

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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VOTERS NARROWLY FAVORING PROP. 4, THE PARENTAL NOTIFICATION OF ABORTION BY MINORS INITIATIVE.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Proposition 4, the initiative to require parental notification for abortion by minors, is holding a slim lead in the latest *Field Poll*. The poll finds that 49% of likely voters intend to vote Yes, while 41% are on the No side. Another 10% are undecided.

This eight-point Yes-side edge compares to a nine-point advantage (48% to 39%) observed by the poll in July.

Prop. 4 is the third attempt in the past four years by backers to pass a parental notification initiative. In each of the two previous attempts – Proposition 73 in the November 2005 special election and Proposition 85 in the November 2006 general election – California voters narrowly rejected these previous parental notification initiatives.

Table 1
Trend of voter preferences regarding Proposition. 4,
to require parental notification for abortion by minors
(among likely voters)

	September	July
Intend to vote...		
Yes	49%	48%
No	41	39
Undecided	10	13

The current findings come from a statewide survey of 830 likely voters completed September 5-14 by *The Field Poll*. The California Wellness Foundation provided additional grant funding to the poll to enable a more detailed examination of voter opinions about the initiative. Findings from these additional questions follow.

Reasons voters give for supporting Prop. 4

Voters in this survey were asked to state in their own words why they either favored or opposed Prop. 4. Answers were recorded verbatim during the interview and later coded into general categories of response.

One answer dominates among those intending to vote Yes. This relates to the idea that “parents need to be involved” or “have a right to know” when their child is seeking an abortion. Statewide, 75% of Yes side supporters offer this as a reason for backing of the initiative.

Other answers offered by significant proportions of voters favoring Prop. 4 include these: “to preserve the baby’s life” or “decisions to end life should not be made by a minor,” cited by 18%, and “pregnant teens need advice” and are “not always able to make the right decision,” offered by 10%

Table 2a

**Volunteered reasons given by Yes voters for intending to vote Yes on Prop. 4
(among likely voters intending to vote Yes)**

Parents need to be involved / have a right to know	75%
To preserve the baby's life / decisions to end life should not be made by a minor	18
Pregnant teens need advice / not always able to make right decision	10
Pregnancy and abortion can put teen's life in danger	5
Abortion decision shouldn't be rushed / gives teens options	2
Other mentions (less than 1% each)	3
No answer	3

Note: Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions.

Reasons for opposing Prop. 4

Two reasons are offered by large proportions of voters on the No side for opposing Prop. 4. Most frequently mentioned is the view that abortion is “a woman’s personal decision” and a woman should “have control over her own body” (44%). Another 25% volunteer that “notifying a parent can be risky” or “could lead some teens to do something rash.”

One in seven voters also say they oppose Prop. 4 (14%) because “government should be involved” or that “this shouldn’t be in the state constitution.”

Table 2b
Volunteered reasons given by No voters for intending to vote No on Prop. 4
(among likely voters intending to vote No)

It's a woman's personal decision / right to have control over her own body	44%
Notifying a parent can be risky / could lead some teens to do something rash	25
Government shouldn't be involved / this shouldn't be in the state constitution	14
Everyone has a right to a safe, legal abortion / am pro-choice and oppose a waiting period	5
Voters have already decided this before	2
Oppose the religious right imposing their views on others	1
Oppose spending any government money for this	1
Other mentions (less than 1% each)	9
No answer	8

Note: Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions.

Large, wide-ranging differences in preferences across voter subgroups

There is considerable variation in preferences across subgroups of the voting population on this initiative. Because of this, the shape of voter turnout on Election Day will have a greater than usual impact in determining the outcome of the election. Below is a listing of some of the most significant subgroup differences.

1. Party and political ideology

While Democrats and non-partisans are opposing Prop. 4 by eleven points and seventeen points respectively, Republicans are voting Yes nearly three to one.

There is overwhelming support for Prop. 4 among voters identifying themselves as conservative in politics, while liberals are opposed nearly three to one. The large segment of voters who identify themselves as middle-of-the-road in politics are about evenly divided.

2. Regional differences

On a regional basis most of Prop. 4's current Yes side advantage is the result of strong backing from voters living in California's inland counties, who favor the initiative by twenty-one points (56% to 35%). By contrast, opinions are very closely divided among voters living in counties on the coast or touching the San Francisco Bay, with 46% voting Yes and 43% on the No side.

Voters living in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area currently oppose Prop. 4 by nine points (49% to 40%). Voters in Los Angeles County are also on the No side, but by a narrower four-point margin (47% to 43%). This contrasts with the preferences of voters in the Central Valley and those in Southern California outside of Los Angeles, who are favoring Prop. 4 by nineteen and twenty-three points, respectively.

3. Gender

Men are much more inclined than women to support requiring minors to obtain parental notification before abortion. Men currently favor Prop. 4 by sixteen points (54% to 38%), while women are about evenly divided 44% Yes to 43% No.

Gender differences are magnified when examined within party. For example, both Democratic and non-partisan men are narrowly opposing Prop. 4, while Republican men are supporting backing it by fifty points (74% to 24%). Similarly, whereas both Democratic and non-partisan women are heavily on the No side, Republican women are voting Yes three to one (63% to 23%).

4. Religion

Large majorities of both Protestants and Catholics are endorsing Prop. 4, with Protestants favoring it by twenty-five points (58% to 33%) and Catholics voting Yes by an even larger 63% to 26% margin. By contrast, voters affiliated with other religions are opposed 46% to 41%. In addition, voters who have no religious preference are lining up nearly five to one on the No side (15% Yes vs. 73% No).

The approximately one in five voters who identify as evangelical Christians are heavily on the Yes side, with 68% voting Yes and 25% voting No. By contrast, voters who do not consider themselves evangelical Christians are narrowly on the No side, 46% to 43%.

5. Age and marital status

Middle age and older voters are more supportive of the initiative than voters under age 40. For example, seniors age 65 or older are on the Yes side by sixteen points (52% to 36%). There is also slightly greater support than opposition among voters age 50-64 and voters 40-49. By contrast, younger voters are more divided in their views about the initiative, with 18-29 year olds opposing it by one point and those age 30-39 backing it by two points.

There are big differences between married and single voters. Those who are married or living together currently support Prop. 4 52% to 38%. On the other hand, voters who have never married are opposing the initiative 49% to 39%. Voters who are separated or divorced are evenly divided.

6. Race/ethnicity and education

There are also significant differences in voting preferences by a voter's race/ethnicity. White non-Hispanics, who comprise about seven in ten likely voters, are divided, with 47% in favor and 43% opposed. By contrast, Latinos are supporting Prop. 4 by a large 62% to 31% margin. The relatively small segment of Asian voters are also voting Yes 48% to 32%. By contrast, the poll finds that black/African-American voters are opposing Prop. 4 52% to 32%.

Voters with fewer years of formal education are much more supportive of Prop. 4 than voters with higher levels of education. Voters with no more than a high school education are backing Prop. 4 by twenty points (54% to 34%), as are voters who have attended some college or trade school, who are favoring it 58% to 32%. College graduates who have not attended graduate school are backing the initiative but by a narrower seven-point margin (50% to 43%). By contrast, voters who have completed post-graduate work are heavily on the No side, opposing Prop. 4 by twenty-one points (55% to 34%).

Table 3
Preferences regarding Proposition 4, to require parental notification for
abortion by minors across subgroups of the voting population
(among likely voters)

	Yes	No	Undecided
Total statewide	49%	41	10
<u>Party</u>			
(.44) Democrats	39%	50	11
(.36) Republicans	69%	24	7
(.20) Non-partisans/others	35%	52	13
<u>Political ideology</u>			
(.22) Strongly conservative	80%	12	8
(.09) Moderately conservative*	71%	26	3
(.40) Middle-of-the-road	45%	43	12
(.11) Moderately liberal*	20%	60	20
(.18) Strongly liberal	25%	66	9
<u>Region</u>			
(.24) Los Angeles County	43%	47	10
(.33) Other Southern California	56%	33	11
(.17) Central Valley	56%	37	7
(.21) San Francisco Bay Area	40%	49	11
(.05) Other Northern California*	44%	38	18
<u>Area</u>			
(.70) Coastal counties	46%	43	11
(.30) Inland counties	56%	35	9
<u>Gender</u>			
(.47) Men	54%	38	8
(.19) Democratic men	43%	46	11
(.18) Republican men	74%	24	2
(.10) Non-partisan/other men*	38%	48	14
(.53) Women	44%	43	13
(.24) Democratic women	36%	53	11
(.18) Republican women	63%	23	14
(.11) Non-partisan/other women*	31%	56	13

* Small sample size.

Table 3 (cont'd)
**Preferences regarding Proposition 4, to require parental notification for
 abortion by minors across subgroups of the voting population
 (among likely voters)**

	Yes	No	Undecided
Total statewide	49%	41	10
<u>Religion</u>			
(.39) Protestant	58%	33	9
(.25) Catholic	63%	26	11
(.19) Other religion	41%	46	13
(.17) No preference	15%	73	12
<u>Evangelical Christian</u>			
(.21) Yes	68%	25	7
(.79) No	43%	46	11
<u>Age</u>			
(.15) 18 – 29	44%	45	11
(.15) 30 – 39	45%	43	12
(.20) 40 – 49	50%	38	12
(.31) 50 – 64	49%	42	9
(.19) 65 or older	52%	36	12
<u>Marital status</u>			
(.69) Married/live together	52%	38	10
(.14) Separated/divorced	46%	46	8
(.17) Never married	39%	49	12
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
(.71) White non-Hispanic	47%	43	10
(.17) Latino	62%	31	7
(.06) Black/African-American*	32%	52	16
(.06) Asian/other*	48%	32	20
<u>Education</u>			
(.16) High school grad or less	54%	34	12
(.31) Some college/trade school	58%	32	10
(.27) College graduate	50%	43	7
(.26) Post-graduate work	34%	55	11

* Small sample size.

Voter preferences largely unaffected by arguments made by Prop. 4 supporters and opponents

Voters in this survey were also read arguments that have been made by both supporters and opponents about the initiative and asked whether each made them more or less likely to vote for Prop. 4 or had no effect on them. The results indicate that large majorities of voters say that each of the arguments has no effect on their voting decision.

For example, between 68% and 83% of voters say that each of the four Yes side arguments has no effect on their voting decision. A listing of the arguments is shown below. Among the minority of voters who are influenced to some extent by these arguments, larger proportions indicate that each argument makes them more rather than less likely to vote for Prop. 4.

Table 4a	
Voter reactions to arguments made by SUPPORTERS of Prop. 4 (among likely voters)	
	<u>Total likely voters</u>
<hr/> Supporters are referring to Prop. 4 as "Sarah's Law" after a young woman who died of complications from an abortion and imply that Sarah's life would have been saved had Prop. 4 been in effect <hr/>	
More likely to vote for Prop. 4	25%
No effect	69
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	6
<hr/> Supporters say that passage of this initiative will change teen behavior and lead to fewer teen pregnancies <hr/>	
More likely to vote for Prop. 4	23%
No effect	68
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	9
<hr/> Supporters say that by arranging abortions for pregnant teens without parental notification, Planned Parenthood doesn't always reveal cases in which teens might be the victims of abuse by adults <hr/>	
More likely to vote for Prop. 4	20%
No effect	69
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	11
<hr/> Proposition 4 is supported by Barbara Alby, the author of California's "Megan's Law" child protection legislation, Joseph Zanga, past President of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Tony Rachauckas, Orange County District Attorney <hr/>	
More likely to vote for Prop. 4	11%
No effect	83
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	6

Note: "No effect" percentages also include those with no opinion.

Similarly, between 62% and 82% of voters say that each of the five arguments put forward by opponents of Prop. 4 has no effect on how they intend to vote. Among the relatively small proportions who report being influenced by the arguments voters give mixed responses, with some making more voters less likely to back Prop. 4 and others not.

Table 4b
Voter reactions to arguments made by OPPONENTS of Prop. 4
(among likely voters)

	Total likely voters
<hr/>	
Opponents say that the tragic death of the person referred to as Sarah would not have been prevented had Prop. 4 been in effect because she was married and would not have been required to notify a parent of her abortion, was not a California resident and was not even named Sarah	
<hr/>	
More likely to vote for Prop. 4	6%
No effect	82
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	12
Opponents say that mandatory parental notification laws put teens in real danger because scared, pregnant teens who feel they can't go to their parents do things that can risk serious injury and sometimes death	
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More likely to vote for Prop. 4	18%
No effect	62
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	20
Proposition 4 is opposed by many major professional organizations, like the California Medical Association, the California Teachers Association, California Association of Family Physicians and the American Academy of Pediatrics	
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More likely to vote for Prop. 4	21%
No effect	64
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	15
California voters defeated two prior parental notification initiatives in previous elections	
<hr/>	
More likely to vote for Prop. 4	16%
No effect	72
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	12
Opponents say that Planned Parenthood provides counsel to pregnant teens about all options available to them, including adoption, continuing their pregnancy, as well as abortion	
<hr/>	
More likely to vote for Prop. 4	22%
No effect	69
Less likely to vote for Prop. 4	9

Note: "No effect" percentages also include those with no opinion.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 830 likely voters in California. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period September 5-14, 2008 by *The Field Poll*. The California Wellness Foundation provided additional grant funding to the poll to enable a more detailed examination of voter opinions of the initiative. Up to six attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted slightly to Field Poll estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depends on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of 830 likely voters is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (percentages around 10% or around 90%) have a smaller margin of error. While there are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error, the overall design and execution of the survey minimized the potential for these other sources of error. The maximum sampling error will be larger for analyses based on subgroups of the overall sample.

Questions Asked

Have you seen, read or heard anything about Proposition 4, an initiative having to do with parental notification of abortion by teenagers that will appear on the November statewide election ballot?

(As you know) Proposition 4 is the "Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of Minor's Pregnancy" initiative. It changes the California Constitution prohibiting abortion for minors under the age of 18 until 48 hours after a physician notifies the minor's parent, legal guardian, or in limited cases, substitute adult relative. It provides an exception for a medical emergency or parental waiver. Fiscal impact: Unknown net state costs of several million dollars annually for health and social services programs and administration. If the election were being held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 4, the Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of Minor's Pregnancy initiative?

(IF YES) What are some of the reasons why you intend to vote yes on Proposition 4? Any other reasons?

(IF NO) What are some of the reasons why you intend to vote no on Proposition 4? Any other reasons?

I am going to read some statements that have been made by proponents and opponents of Proposition 4, the parental notification initiative. For each statement, please tell me if it makes you more likely or less likely to vote for the initiative or have no effect on how you will vote. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER) Does this make you more likely or less likely to vote for Proposition 4 or does it have no effect on how you will vote? (SEE RELEASE FOR STATEMENTS READ)

California voters were asked to vote on two very similar initiatives having to do with attempts to establish laws to require parental notification of abortion by teenagers, once in November 2005 and again in November 2006. In both previous elections California voters defeated the parental notification initiatives. Does the fact that California voters have twice defeated similar initiatives make you more likely or less likely to vote for Prop. 4, or does it have no effect on how you will vote?

About The California Wellness Foundation

The California Wellness Foundation is an independent, private foundation created in 1992, with a mission to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education and disease prevention. The Foundation prioritizes eight issues for funding: diversity in the health professions, environmental health, healthy aging, mental health, teenage pregnancy prevention, violence prevention, women's health, and work and health. It also responds to timely issues or special projects outside these funding priorities. For more information, visit the Foundation's website, www.tcwff.org.