

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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STEM CELL BONDS INITIATIVE LEADING BY A NARROW MARGIN.

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

One of the more controversial ballot propositions that California voters will be asked to decide on next month is Proposition 71, a \$3 billion statewide bond initiative to fund stem cell research. In its latest survey, *The Field Poll* finds the measure leading by a narrow 46% to 39% margin, up marginally from a three point lead found in August.

Half (50%) of likely voters in the current survey say they have seen or heard something about the initiative prior to being read its official ballot description. This represents an increase from August, when 40% were aware of the bond measure. In addition, over one in five voters (22%) now report having seen or heard television or radio advertising about the initiative.

When those supporting Prop. 71 are asked why they intend to vote yes, two types of comments predominate – “we need more medical research/ believe in medical advances,” cited by 56% of yes voters and “to find cures for diseases/ to help treat people and save lives,” cited by 40%.

By contrast, a broader range of comments is cited by opponents of Prop. 71 when they are asked to volunteer their reasons for voting no, although none is cited by more than one in four. They include: “oppose retrieving stem cells from aborted fetuses/am pro-life, anti-abortion” (26%), “it’s too expensive, creates too much debt” (20%), “oppose using public, tax money for this/let private industry pay for this” (13%), “it moves us closer to cloning humans/oppose human cloning” (13%), and “it’s immoral, unethical/scientists shouldn’t be playing God” (10%).

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* of likely voters about Prop. 71 in the upcoming November election.

Voter preferences

The survey finds that California voters now support Prop. 71 by seven points, 46% to 39%, while 15% are undecided. This is up marginally from a three-point lead in August, when voters were dividing 45% yes and 42% no.

The 50% of voters who report having seen or heard of the initiative are much more likely than those previously unaware of Prop. 71 to be supporting it. Among voters who had some awareness of Prop. 71 prior to the survey, supporters outnumber opponents of it by a 58% to 34% margin. On the other hand, the 50% of voters who were unaware of Prop. 71 prior to being read its official ballot summary oppose it 45% to 34%.

Lining up in support of the initiative are large proportions of Democrats, liberals moderates, supporters of John Kerry and voters with a post-graduate degree. On the other hand, majorities of Republicans, backers of George W. Bush, conservatives and voters who identify themselves as born-again Christians are on the no side.

The table following reports how likely voters divide after being read a summary of the official ballot description that voters will see when they go to the polls to vote.

Table 1
Voter preferences regarding Proposition 71, the
Stem Cell Research, Funding, Bonds initiative
(among likely voters)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Total Statewide – Late September	46%	39	15
– August	45%	42	13
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	57%	27	16
Republicans	32%	55	13
Non-partisans/others	46%	38	16
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	24%	60	16
Middle-of-the-road	57%	30	13
Liberal	54%	28	18
<u>Education</u>			
High school or less	43%	47	10
Some college/trade school	46%	36	18
College graduate	43%	43	14
Post graduate	53%	33	14
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant	40%	43	17
“Born Again” Christian	31%	57	12
Catholic	49%	43	8
Other religions	53%	36	11
No religious preference	52%	30	18
<u>Presidential preference</u>			
Kerry voter	60%	23	17
Bush voter	32%	58	10
<u>Prior awareness of Prop. 71</u>			
Aware	58%	34	8
Not aware	34%	45	21

Note: subgroup percentages are from the September survey.

Reasons “Yes” voters give for supporting Prop. 71

Those intending to vote yes on Prop. 71 were asked to state in their own words the reasons for supporting the initiative. Their answers were recorded verbatim and later coded into general categories of response. Two types of comments are offered much more frequently than all others by yes voters. They include: “we need more medical research/ believe in medical advances,” cited by 56% and “to find cures for diseases/ to help treat people and save lives,” cited by 40%.

Table 2
What are some of the reasons why you intend to vote Yes to approve Prop. 71?
(among likely voters intending to vote Yes)

We need more medical research/believe in medical advances	56%
To find cures for diseases/to help treat people and save lives	40
Will benefit all mankind/improve the human condition	6
Will help a family member, others I know who are afflicted	6
Will make California a leader in bio-technology, medical research, will benefit the state’s economy	6
Oppose the federal government limiting, interfering in scientific research/should not be tied up in politics, religion	6
If federal government refuses to fund this, the state should	1
Other mentions	5
Don’t know / no answer	3

Note: This question was not asked in August. Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions

Voters intending to vote No on Prop. 71 were also asked why they opposed the initiative. They offer a wider array of reasons, although no one answer predominates. These include: “oppose retrieving stem cells from aborted fetuses/am pro-life, anti-abortion” (26%), “it’s too expensive, creates too much debt” (20%), “oppose using public, tax money for this/let private industry pay for this” (13%), “it moves us closer to cloning humans/oppose human cloning” (13%), and “it’s immoral, unethical/scientists shouldn’t be playing God” (10%).

Table 3
What are some of the reasons why you intend to vote No to oppose Prop. 71?
(among likely voters intending to vote No)

Oppose retrieving stem cells from aborted fetuses/am pro-life/ anti-abortion	26%
It's too expensive/state can't afford it/creates too much debt/ oppose new bonds	20
Oppose using public, tax money for this/let private industry pay for this	13
It moves us closer to cloning humans/oppose human cloning	13
It's immoral, unethical/scientists shouldn't be playing God/ violates God's law	10
Its benefits are overblown, exaggerated	6
The federal government should be paying for it, not California	4
Creates more government, bureaucracy/government is wasteful, inefficient	2
It's poorly written/too vague/not enough safeguards	2
Other mentions	11
Don't know / no answer	9

Note: This question was not asked in August. Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions

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Prop. 71 is one of five health-related propositions that California voters will see on the upcoming November election ballot. The others include Prop. 61, the Children's Hospital Bond, Prop. 62 relating to mental health services, Prop 67 on emergency medical services, and Prop. 72, the Health Care Coverage Requirements Referendum. Throughout the 2004 election cycle The Field Poll is expanding its coverage of these statewide ballot propositions as part of the California HealthCare Foundation's HealthVote2004 project, aimed at providing voters with facts and non-partisan analysis about each of the health-related ballot measures facing California voters in this election. More information can be found at www.healthvote2004.org.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The results in this report are based on a random sample of 549 Californians considered likely to vote in the November election. Interviews were conducted by telephone between the period September 24-29, 2004 in English and Spanish.

Sampling was carried out using a random digit dial methodology, which gives all voters including those whose phone number is listed or unlisted, an equal chance of being contacted. Up to four attempts were made to reach a randomly selected voter at each household contacted. After the completion of interviewing, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the state's total registered voter population.

According to statistical theory, the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 4.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. There are other possible sources of error in any survey in addition to sampling variability. Different results could occur because of difference in question wording, sequencing or through omissions or errors in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Have you seen, read or heard anything about Proposition 71, which would authorize bonds to fund stem cell research?

Proposition 71 is the "Stem Cell Research, Funding, Bonds" initiative. It establishes a "California Institute for Regenerative Medicine" to regulate and fund stem cell research and establishes a constitutional right to conduct such research and an oversight committee. It prohibits funding of human reproductive cloning research. Fiscal impact: State costs of about 6 billion dollars over 30 years to pay off both the principal and interest on the bonds. State payments averaging 200 million dollars per year. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 71?

IF YES: What are some of the reasons why you intend to vote YES to approve Prop. 71? Any other reasons?

IF NO: What are some of the reasons why you intend to vote NO to reject Prop. 71? Any other reasons?

Have you seen or heard any television or radio ads having to do with Prop. 71, the "Stem Cell Research, Funding, Bonds" initiative?