

# 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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**VOTER SENTIMENT RUNNING AGAINST FIVE OF SIX BUDGET PROPOSITIONS ON MAY 19 BALLOT. MAJORITIES SKEPTICAL THAT PROP. 1A WILL ACHIEVE ITS GOALS. MANY VOTERS CONFUSED ABOUT THE IMPACT THAT PROPS. 1D AND 1E WILL HAVE ON HEALTH-RELATED BUDGETS.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Following passage of the long-delayed state budget in February, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and legislative leaders agreed to place proposals for voter approval onto a special statewide election scheduled for May 19. Now, with just three weeks to Election Day, a new *Field Poll* finds pluralities of likely voters lining up on the No side on five of six of the ballot measures.

#### **Prop. 1A (Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund)**

This proposition, which would establish a "rainy day" budget reserve and limit state spending, is trailing by nine points – 49% No, 40% Yes and 11% undecided.

#### **Prop. 1B (Education Funding)**

Prop. 1B, the measure that would provide supplemental funding to local schools and community colleges, is also behind by nine points – 49% No vs. 40% Yes, with 11% undecided.

#### **Prop. 1C (Lottery Modernization)**

The measure receiving the least support is Prop. 1C. It calls for modernizing the state lottery and borrowing against its future proceeds. Likely voters are opposing it 59% to 32%.

#### **Prop. 1D (Children's Services Funding)**

This measure would transfer early childhood development monies out of the California Children and Families Program to the state general fund. Voters divide 49% No, 40% Yes, with 11% undecided.

#### **Prop. 1E (Mental Health Funding)**

Prop. 1E would temporarily transfer funds currently allocated to mental health programs under the Mental Health Services Act to the state general fund. Currently 51% are voting No and 40% Yes.

#### **Prop. 1F (Elected Officials Salaries)**

This proposition, which would bar legislative and statewide constitutional officers from receiving pay raises when the state is running a budget deficit, is overwhelmingly supported, 71% Yes to 24% No.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* of 901 registered voters in California conducted April 16-26, of whom 422 were deemed likely to vote in the May 19 special election. The California HealthCare Foundation provided additional grant funding to include questions probing voter knowledge of the two health-related ballot measures and their likely impact on the state budget.

### **Voter awareness**

Voters in the survey were first asked whether they were aware of the six budget-related measures that will appear on the May 19 special election ballot. All voters regardless of any prior awareness were then read each measure's ballot title, summary description and fiscal impact that will appear on the ballot and asked how they would vote if the election were being held today.

With just three weeks remaining before Election Day, almost three in ten likely voters (28%) say they had not seen or heard anything about these proposed ballot measures, while 72% had.

### **Big partisan differences in voter preferences**

Overall voter preference totals mask large partisan differences toward many of the ballot measures. For example, only about one in four Republicans favors Props. 1A, 1B, 1C or 1D, and just one in three favors Prop. 1E.

By contrast, pluralities of Democrats and non-partisans support Props 1A and 1B and are about evenly divided about Prop. 1E. Democrats are lining up in favor of Prop. 1D (53% Yes vs. 37% No), but non-partisans are divided 41% Yes vs. 44% No. Democrats and non-partisans oppose Prop. 1C, but by narrower margins than Republicans.

Only with regard to Prop 1F, the measure to bar legislative and statewide constitutional officers from receiving pay raises when the state is running a budget deficit, is there a consistent pattern across each partisan group. Seventy-six percent of Democrats, 67% of non-partisans and 67% of Republicans favor limiting the salaries of elected officials.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>Likely voter preferences regarding Props. 1A – 1F after being read summaries of each measure’s official ballot description – overall and by party</b>				
	<b>Total likely voters</b>	<b>Demo-crats</b>	<b>Repub-licans</b>	<b>Non-partisans/others*</b>
<b>Prop 1A (Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund)</b>				
Yes	40%	52%	24%	47%
No	49	37	65	40
Undecided	11	11	11	13
<b>Prop. 1B (Education Funding)</b>				
Yes	40%	49%	22%	55%
No	49	36	69	37
Undecided	11	15	9	8
<b>Prop. 1C (Lottery Modernization)</b>				
Yes	32%	37%	24%	40%
No	59	49	73	53
Undecided	9	14	3	7
<b>Prop. 1D (Children’s Services Funding)</b>				
Yes	40%	53%	25%	41%
No	49	37	63	44
Undecided	11	10	12	15
<b>Prop. 1E (Mental Health Funding)</b>				
Yes	40%	46%	32%	46%
No	51	45	61	44
Undecided	9	9	7	10
<b>Prop. 1F (Elected Officials’ Salaries)</b>				
Yes	71%	76%	67%	67%
No	24	16	30	27
Undecided	5	8	3	6

\* Small sample base.

### **Significant bloc of voters not supporting Props. 1A-1E**

One of the factors working against passage of the first five ballot measures, Propositions 1A-1E, is the existence of a significant bloc of voters who are not currently supporting any of these measures. Statewide one in three likely voters (33%) either are intending to vote No or remain in the undecided column on each of these measures three weeks before the election. Among Republican voters half (50%) are withholding their support for each of these five measures.

**Table 2**  
**The potential for bloc voting on Props. 1A-1E in the May 19 special election**  
**(among likely voters)**

	<b>Total likely voters</b>	<b>Demo- crats</b>	<b>Repub- licans</b>	<b>Non- partisans/ others*</b>
Not supporting any of the five propositions	33%	18%	50%	30%
Supporting one – four of the five propositions	54	65	44	49
Supporting all five propositions	13	17	6	21

*\* Small sample base.*

### **Voters skeptical that Prop. 1A will be successful in limiting spending growth or future deficits**

Most voters (60%), including majorities of both those intending to vote Yes or No, recognize that if Prop. 1A is approved it will extend for up to two years recent increases in the state's sales tax, vehicle registration fee and income tax.

However, there is a widespread skepticism that if passed Prop. 1A would be successful in either limiting the size of future budget deficits or slowing the rate of future state spending growth. By a 51% to 39% margin voters believe it is not likely that Prop. 1A would limit the size of future state budget deficits. And, by a 61% to 32% margin voters are not convinced that passage of Prop 1A would slow the rate of growth of future state spending.

Supporters and opponents of Prop. 1A hold diametrically opposite views about whether Prop. 1 A will be successful in meeting its stated goals. Large majorities of those intending to vote Yes believe it is very or somewhat likely that passage of Prop. 1A would both limit the size of future budget deficits and slow the rate of future state spending growth. No voters, on the other hand, are nearly unanimous in their view that the measure will not be successful it doing either of these things.

**Table 3**  
**Voter perceptions of the impact that Prop. 1A would have if approved**  
**(among likely voters)**

	Total	Likely voters		
		Yes voters on 1A	No voters on 1A	Undecided on 1A*
If Prop. 1A is approved, it will extend for up to two years recent increases in the state sales tax, vehicle registration fee and income tax				
True (CORRECT)	60%	63%	64%	33%
Not true	18	15	23	10
Don't know	22	22	13	57
If Prop. 1A is approved, the size of future state budget deficits will be limited				
Very/somewhat likely	39%	79%	9%	27%
Not too/not at all likely	51	16	87	27
No opinion	10	5	4	46
If Prop. 1A is approved, the rate of growth of future state spending will be slowed				
Very/somewhat likely	32%	61%	9%	31%
Not too likely/not at all likely	61	35	88	34
No opinion	7	4	3	35

\* Small sample base.

### **Voter perceptions of Props. 1B and 1C**

A provision included in Proposition 1B (Education Funding) is that even if it is approved by voters on May 19 it will not take effect unless Prop. 1A (Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund) is also approved. The survey finds that only 43% of likely voters know about this provision, while 24% believe this is not true and 33% say they don't know.

Another question asked voters whether they thought that changes called for under Prop. 1C (Lottery Modernization) would significantly increase future earnings of the state lottery. Almost six in ten voters (58%) are skeptical and maintain that it is not too or not at all likely that passage of this measure will produce significantly higher lottery earnings.

Supporters and opponents of Prop. 1C hold very different views about this. While three in four Yes voters (75%) are confident that lottery earnings would increase substantially under Prop. 1C, among No voters just 12% hold to this view.

**Table 4**  
**Voter perceptions of the impact that Props. 1B and 1C would have if approved**  
**(among likely voters)**

	Likely voters			
		Yes voters on 1B	No voters on 1B	Undecided on 1B*
Total				
Even if voters approve Prop. 1B, it won't take effect unless Prop. 1A is also approved				
True (CORRECT)	43%	49%	42%	27%
Not true	24	22	27	16
Don't know	33	29	31	57
Total		Yes voters on 1C	No voters on 1C	Undecided on 1C*
If Prop. 1C is approved, changes made to the lottery will significantly increase future earnings				
Very/somewhat likely	33%	75%	12%	26%
Not too/not at all likely	58	17	82	36
No opinion	9	8	6	38

\* Small sample base.

### **Large majorities confused about the impact that Props. 1D and 1E would have on health-related budgets**

Passage of Prop 1D (Children's Services Funding) would change state funding of health and human service programs for children from what voters approved in 1998 through the passage of Prop. 10 by transferring monies out of the early childhood development programs now administered by the California Children and Families Program to the state general fund. When voters were asked the extent to which they were aware of this eventuality, just 41% stated that they knew of this.

In addition, large majorities of likely voters appear to be confused about the impact that approval of Prop. 1D would have on the overall health and human service budgets. When asked what effect passage of Prop. 1D would have on the total amount the state spends on health and human service programs over the next four years, just 18% can correctly identify that its passage would reduce state funding in this area. A much larger proportion (31%) believes the reverse is true and mistakenly believes Prop. 1D would increase the total amount spent on these programs. Another 40% think expenditures would remain about the same, while 11% say they don't know.

A similar result occurs when likely voters are asked what would happen to the budgets of mental health programs over the next two years should Prop. 1E (Mental Health Funding) be approved.

Just 25% correctly understand that passage of Prop. 1E would result in a net decrease in state spending of mental health programs over the next two years. This compares to 33% who think a Yes vote would increase spending on mental health programs, 35% who believe its passage would not change the total amount spent in this area, and 7% who say they don't know.

**Table 5**  
**Voter perceptions of the impact that Props. 1D and 1E would have if approved**  
**(among likely voters)**

		Likely voters		
		Yes voters on 1D	No voters on 1D	Undecided on 1D*
Total				
Prop. 1D would change state funding of health and human service programs for children from what voters previously approved through passage of Prop. 10 in 1998.				
True (correct)	41%	46%	43%	14%
Not true	27	24	34	8
Don't know	32	30	23	78
If Prop. 1D is approved, will the total amount the state spends on health and human service programs over the next four years increase, decrease or remain the same?				
Decrease (correct)	18%	10%	26%	10%
Remain the same	40	52	36	19
Increase	31	33	33	18
Don't know	11	5	5	53
Total		Yes voters on 1E	No voters on 1E	Undecided on 1E*
If Prop. 1E is approved, will the total amount the state spends on mental health programs over the next two years increase, decrease or remain the same?				
Decrease (CORRECT)	25%	18%	33%	13%
Remain the same	35	40	35	16
Increase	33	38	30	20
Don't know	7	4	2	51

\* Small sample base

### **Many voters want to send the governor and state legislature a message**

By a 47% to 41% margin likely voters are inclined to believe that the defeat of the budget-related measures would make the state's budget problem even worse than it is now by increasing the size of the deficit by about \$6 billion. Democrats are more likely to agree with this statement than Republicans and non-partisans.

Yet, voters are much more inclined to agree that if the budget measures are defeated it would send a message to the governor and the legislature that voters are tired of more government spending and higher taxes. Statewide, 72% agree with this statement. Republicans hold to this view by a six to one margin, while non-partisans concur greater than three to one. Even a 60% majority of Democrats agrees with this view.

**Table 6**  
**Likely voter views about the impact on the state government  
if the special election measures are defeated**

	<b>Total likely voters</b>	<b>Demo- crats</b>	<b>Repub- licans</b>	<b>Non- partisans/ others*</b>
<hr/>				
If the measures on the special election ballot are defeated it would make the state's budget problems even worse by increasing the size of the deficit by about six billion dollars				
Agree	47%	53%	42%	42%
Disagree	41	32	48	44
No opinion	12	15	10	14
<hr/>				
If the measures on the special election ballot are defeated it would send a message to the governor and the state legislature that voters are tired of more government spending and higher taxes				
Agree	72%	60%	84%	72%
Disagree	24	34	14	22
No opinion	4	6	2	6

\* Small sample size.



## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 901 registered voters in California, including 422 considered likely to vote in the May 19 special election. The survey was conducted by *The Field Poll*, with additional grant funding provided by the California HealthCare Foundation to add questions probing voter knowledge of the two health-related ballot measures and their likely impact on the state budget.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish April 16-26, 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.

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 to the 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 depend on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for findings from the sample of 422 likely voters is +/- 4.9 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 errors. The maximum sampling error will be larger for subgroups of the overall sample.

### **Questions Asked**

Have you seen, read or heard anything about the six budget-related ballot measures, Propositions 1A through 1F, that will appear on the May 19 special election ballot?

I am going to read the descriptions of these six ballot propositions, and for each please tell me whether you would vote Yes or No if the election were being held today.

The first measure is Proposition 1A, the Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund. It changes the budget process and could limit future deficits and spending 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 and other purposes.

Fiscal Impact: Higher state tax revenues of roughly 16 billion dollars from 2010 through 2012, with increased rainy day reserve and potentially fewer ups and downs in state spending over time. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 1A?

If Prop. 1A is approved, how likely do you think it is that it will be successful in limiting the size of future state budget deficits – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely or not at all likely?

If Prop. 1A is approved, how likely do you think it is that it will be successful in slowing the rate of growth in future state spending – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely or not at all likely?

Please tell me if you believe the following statement about Prop. 1A is true or not. "If Prop. 1A is approved it will extend for up to two years recent increases in the state sales tax, vehicle registration fee and income tax." In your opinion is this statement true or not true?

The second ballot measure is Proposition 1B, the Education Funding, Payment Plan Act. It requires supplemental payments to local school districts and community colleges to address recent budget cuts. Fiscal Impact: Potential state savings of up to several billion dollars in 2009 and 2010, and potential state costs of billions of dollars annually thereafter. If the election were being held today would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 1B?

Please tell me if you believe the following statement about Prop. 1B is true or not: “Even if voters approve Prop. 1B, it won’t take effect unless Prop. 1A is also approved.” In your opinion is this statement true or not true?

The third ballot measure is Proposition 1C, the Lottery Modernization Act. It modernizes the state lottery to improve its performance with increased payouts and improved marketing and management. It requires the state to maintain lottery ownership and authorizes additional accountability measures. It protects school funding levels provided by lottery revenues. Increased lottery revenues will be used to address the budget deficit and reduce the need for additional tax increases and cuts to state programs. Fiscal Impact: Allows 5 billion dollars of borrowing from future lottery profits to help balance the 2009 state budget. Debt service payments would likely make it more difficult to balance future state budgets. If the election were being held today would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 1C?

If Prop. 1C is approved, how likely do you think it is that the changes made to the state lottery will significantly increase its future earnings – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely or not at all likely?

The fourth ballot measure is Proposition 1D, 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. Fiscal Impact: State General Fund savings of up to 608 million dollars in 2009 and 268 million dollars from 2010 through 2013. Corresponding reductions in funding for early childhood development programs provided by the California Children and Families Program. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 1D?

Please tell me if you believe the following statement about Prop. 1D is true or not: “Prop. 1D would change the way the state funds health and human service programs for children from what had been approved by voters in a previous ballot initiative, Proposition 10 in 1998.” In your opinion is this statement true or not true?

If Prop. 1D is approved, do you think it will increase or reduce the total amount that the state spends on health and human service programs over the next four years or will funding on health and human service programs remain about the same?

The fifth ballot measure is Proposition 1E, the Mental Health Funding. Temporary Reallocation Act. It helps balance the state budget by amending the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63 of 2004) to transfer funds for two years to pay for mental health services provided through the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program for children and young adults. Fiscal Impact: General Fund savings of about 230 million dollars annually for two years. Corresponding reduction in funding available for Mental Health Services Act programs. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 1E?

If Prop. 1E is approved, do you think it will increase or reduce the total amount that the state spends on mental health programs over the next two years or will funding on mental health programs remain about the same?

The sixth ballot measure is Proposition 1F, the Elected Officials’ Salaries and Prevents Pay Increases During Budget Deficit Years 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. Fiscal impact: Minor state savings related to elected state officials’ salaries when the state expects to end the year with a budget deficit. If the election were being held today would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 1F?

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements... (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat disagree somewhat or disagree strongly?

- If the measures on the special election ballot are defeated, it would make the state’s budget problems even worse by increasing the size of the deficit by about six billion dollars.
- If the measures on the special election ballot are defeated, it would send a message to the governor and the state legislature that voters are tired of more government spending and higher taxes.