

THE FIELD POLL

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

Field Research Corporation

601 California Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94108-2814
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541
EMAIL: fieldpoll@field.com
www.field.com/fieldpollonline

FOR ADVANCE PUBLICATION BY SUBSCRIBERS ONLY.

COPYRIGHT 2009 BY FIELD RESEARCH CORPORATION.

Release #2297

Release Date and Time: **6:00 a.m., Tuesday, March 3, 2009**

**VOTERS DISSATISFIED WITH STATE BUDGET,
BUT ARE INITIALLY BACKING SIX BUDGET-
RELATED MEASURES ON THE MAY BALLOT.
GREATER THAN SEVEN IN TEN THINK STATE
IS ON WRONG TRACK AND DISAPPROVE OF
STATE LEGISLATURE. GOVERNOR'S RATINGS
NEAR HIS PERSONAL LOW.**

IMPORTANT: Contract for this service is subject to revocation if publication or broadcast takes place before release date or if contents are divulged to persons outside of subscriber staff prior to release time. (ISSN 0195-4520)

By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

After months of debate and partisan wrangling, the state legislature and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger last month agreed to a deal to close a state budget deficit in excess of \$40 billion. However, a *Field Poll* taken after the agreement was reached finds considerable voter dissatisfaction with the budget.

A 55% to 39% majority of California registered voters report being dissatisfied with the budget, and among voters considered most likely to vote in the May 19 special election dissatisfaction is even greater (65% dissatisfied vs. 32% satisfied).

While voters may not like the budget itself, they are offering their initial support for each of six ballot measures worked out in the budget negotiations that will be put before them in the May special election. The measures will appear as Propositions 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E and 1F on the May 19 ballot.

The poll finds voters are initially backing each of the six propositions by varying margins, but with relatively large proportions undecided. Support is strongest for Prop. F, the Elected Officials Salary measure, which holds an early sixty-three point advantage among early voters, and is weakest for Prop. C, the Lottery Modernization Act, which leads by just eight points. Initial likely voter support for most of the other ballot measures is greater than two to one.

However, voters are in a particularly pessimistic frame of mind as the campaign for the budget-related propositions begins. Greater than seven in ten (73%) think the state is seriously off on the wrong track, and nearly as many (72%) express their disapproval of the performance of the state legislature. Arnold Schwarzenegger also does not escape the voters' scorn, with 54% disapproving and 38% approving of his overall performance, close to the lowest rating he has received during his tenure as Governor.

These are the findings of the latest *Field Poll* completed February 20-March 1 among a random sample of 761 registered voters statewide.

Voter dissatisfaction with the state budget

Most voters are dissatisfied with the state budget recently passed by the legislature and signed into law by the governor. Among all registered voters 55% are dissatisfied, while 39% are satisfied. Disapproval is greater among those considered most likely to vote in the May 19 special election. Among these voters dissatisfaction with the budget is two to one (65% to 32%).

Dissatisfaction is greatest among Republicans (64%), although about half of registered Democrats (50%) and non-partisans (51%) are also dissatisfied.

Table 1			
How satisfied voters are with the state budget recently passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor			
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No opinion
Total registered voters	39%	55	6
Likely voters in May special election	32%	65	3
<u>Party registration (among registered voters)</u>			
Democrats	46%	50	4
Republicans	28%	64	8
Non-partisans/others	43%	51	6

Voters initially backing the budget-related ballot propositions, but levels of support vary

Survey respondents were read a summary of the official ballot descriptions of each of the six budget-related ballot propositions that voters will see when voting in the May 19 special election. The *Poll* finds that voters are initially backing each proposition by varying margins, but that relatively larger proportions are undecided.

Voters show their greatest support for Proposition 1F, the measure which calls for preventing legislative and statewide constitutional officers from receiving pay raises when the state is running a budget deficit. Likely voters are initially backing it by a huge 77% to 14% margin.

Voter support is weakest with regard to Proposition 1C, which calls for the modernization of the state lottery and the use of future lottery revenues to address the current budget situation. Likely voters are initially supportive, but by a relatively narrow eight-point margin (47% Yes to 39% No).

Majorities of likely voters are initially backing Prop. 1A, the Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund, which would place a spending cap on future state budgets, and Prop. 1B, the Education Funding ballot measure, which provides supplemental funding to local schools and community colleges to

counteract recent cuts to their budgets. Both hold comfortable leads in the early going. Among likely voters Prop. 1A is backed 57% to 21%, while Prop 1B is supported 53% to 30%.

Two other measures, Propositions 1D and 1E, call for amending previous voter-approved ballot initiatives – the cigarette tax for early childhood development programs approved by voters in 1998, and the income tax surcharge on millionaires for mental health services passed in 2004. Both measures are initially supported by greater than two-to-one margins by likely voters in the early going.

Table 2
Voter preferences regarding Propositions 1A – 1F on the May 5
special election ballot, after being read summaries of the
official description voters will see on the ballot

	<u>Intend to vote...</u>		
	Yes	No	Undecided
Prop. 1A (Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund)			
Registered voters	54%	24	22
Likely voters in May special election	57%	21	22
Prop. 1B (Education Funding)			
Registered voters	59%	27	14
Likely voters in May special election	53%	30	17
Prop. 1C (Lottery Modernization)			
Registered voters	48%	37	15
Likely voters in May special election	47%	39	14
Prop. 1D (Children's Services Funding)			
Registered voters	62%	20	18
Likely voters in May special election	54%	24	22
Prop. 1E (Mental Health Funding)			
Registered voters	61%	23	16
Likely voters in May special election	57%	23	20
Prop. 1F (Elected Officials' Salaries)			
Registered voters	74%	17	9
Likely voters in May special election	77%	13	10

Many Prop. 1A supporters are less inclined to do so when told of its tax extension provisions

One of the provisions which lawmakers attached to Prop. 1A, the Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund, was a stipulation that should it pass the timelines of the state's recently approved increases to the sales tax, the vehicle registration fee and the income tax would be extended by up to two years.

In the current survey likely voters who said they were backing Prop. 1A were asked what effect this information would have on their voting preferences. Of the 57% of likely voters initially supporting the measure 23% say knowledge of the tax extension makes them more inclined to vote No.

Bi-partisan voter support for an open primary

Another ballot proposition emerging from the budget negotiations calls for changing California's primary election system to an open primary. Unlike the budget-related propositions, this measure will go before voters in the June 2010 primary election rather than the May special election.

Voters are initially supporting this proposal by a greater than two to one margin (58% to 27%), with majorities of Democrats (56%), Republicans (55%) and especially non-partisans (65%) in favor.

If approved, this constitutional amendment would be the second time the state's voters will have passed an open primary law. In 1996 Californians approved a somewhat different version of the open primary, but it was challenged in court and subsequently ruled unconstitutional.

More recently another open primary initiative, Proposition 62, was put before voters in the November 2004 general election, but was rejected 54% to 46%.

Table 4			
Voter preferences regarding a ballot proposition to change California's primary election system to an open primary (among all registered voters)			
	Yes	No	Undecided
Total	58%	27	15
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	56%	26	18
Republicans	55%	30	15
Non-partisans/others	65%	25	10

California on the wrong track

Two years ago Californians were somewhat divided about whether the state was headed in the right direction or seriously off on the wrong track. But voter sentiment on this question swung heavily to the negative side in 2008, with about two-thirds saying the state was on the wrong track.

In the current survey voters are even more convinced that California is moving in the wrong direction. At present greater than seven in ten (73%) hold to this view, while just 18% feel it is heading in the right direction.

As dismal as this rating is, it is not a record low. That distinction belongs to a September 1992 *Field Poll* when nine in ten voters (90%) felt the state was on the wrong track.

Table 4
Overall direction that California is heading
(among registered voters)

	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
March 2009	18%	73	9
September 2008	22%	70	8
July 2008	21%	68	11
May 2008	23%	68	9
December 2007	43%	47	10
October 2007	42%	42	16
August 2007	42%	45	13
March 2007	52%	38	10
September 2006	49%	36	15
July 2006	47%	41	12
May 2006	32%	57	11
April 2006	28%	56	16
February 2006	31%	55	14
October 2005	30%	63	7
August 2005	30%	57	13
June 2005	28%	60	12
February 2005	35%	53	12
September 2004	46%	38	16
May 2004	37%	51	12
February 2004	35%	54	11
August 2003	16%	76	8
July 2003	18%	75	7
April 2003	26%	65	9
September 2002	33%	54	13
January 2002	41%	50	9
December 2001	45%	45	10
September 2001 (pre-9/11)	39%	54	7
January 2001	44%	50	6
2000 (average)	58%	35	7
1999 (average)	52%	34	14
1998 (average)	48%	42	10
1997 (average)	36%	54	10
1996 (average)	39%	49	12
1995 (average)	32%	57	11
1994 (average)	21%	70	9
1993 (average)	11%	83	6
1992 (average)	7%	90	3
1989 (average)	50%	42	8
1988 (average)	52%	43	5
<u>Party (March 2009)</u>			
Democrats	23%	70	7
Republicans	12%	77	11
Non-partisan/other*	18%	74	8

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 conducted among all California adults, not just registered adults.

* Small sample base.

Voter disapproval of state legislature remains at near record low levels

Greater than seven in ten voters (72%) disapprove and only 18% approve of the job that the state legislature is doing. This represents no significant improvement from the dismal appraisal voters had of the legislature at the beginning of the state's budget standoff in September. Thus, voter opinions of the legislature did not materially change following their passage of the state budget.

Disapproval spans voters of all parties.

Table 5			
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
March 2009	18%	72	10
September 2008	15%	73	12
July 2008	27%	57	16
May 2008	30%	57	13
December 2007	39%	42	19
October 2007	38%	40	22
August 2007	33%	51	16
March 2007	42%	40	18
September 2006	34%	46	20
May 2006	26%	51	23
April 2006	28%	56	16
February 2006	31%	48	21
2005 (average)	28%	55	17
2004 (average)	28%	53	19
2003 (average)	25%	59	16
2002 (average)	40%	40	20
2001 (average)	43%	37	20
2000 (average)	48%	25	27
1999 (average)	45%	28	27
1998 (average)	45%	33	22
1997 (average)	38%	40	22
1996 (average)	41%	49	10
1995 (average)	34%	59	7
1993 (average)	28%	64	8
1992 (average)	32%	64	4
1990 (average)	45%	48	7
1988 (average)	57%	36	7
1983 (average)	43%	49	8
Party (March 2009)			
Democrats	17%	72	11
Republicans	13%	79	8
Non-partisans/others*	26%	63	9

Note: For surveys conducted prior to 1996 conducted among all adults. In addition, response scales from these surveys were converted to the current two-point approve/disapprove scales.

** Small sample base.*

Schwarzenegger's job approval remains close to his personal low

Early in the tenure of Governor Schwarzenegger large majorities of voters approved of the job that he was doing. But during mid and late 2005 majorities took a much more negative view as the Governor sought to approve a series of ballot measures in a special election, all of which were ultimately rejected by voters. Schwarzenegger's approval ratings rebounded some in 2006, and even more following his re-election victory in November 2006.

However, as the extent of the state's current budget deficit situation became known last year, pluralities of voters again registered disapproval of Schwarzenegger. Today's finding, 54% disapproving and 38% approving, is similar to voter assessments of the Governor last September and is close to the lowest rating that voters have given Schwarzenegger in twenty-two separate *Field Poll* measures conducted during his tenure.

At present, majorities of both Democrats (57%) and Republicans (56%) disapprove of the Governor's performance.

Table 6 Trend of Arnold Schwarzenegger's overall job performance as Governor (among registered voters)			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
March 2009	38%	54	8
September 2008	38%	52	10
July 2008	40%	46	14
May 2008	41%	48	11
December 2007	60%	31	9
October 2007	56%	32	12
August 2007	57%	31	12
March 2007	60%	29	11
September 2006	48%	37	15
July 2006	49%	40	11
May 2006	41%	46	13
April 2006	39%	47	14
February 2006	40%	49	11
October 2005	37%	56	7
August 2005	36%	52	12
June 2005	37%	53	10
February 2005	55%	35	10
September 2004	65%	22	13
August 2004	65%	22	13
May 2004	65%	23	12
February 2004	56%	26	18
January 2004	52%	27	21
<u>Party (March 2009)</u>			
Democrats	33%	57	10
Republicans	39%	56	5
Non-partisans/others	46%	45	9

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 761 registered voters in California, including 343 considered likely to vote in the May 19 special election. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period February 20 and March 1, 2009. 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. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize voter fatigue, the overall voter sample was divided into two random subsamples on some of the questions.

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. The sample was stratified so as to yield interviews with approximately equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted to return this disproportionate sample allocation to the actual distribution of registered voters by party and by various other 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 registered voters is +/- 3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from the sample of likely voters has a maximum sampling error of +/- 5.4 percentage points. 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

Thinking about this state, do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as Governor of California?

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the California state legislature is doing its job? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

After months of negotiation, Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature finally approved a budget to deal with the state's 40 billion dollar budget deficit. How satisfied are you with the state budget that the legislature and Governor passed – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?

I am going to read the ballot propositions that will appear on the May special election ballot. For each, please tell me whether you would vote Yes or No if the election were being held today.

Proposition 1A is the Rainy Day' Budget Stabilization Fund Act. It reforms the budget process. Limits future deficits and overspending by increasing the size of the state 'rainy day' fund and requiring above-average revenues to be deposited into it, for use during economic downturns. If the election were being held today, would you vote Yes or No on Proposition 1A?

Proposition 1B is the Education Funding, Payment Plan Act. It requires supplemental payments to local school districts and community colleges to address recent budget cuts. If the election were being held today would you vote Yes or NO on Proposition 1B?

Proposition 1C is the Lottery Modernization Act. It allows the state lottery to be modernized to improve its performance with increased payouts, improved marketing and effective management. Increased lottery revenues will be used to address the current budget deficit and reduce the need for additional tax increases and cuts to state programs. If the election were being held today would you vote Yes or NO on Proposition 1C?

Proposition 1D is the Children's Services Funding Act. It temporarily provides greater flexibility in funding to preserve health and human services for young children while helping balance the state budget in a difficult economy. If the election were being held today, would you vote Yes or No on Proposition 1D?

Proposition 1E is the Mental Health Funding Budget Act. It helps balance the state budget and preserve funding for children's mental health services by providing temporary flexibility in the Mental Health Services Act to fund the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program for children. If the election were being held today, would you vote Yes or No on Proposition 1E?

Proposition 1F is the Elected Officials Salaries Act. It encourages balanced state budgets by preventing elected members of the legislature and statewide constitutional officers from receiving pay raises in years when the state is running a deficit. If the election were being held today would you vote Yes or NO on Proposition 1F?

(IF VOTING YES ON PROP. 1A) If voters approve Proposition 1A, the Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund Act, a provision of the budget deal enables the state to extend for two more years the state sales tax, vehicle license fees and income tax increase contained in the new budget. Does this provision make you more inclined to vote Yes, more inclined to vote No or, does it have no effect on how you will vote on the state spending limit?

One other statewide ballot proposition has been proposed. It calls for changing California's primary election system to an open primary, where voters of all parties choose from among the primary election candidates of all parties and with the two top vote-getters competing in the general election. If the election were being held today, would you vote Yes or No on the open primary ballot proposal?