

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 NOT PAYING MUCH ATTENTION
TO NEXT YEAR'S OPEN PRIMARY
ELECTION FOR U.S. SENATE. KAMALA
HARRIS LEADS, BUT RECEIVES JUST 19%
OF FIRST CHOICE PREFERENCES. NEARLY
SIX IN TEN LIKELY VOTERS UNDECIDED.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

California voters appear not to be giving much attention to next year's election to fill the U.S. Senate seat now held by Democrat Barbara Boxer. When likely voters in next year's June open primary are asked who they would support from a list of announced or potential candidates, a majority (58%) does not offer a preference.

Leading the pack among voters expressing a preference is Democratic state Attorney General Kamala Harris, who receives 19% of the first choice votes.

Three other announced candidates, Democratic Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez, Republican Assemblyman Rocky Chavez, and former state Republican Party chair Tom Del Beccaro trail. Sanchez, who announced her candidacy only last Thursday, receives 8% of likely voter preferences, while Chavez and Del Beccaro were the first choice of 6% and 5%, respectively. Smaller proportions are supporting two others included in the poll who are considering Senate bids, Democratic Congressman Xavier Becerra (3%) and former state Republican Party chair Duf Sundheim (1%).

The poll also asked likely voters for their second choice preferences in the Senate race. When combining each potential candidate's first and second choice preferences, support for Harris increases to 22%. Support for Sanchez increases to 14% of likely voters in this setting.

Table 1
Preferences in the 2016 California open primary for U.S. Senate
(among likely voters)

	<u>1st Choice</u>	<u>1st or 2nd Choice</u>
Kamala Harris, <i>state Attorney General (D)</i>	19%	22%
Loretta Sanchez, <i>Congresswoman (D)</i>	8	14
Rocky Chavez, <i>Assemblyman (R)</i>	6	7
Tom Del Beccaro, <i>former chair, state Republican Party, (R)</i>	5	6
Xavier Becerra, <i>Congressman (D)</i>	3	6
Duf Sundheim, <i>former chair, state Republican Party, (R)</i>	1	3
Undecided	58	58

(D) denotes Democrat and (R) denotes Republican.

Early preferences in the Senate race are highly partisan and ideological

Partisan loyalties are a big factor in the initial preferences of likely voters in the open primary. For example, Harris is the first or second choice of four in ten likely Democratic voters in the primary (40%), but only receives 7% of the first or second choice votes of likely Republicans. Similarly, fellow Democrat, Sanchez obtains 25% first or second choice votes, but only 4% support from Republicans. Chavez and Del Beccaro receive the largest proportions of first or second choice preference votes among likely Republican voters (17% and 14%, respectively), but receive only 1% support from Democrats.

Early voter preferences for Senate are also heavily ideologically based. Nearly half of voters identifying themselves as strongly liberal (47%) are choosing Harris as either their first or second choice. However, she only receives 4% support from strong conservatives.

Regional differences also permeate the early first or second choice preferences. Harris does best among likely voters in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area (31%). Sanchez's support is greatest among Southern California voters (18%).

There are also differences in preferences relating to the race or ethnicity of the voter. Harris is the first or second choice of 51% of African Americans, and also leads her nearest potential challengers among white non-Hispanics nearly two to one. Sanchez holds the lead among Latinos, while the preferences of Asian American voters are about evenly divided between the two.

Support for Harris is also somewhat greater among voters living in union-affiliated households than those in non-union households.

Table 2						
First or second choice preferences in 2016 open primary for U.S. Senate – by subgroup (among likely voters)						
	Harris (D)	Sanchez (D)	Chavez (R)	Del Beccaro (R)	Becerra (D)	Sund- heim (R)
Total likely voters	22%	14	7	6	6	3
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	40%	25	1	1	9	1
Republicans	7%	4	17	14	4	7
No party preference/other	10%	8	6	4	1	1
<u>Political ideology</u>						
Strongly conservative	4%	5	23	19	2	7
Moderately conservative	11%	16	10	7	14	7
Middle-of-the-road	24%	12	3	4	3	1
Moderately liberal*	31%	24	3	**	12	**
Strongly liberal	47%	24	**	1	4	1
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>						
White non-Hispanic	23%	13	8	6	3	4
Latino	13%	20	10	4	11	1
African American*	51%	23	2	2	10	**
Asian American*	13%	14	4	7	11	**
<u>Section</u>						
Southern California	21%	18	8	7	7	4
Northern California	24%	10	6	4	3	2
<u>Region</u>						
Los Angeles County	25%	19	7	11	6	3
South Coast	19%	17	11	3	5	4
Other Southern California	16%	15	8	8	11	5
Central Valley	15%	9	4	4	2	3
San Francisco Bay Area	31%	9	6	3	4	1
Other Northern California*	22%	13	9	9	4	**
<u>Gender</u>						
Male	20%	16	9	7	8	2
Female	24%	13	5	5	4	4
<u>Age</u>						
18 – 39	15%	12	8	4	8	2
40 – 49	27%	15	4	2	6	2
50 – 64	26%	15	7	8	5	3
65 or older	23%	17	9	9	3	4
<u>Union affiliation</u>						
Union-affiliated household	31%	17	9	3	3	2
Non-union household	20%	14	7	7	6	3

* Small sample base.

** Less than ½ of 1%.

(D) denotes Democrat. (R) denotes Republican.

Two very different types of general election contests could emerge depending on whether the top two primary finishers are from the same or different parties

Because the primary election to fill Boxer's U.S. Senate seat is an open primary, candidates from all parties – Democrats, Republicans and others – will be listed together on the same primary election ballot and voters of all political stripes can choose to vote for a candidate from any party. The two candidates receiving the most votes in the June primary, regardless of party, then square off against one another five months later in the November general election.

This opens up the possibility of two very different types of general election contests emerging from the primary, depending on whether the top two finishers are from the same party or from different parties. For example, if the general election were to pit two Democrats against one another, both Democrats would need to compete for the votes the state's Republicans, no party preference and minor party voters, who collectively account for 57% of the state's registered voters. In this setting, each Democrat would need to expend considerable time and effort to win the support of these voters, while at the same time making appeals to their fellow Democrats.

On the other hand, if the general election were to be a more traditional Democrat vs. Republican affair, given the strong partisan loyalties of Democratic and Republican voters and the fact that registered Democrats outnumber Republicans statewide by 15 percentage points (43% to 28%), the Democrat would be the heavy favorite.

Information About The Survey

Methodological Details

The findings in this report come from a telephone survey completed April 23-May 16, 2015 among a random sample of 1,664 California adults, including 801 registered voters consider likely to vote in next year's June 2016 open primary election. To capture the diversity of the California adult population, the survey was administered in six languages and dialects – English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Korean, depending on the preference of the voter.

The sample was developed using a dual frame random cell phone and landline listings covering the state of California. Up to six 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 combined landline and cell phone sample was weighted to match demographic, geographic and voter registration estimates of the adult population in California. The weighting process also takes into account the higher probability of reaching respondents who receive calls on both a landline and cell phone.

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 random sample of likely voters is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

The maximum sampling error 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 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, who is still an active advisor. The Poll has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The Poll receives funding from media subscribers, from California foundations and independent not-for-profit organizations, and 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.

Questions Asked

There will be an open primary election for U.S. Senate in California next June. 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 to vote for a candidate from any party. Supposing the open primary election for U.S. Senate were being held today and the candidates were (NAMES, PARTIES AND TITLES OF ALL CANDIDATES READ IN RANDOM ORDER), who would be your first choice? (IF FIRST CHOICE GIVEN, ASK:) Who would be your second choice? (SEE RELEASE FOR CANDIDATES LISTED)

Note: Congressmen Adam Schiff and John Garamendi were also included as potential candidates in the poll, but have decided against making a run. Because of this, the preferences of voters who chose either of them as their first choice were allocated to the other candidates based on these voters' second choice preference.