

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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Release #2523

Release Date: **Thursday, January 7, 2016**

KAMALA HARRIS MAINTAINS LEAD IN THE OPEN PRIMARY ELECTION FOR U.S. SENATE, WITH FELLOW DEMOCRAT LORETTA SANCHEZ SECOND. BUT, MANY LIKELY VOTERS ARE UNDECIDED, ESPECIALLY REPUBLICANS AND STRONG CONSERVATIVES.

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By Mark DiCamillo, Director, *The Field Poll*

The latest statewide *Field Poll* finds many voters not paying much attention to California's upcoming June open primary election to succeed Barbara Boxer for U.S. Senate. Greater than four in ten likely voters (44%) say they are undecided or do not express a preference. However, among voters who do offer a choice, state Attorney General Kamala Harris continues to lead, with 27% of likely voters supporting her candidacy. In second is fellow Democratic Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez at 15%. Three Republicans – Assemblyman Rocky Chavez, and two former California Republican party chairmen, Duf Sundheim and Tom Del Beccaro – trail in single digits.

Preferences at this stage are largely partisan and ideological, with both Harris and Sanchez the choice of most of the Democrats and liberals expressing a preference, and the Republicans dividing up the preferences of likely GOP and conservative voters. However, about twice as many Republicans (58%) and strong conservatives (66%) are undecided in the poll as are Democrats (30%) and strong liberals (27%). Because of this, the current standings could change once more Republican and strong conservatives weigh in on the contest, especially if one of the Republicans is able to attract their attention and interest.

Both Harris and Sanchez are better known than are their GOP rivals. About six in ten likely primary election voters (59%) can offer an opinion of Harris, with 38% viewing her favorably and 21% unfavorably. About half of the likely June electorate (51%) expresses an opinion of Sanchez, although views about the Santa Ana Congresswoman are more mixed, with 27% viewing her positively and 24% negatively. By contrast, only about three in ten likely voters have formed an opinion of the three Republicans, and each receives more negative than positive ratings among those expressing an opinion.

Harris continues to lead, but very large proportions are undecided

The latest survey is the third time *The Field Poll* has gauged likely voter preferences in the U.S. Senate race. Since the June election for U.S. Senate will be an open primary, all candidates regardless of party will be listed together on the same ballot and voters from all parties can choose to vote for a candidate from any party. The top two finishers regardless of party affiliation then move on to a fall general election showdown.

In each poll, Harris has led the field among voters expressing a preference, although large proportions of voters have remained undecided. The current poll finds Harris with a twelve-point lead over Sanchez – 27% to 15%. This is similar to a thirteen-point lead she held last October. Chavez has remained in third place in each poll, although both he and his fellow Republicans, former state Republican Party chairs Tom Del Beccaro and Duf Sundheim, remain in single digits.

Table 1 Trend of likely voter preferences in the California June 2016 open primary election for U.S. Senate (among likely voters in California's June primary)			
	January 2016	October 2015	May 2015
Kamala Harris (D)	27%	30%	19%
Loretta Sanchez (D)	15	17	8
Rocky Chavez (R)	7	9	6
Tom Del Beccaro (R)	3	6	5
Duf Sundheim (R)	3	3	1
Other	1	1	3
Undecided	44	34	58

(D) denotes Democrat, (R) denotes Republican

Early preferences are highly partisan and ideological

The vote choices of likely voters in the Senate contest at this stage are highly partisan and ideologically-based. Harris and Sanchez are the choice of nearly all Democrats and liberals expressing a preference, while most Republicans and strong conservative voters who offer an opinion divide their votes among the GOP candidates.

However, a key finding from the survey is that about twice as many Republicans (58%) and strongly conservative voters (66%) than Democrats (30%) and strong liberals (27%) do not offer a preference. Because of this, the standings could change once more Republicans and strong conservatives begin to weigh in on the contest.

In the current poll, Harris does best among likely voters in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, strong liberals and registered Democrats, while Sanchez leads among the state's Latinos.

Table 2 Preferences for U.S. Senate in the open primary – by subgroup (among likely voters in California's June primary)						
	<u>Harris</u>	<u>Sanchez</u>	<u>Chavez</u>	<u>Del Beccaro</u>	<u>Sundheim</u>	<u>Other/ Undecided</u>
Total likely voters	27%	15	7	3	3	45
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	41%	24	5	**	**	30
Republicans	9%	3	14	9	7	58
No party preference/other	27%	16	1	**	**	56
<u>Area</u>						
Coastal counties	31%	16	6	3	2	42
Inland counties	18%	14	7	4	3	54
<u>Region</u>						
Los Angeles County	31%	23	6	2	2	36
Other Southern CA	17%	15	9	4	3	52
Central Valley	17%	11	6	5	3	58
San Francisco Bay Area	48%	11	4	2	3	32
<u>Gender</u>						
Male	26%	13	9	3	3	46
Female	28%	18	5	3	2	44
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>						
White non-Hispanic	28%	10	6	4	3	49
Latino	19%	31	11	1	1	37
Black/Asian/other	32%	21	8	2	4	33
<u>Age</u>						
18-39	24%	15	6	**	2	53
40-64	28%	16	8	5	3	40
65 or older	31%	14	5	4	3	43
<u>Political ideology</u>						
Strongly conservative	3%	4	11	9	7	66
Moderately conservative*	14%	10	15	5	5	51
Middle-of-the-road	35%	13	5	2	1	44
Moderately liberal*	28%	29	4	**	1	48
Strongly liberal	46%	24	3	**	**	27

* Small sample base.

** Less than ½ of 1%.

Both Democrats are better known than their Republican rivals

About six in ten likely voters (59%) can offer an opinion of Harris, with 38% holding a favorable view, and 21% an unfavorable opinion. About half of likely voters (51%) also has an opinion of Sanchez, although voter assessments about the Santa Ana Congresswoman are more mixed, with 27% viewing her positively and 24% negatively. By contrast, only about three in ten likely voters hold an opinion of each of the Republicans measured. In addition, each Republican receives more negative than positive assessments among likely voters offering an opinion.

Voter views of the Senate candidates are highly partisan. Both Democrats are viewed very favorably by their fellow Democrats, but very negatively by Republican voters. Conversely, the three Republicans receive much more positive than negative assessments from the relatively small proportions of GOP voters offering an opinion, but are viewed very negatively by the state's Democratic voters.

One segment where Harris appears to hold an image advantage over the other Senate hopefuls is among no party preference voters. Among these voters, nearly four times as many hold a favorable as an unfavorable impression of the Attorney General.

Table 3 Voter identification and image ratings of the U.S. Senate candidates (among likely voters in the June 2016 primary)			
	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
<u>Harris – all likely voters</u>	<u>38%</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>41</u>
Democrats	55%	7	38
Republicans	14%	48	38
No party preference/others	40%	12	48
<u>Sanchez – all likely voters</u>	<u>27%</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>49</u>
Democrats	42%	10	48
Republicans	7%	48	45
No party preference/others	27%	17	56
<u>Chavez – all likely voters</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>72</u>
Democrats	10%	21	69
Republicans	19%	11	70
No party preference/others	5%	18	77
<u>Del Beccaro – all likely voters</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>72</u>
Democrats	2%	31	67
Republicans	17%	9	74
No party preference/others	2%	20	78
<u>Sundheim – all likely voters</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>71</u>
Democrats	3%	32	65
Republicans	17%	9	74
No party preference/others	3%	23	74

Information About The Survey

Methodological Details

The findings in this report come from a *Field Poll* completed December 15, 2015-January 3, 2016 among 730 Californians considered likely to vote in the June statewide primary election.

Interviews were administered by telephone using live interviewers in English and Spanish. Individual voters were sampled at random from listings derived from the statewide voter registration rolls. Once a voter's name and telephone number had been selected, interviews were attempted with voters on their landline or cell phone depending on the source of the listing from the voter file and the preference of the voter.

Up to four attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. After the completion of interviewing, the sample was weighted to align it to the proper distribution of voters by race/ethnicity and other demographic, geographic and party registration characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size and the percentage distributions being examined. The maximum sampling error for results from the overall likely voter sample in this report is +/- 3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. These estimates are based on survey findings in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., results at or near 50%). Percentages at or near either end of the tail of the distributions (i.e., results closer to 10% or 90%) have somewhat smaller margins of error. There are other potential sources of error in surveys of public opinion besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of this survey sought to minimize these other possible errors.

The Field Poll was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field. The *Poll* has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. *The Field Poll* receives financial support from leading California newspapers and television stations, who purchase the rights of first release to *Field Poll* reports in their primary viewer or readership markets. The *Poll* also receives funding from the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes, as well as from foundations, non-profit organizations, and others as part of the *Poll's* policy research sponsor program.

Questions Asked

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer has announced that she will not be seeking another term as U.S. Senator next year. I am going to read the names of some people who are likely to run for U.S. Senate in California in 2016. As I read each name, please tell me whether your opinion of that person is favorable, unfavorable or whether you don't know enough about that person to have an opinion. (NAMES AND TITLES READ IN RANDOM ORDER) Is your opinion of (LAST NAME) favorable or unfavorable? (SEE RELEASE FOR NAMES AND TITLES READ)

The California primary election for U.S. Senate next June will be an open primary. In an open primary, the candidates from all parties – Democrats, Republicans and others – will be listed together on the same ballot and voters can choose any candidate from any party. If the June open primary election for U.S. Senate were being held today and the candidates were (NAMES AND PARTIES OF ALL CANDIDATES READ IN RANDOM ORDER), who would be your first choice?