposition 302? Aren't tourism promotion, Cactus League visitors and Fiesta Bowl fans things that help keep our local economy humming?

■ Finally, are soccer fields for kids a bad thing?