

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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THE ECONOMY, PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND STATE BUDGET DEFICIT ARE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES TO VOTERS WHEN DECIDING WHOM THEY WILL SUPPORT FOR GOVERNOR. MAJORITY DISAPPROVES OF NEW LAW ALLOWING ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS TO OBTAIN A DRIVER'S LICENSE.

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

A frequently voiced complaint in many California gubernatorial and other elections is that there isn't enough airing or public discussion of major issues confronting voters. However, things appear to be somewhat different in the current gubernatorial recall election. The candidates running for Davis's job are being questioned extensively about where they stand on a wide range of issues and problems facing the state.

In a survey completed September 3-7, *The Field Poll* asked a representative sample of California voters to rate the importance of a candidate's stand on each of twenty-three issues in deciding whom voters will support in the recall election. The poll also asked voters their opinions about a new law allowing illegal immigrants to obtain a California driver's license.

Issue Rankings

Three issues top the list, which greater than eight in ten voters consider "very important" to them in determining whom they will support for Governor. These include the state's economy (90%), the public schools (82%) and reducing the state's budget deficit (82%).

Three other problems are deemed very important to more than seven in ten voters. These include: encouraging businesses to invest and expand in California (73%), health care (72%), and taxes (71%). Another six in ten voters rate crime and law enforcement (62%), electricity supplies and costs (61%) and illegal immigration (60%) very important to their gubernatorial vote decision on October 7.

Smaller majorities rate issuing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants (55%), Prop. 13, the 1978 property tax reduction initiative (54%), state vehicle license fees (53%), upholding family values (53%), protecting the environment (52%), Prop. 187, the 1994 illegal immigration initiative (52%), reforming the state's worker's compensation laws (52%), gasoline prices (51%), and gun control (51%) as very important to them.

Less than half rate looking out for the interests of women, (49%), looking out for the interests of minorities (42%), abortion (40%) and Prop. 54, this year's so-called Racial Privacy Initiative (40%) to be very important influences on their voting decision. Just 18% say the issue of Indian casino gambling will be very important to their voting decision.

Table 1 below reports how voters reacted to each of the twenty-three issues posed in the survey.

Table 1
Importance of a candidate's stand on each of 23 issues
in deciding who voters will support for Governor
(among registered voters)

| | Very important | Somewhat important | Not important | No opinion |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| The state's economy | 90% | 8 | 2 | * |
| Public schools | 82% | 14 | 4 | * |
| Reducing the state's budget deficit | 82% | 12 | 3 | 3 |
| Encouraging business to invest and expand in California | 73% | 20 | 6 | 1 |
| Health care | 72% | 19 | 8 | 1 |
| Taxes | 71% | 23 | 5 | 1 |
| Crime/law enforcement | 62% | 30 | 7 | 1 |
| Electricity supplies and costs | 61% | 32 | 6 | 1 |
| Illegal immigration | 60% | 27 | 11 | 2 |
| Issuing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants | 55% | 19 | 22 | 4 |
| Prop. 13, the 1978 property tax reduction initiative | 54% | 24 | 15 | 7 |
| State vehicle license fees | 53% | 25 | 21 | 1 |
| Upholding family values | 53% | 20 | 25 | 2 |
| Protecting the environment | 52% | 36 | 12 | * |
| Prop. 187, the 1994 illegal immigration initiative | 52% | 32 | 13 | 3 |
| Reforming the state's worker's compensation laws | 52% | 31 | 14 | 3 |
| Gasoline prices | 51% | 30 | 19 | 1 |
| Gun control | 51% | 24 | 23 | 2 |
| Looking out for the interests of women | 49% | 28 | 20 | 3 |
| Looking out for the interests of minorities | 42% | 39 | 18 | 1 |
| Abortion | 40% | 28 | 29 | 3 |
| Prop. 54, the Racial Privacy Initiative | 40% | 22 | 27 | 11 |
| Indian casino gambling | 18% | 27 | 50 | 5 |

* Less than 1/2 of 1%.

The poll also explores the relationship between the importance attached to each of the twenty-three issues and whom voters are supporting in the replacement election.

Issues of greater importance to Bustamante voters

Larger proportions of the supporters of Democrat Cruz Bustamante than those intending to vote for either Republicans Arnold Schwarzenegger or Tom McClintock rate seven of the twenty-three issues as very important to them when deciding whom to support for Governor. These include the public schools, health care, looking out for the interests of women, protecting the environment, gun control, looking out for the interests of minorities and abortion.

Table 2
Issues rated as being more important to Bustamante’s supporters than Schwarzenegger or McClintock supporters in deciding whom to support for Governor (among registered voters)

| | % rating this issue “very important” | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | <u>Bustamante supporters</u> | <u>Schwarzenegger supporters</u> | <u>McClintock supporters</u> |
| | % | % | % |
| Public schools | 85 | 70 | 69 |
| Health care | 79 | 68 | 47 |
| Looking out for the interests of women | 71 | 33 | 28 |
| Protecting the environment | 67 | 39 | 33 |
| Gun control | 66 | 38 | 40 |
| Looking out for the interests of minorities | 62 | 23 | 26 |
| Abortion | 55 | 18 | 45 |

Issues more important to supporters of Schwarzenegger and/or McClintock

Twelve issues are seen as being more important to voters supporting Schwarzenegger and/or McClintock than those currently favoring Bustamante. These include reducing the state’s budget deficit, taxes, encouraging businesses to invest and expand in California, electricity supplies and costs, issuing driver’s licenses to illegal immigrants, state vehicle license fees, reforming the state’s workers compensation laws, Prop. 13, gasoline prices, Prop. 187, illegal immigration and upholding family values.

Table 3
Issues rated as being more important to Schwarzenegger and/or McClintock supporters than Bustamante supporters in deciding whom to support for Governor (among registered voters)

| | % rating this issue "very important" | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | <u>Schwarzenegger supporters</u> | <u>McClintock supporters</u> | <u>Bustamante supporters</u> |
| | % | % | % |
| Reducing the state's budget deficit | 87 | 82 | 74 |
| Taxes | 83 | 82 | 62 |
| Encouraging businesses to invest and expand in California | 81 | 84 | 65 |
| Electricity supplies and costs | 69 | 65 | 53 |
| Issuing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants | 66 | 69 | 37 |
| State vehicle license fees | 64 | 69 | 41 |
| Reforming the state's workers compensation laws | 62 | 67 | 42 |
| Prop. 13, the 1978 property tax reduction initiative | 60 | 55 | 45 |
| Gasoline prices | 57 | 58 | 45 |
| Prop. 187, the 1994 illegal immigration initiative | 57 | 58 | 45 |
| Illegal immigration | 56 | 79 | 49 |
| Upholding family values | 82 | 82 | 43 |

Issues about which there are no major differences among supporters of the leading candidates

One issue about which very large proportions of voters supporting Bustamante, Schwarzenegger and McClintock can all agree is the importance of the state's economy. Greater than eight in ten of each candidate's supporters consider a candidate's stand on this as very important to the vote decision.

About six in ten of each of the leading candidates' supporters also consider crime and law enforcement as very important to their vote choice. About four in ten of the supporters of each candidate also say that a candidate's position on Prop. 54 very important. On the other hand, less than one in four of those supporting the three leading candidates consider a candidate's stand on Indian casino gambling very important.

Table 4
Issues about which there are no significant differences in the importance
ascribed by Bustamante, Schwarzenegger and McClintock supporters
(among registered voters)

| | % rating this issue "very important" | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | <u>Bustamante</u> <u>supporters</u> % | <u>Schwarzenegger</u> <u>supporters</u> % | <u>McClintock</u> <u>supporters</u> % |
| The state's economy | 86 | 92 | 100 |
| Crime/law enforcement | 58 | 61 | 66 |
| Prop. 54, the Racial Privacy Initiative | 41 | 38 | 39 |
| Indian casino gambling | 16 | 22 | 13 |

Majority disapproves of allowing illegal immigrants to get a driver's license

Last week the state legislature passed and Governor Gray Davis signed a new law that would allow those residents who are in the state illegally to obtain a California driver's license. The current poll asked voters their opinion of this new legislation. The results show that voters disapprove of the law by a 59% to 34% margin.

There are significant variations in opinion on this issue by party, ethnicity and how one intends to vote in the upcoming October 7 recall election. For example, while Democrats approve of the new law 52% to 40%, Republicans are strongly opposed (83% to 11%). Non-partisans also disapprove by a five to three margin (57% to 34%).

Latino voters tend to support the new law (59% to 34%). However, majorities of voters of other racial and ethnic backgrounds disapprove. For example, more than twice as many white non-Hispanics disapprove as approve of the new law (66% to 28%). In addition, majorities of black and Asian voters also disagree with the new law.

The driver's license issue has become a major point of contention in the upcoming recall election and there are significant differences in opinions about the new law depending on how one intends to vote in the October 7 election. While a 54% to 38% majority of those intending to vote No to retain Davis as Governor approve of the new law, recall supporters disapprove by a nearly four to one margin (75% to 20%). Similarly, supporters of Bustamante in the replacement election approve of allowing illegal immigrants to obtain a driver's license, but greater than eight in ten of those backing Schwarzenegger or McClintock disapprove.

Table 5
Voter opinions about allowing illegal immigrants
to obtain a California driver's license
(among registered voters)

| | <u>Disapprove</u> | <u>Approve</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|---|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Statewide | 59% | 34 | 7 |
| <u>Party registration</u> | | | |
| Democrats | 40% | 52 | 8 |
| Republicans | 83% | 11 | 6 |
| Non-partisans/others* | 57% | 34 | 9 |
| <u>Race/ethnicity</u> | | | |
| White non-Hispanic | 66% | 28 | 6 |
| Latino* | 34% | 59 | 7 |
| Black/African American* | 57% | 41 | 2 |
| Asians/others* | 52% | 33 | 15 |
| Vote on Davis recall | | | |
| Yes to remove | 75% | 20 | 5 |
| No to retain | 38% | 54 | 8 |
| Undecided | 48% | 35 | 7 |
| <u>Preference in replacement election</u> | | | |
| Bustamante | 30% | 63 | 7 |
| Schwarzenegger | 84% | 11 | 5 |
| McClintock* | 88% | 10 | 2 |
| Other* | 47% | 45 | 8 |
| Undecided | 67% | 20 | 13 |

* Small sample base

About the Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a telephone survey conducted September 3-7, 2003 in English and Spanish among a random sample of California registered voters. A representative sample of 1,014 California adults were initially screened yielding interviews with 649 registered voters. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize respondent fatigue, the overall sample was divided into two random subsamples of 306 and 343 voters each.

Sampling was conducted by means of random digit dialing, which selects telephone exchanges within all area codes serving California in proportion to the population. From each exchange a random sample of telephone numbers was created by adding random digits to the telephone exchange selected, permitting access to both listed and unlisted telephones. After the completion of interviewing, the survey results were weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the state's total registered voter population.

According to statistical theory, results from the overall voter sample have a sampling error of +/- 4.0 percentage points, while findings from each voter subsample have a sampling error of +/- 5.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Results from subgroups have somewhat larger sampling error ranges.

There are other possible sources of error in any survey in addition to sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sampling, sequencing or through omissions or errors in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

I am going to read some different issues and for each please tell me how important you feel a candidate's stand on each will be to you when deciding how you will vote in the recall election. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER) How important is a candidate's stand on this to you – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important? (SEE RELEASE FOR LIST OF ITEMS) (ITEMS ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLES)

The state legislature (is considering passing) (just passed and Governor Davis signed) a law that (would allow) (allows) illegal immigrants to get a California driver's license. Do you approve or disapprove of this (idea) (new law)? (NOTE: QUESTION WORDING CHANGED AFTER THE GOVERNOR SIGNED THE NEW LAW ON SEPTEMBER 5)