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Wall Street Muni-Bond Bankers Need Work. Voters Gave Them Plenty.

- **They approved at least $31.5 billion in new bonds Tuesday**
- **$76.3 billion in bond referendums on ballots most since 2006**

American voters gave plenty of work to Wall Street underwriters desperate for it.

Of the almost five dozen state and local bond measures asking for at least $200 million or more, voters Tuesday approved $31.5 billion, data from market research company Ipreo by IHS Markit shows. That's about 61 percent.

In all there were more than 690 bond measures across the U.S. ranging from as large as $8.8 billion to as small as $250,000, and a tally of how much of that was approved is still pending. Bond referendums that passed include $4 billion for affordable housing programs and veterans loans in California, $3.5 billion of school improvements in San Diego and $800 million in hospital improvements bonds in Tarrant County, Texas.

"A fair number of bond proposals were approved, that's good for supply," said Joseph Rosenblum, director of municipal credit research at AllianceBernstein.

The bond approvals come after the pace of new debt issues slowed this year, in part because of a surge late last year before the federal tax overhaul pulled the tax-exemption for bonds sold for a key type of refinancing. The support at the ballot box is unlikely to herald an immediate increase in debt issues, however, because the securities are often sold years after they're approved by voters.

Eight bond measures each asking for more than $200 million or more failed. Voters in California rejected an $8.9 billion proposal for water infrastructure and conservation and Colorado voters struck down two competing transportation bonds referendums totaling about $9.5 billion.

The nationwide election brought about $76.3 billion of bond referendums from California to Maine, the most in an election since 2006, according to Ipreo.

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