

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 STRONGLY SUPPORT SOME OF THE PROPOSALS IN THE CALIFORNIA PERFORMANCE REVIEW, BUT STRONGLY OPPOSE OTHERS.

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Last week the 275 members of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's California Performance Review (CPR) committee delivered a 2,500 page report containing their recommendations on ways to improve and streamline the operations of state government.

Made up of teams of state workers from different agencies and headed by Billy Hamilton, on loan from his job as Texas' deputy state comptroller, the committee has been essentially working out of the public eye after the Governor signed an executive order last February to form the commission.

The report makes sweeping proposals consolidating state government programs and services, eliminating some boards and streamlining other agencies. Public hearings will commence this month to get feedback from the public, constituency groups and state employees after which the Governor is expected to make specific recommendations to the legislature for implementation of the proposals.

The Field Poll in its current survey posed some of the issues raised in the CPR report to get initial voter reaction.

In the main, the survey finds strong support for some of the ideas being put forward and equally strong opposition to others.

Proposals supported

A large majority of voters (74%) agree, while only 19% disagree, with the general thrust of the CPR's work – that it is a good idea because state government needs a major overhaul to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and operate in a more cost effective manner.

The proposal to consolidate many of the state's independent agencies, boards, and commissions so that those functioning in the same general areas are merged into fewer but larger agencies is also favored by a 61% to 26% majority. A similar 61% to 31% agree with the statement, "*The plan is a good idea because reducing the number of state agencies will streamline the government and save money.*"

By a 53% to 39% ratio, voters reject the argument that reducing the number of state agencies will end up lowering the quality of government programs and services.

And, by a 50% to 40% margin, voters disagree with the contention that eliminating many of the state's independent boards and commissions will weaken government oversight in important areas, like air and water quality.

In addition, the CPR proposal to expand the state lottery by having California participate in a multi-state lottery whose proceeds would also benefit education is endorsed 57% to 34%.

Proposals not favored

However, voters react negatively to some of the other proposals suggested in the CPR report.

For example, a 57% majority opposes the idea of abolishing county boards of education and community college boards and consolidating them into a centralized department of education that reports to the governor. Just one in three (34%) favors this idea.

The proposal to transfer responsibility and the costs of maintaining some state highways and roadways to local governments is opposed by a 54% to 34% margin.

A 54% majority also reacts negatively (41% are in favor) to increasing the number of toll roads in the state to provide more revenue for highway building and repair.

Some of the public's reservations about the CPR's proposal relate to the perception that it consolidates too much power in the hands of fewer people in the executive branch. Slightly more than half (51%) agree with this point of view, while 40% disagree.

Issue where voters are divided

Voters are about evenly split (44% agreeing and 49% disagreeing) with the contention that centralizing oversight of the state's public schools in the Governor's office is a good thing, because it would make the Governor accountable for the success or failure of the public schools.

Voters are also divided over the CPR proposal to change the time frame of the state budget process to span two years instead of one. Statewide, 43% of voters favor this approach, but 46% are opposed.

There is also an even division of opinion on the proposal to require all students in the state's colleges and universities to perform community service activities as a requirement for graduation. Forty seven percent favor this idea, but 46% are opposed.

How partisans differ

Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans are largely supportive of the overall intent to overhaul state government by reducing and consolidating the number of state agencies.

Voters across each partisan group also are alike in their opposition to proposals to transfer responsibility and the costs of maintaining some state highways and roadways to local governments, and increasing the number of toll roads in the state.

The even split of opinion on the argument that centralizing oversight of the state's public schools in the Governor's office would make the Governor more accountable for the success or failure of the schools also exists across voters of each party.

There is partisan opposition (although Republicans a little less opposed) to abolishing county boards of education and community college boards, and centralizing them into a department reporting to the governor.

However, larger partisan differences emerge on some of the CPR's proposals. For example, sizeable majorities of Democrats and non-partisans agree that the proposals would consolidate too much power in the hands of fewer people in the executive branch, while a majority of Republicans disagree on this matter.

The idea that state should be being set for two year periods instead of one is opposed by a majority of Democrats, but favored by Republicans.

Democrats also favor requiring students in public colleges to perform community service, while Republicans and non-partisans are more divided on this issue.

The view that reducing the number of state agencies will end up reducing the quality of government programs and services is rejected by both Republican and non-partisans, while Democrats are evenly divided on the matter.

Statistical tables

The following tables show overall results from the questions asked.

Table 1
Initial voter reaction to some of the proposals in the State Performance Review
(among registered voters)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Non-partisans/ others</u>
Consolidate many of the state's independent agencies, boards and commissions so that those functioning in the same general areas are merged into fewer, but larger agencies				
Favor	61%	50%	73%	61%
Oppose	26	33	20	25
No opinion	13	17	5	14
Have California participate in a multi-state lottery system whose proceeds would continue to benefit education				
Favor	57%	58%	60%	49%
Oppose	34	32	34	40
No opinion	9	10	6	11
Require all students in the state's public colleges and universities to perform community service activities as a requirement for graduation				
Favor	47%	51%	45%	43%
Oppose	46	43	48	50
No opinion	7	6	7	7
Change the timeframe of the state budget process so that it spans two years rather than one				
Favor	43%	37%	52%	42%
Oppose	46	52	39	45
No opinion	11	11	9	13
Increase the number of toll roads in the state to provide more revenue for highway building and repair				
Favor	41%	44%	39%	37%
Oppose	54	52	56	57
No opinion	5	4	5	6
Transfer responsibility and the costs of maintaining many state highways and roadways to local governments				
Favor	34%	33%	39%	29%
Oppose	54	53	51	59
No opinion	12	14	10	12
Abolish county boards of education and community college boards and consolidate them into a centralized state department of education that reports to the governor				
Favor	34%	25%	43%	35%
Oppose	57	68	47	53
No opinion	9	7	10	12

Table 2
Voter reactions to three positive and negative statements made
about the State Performance Review proposals
(among registered voters)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Non-partisans/ others</u>
<u>Positive statements</u>				
The plan is a good idea because state government is in need of a major overhaul to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and operate in a more cost effective manner				
Agree	74%	68%	85%	69%
Disagree	19	24	12	22
No opinion	7	8	3	9
The plan is a good idea because reducing the number of state agencies will streamline the government and save money				
Agree	61%	51%	75%	58%
Disagree	31	38	20	34
No opinion	8	11	5	8
Centralizing oversight of the state's public schools in the Governor's office is a good idea because it would make the Governor accountable for the success or failure of the public schools				
Agree	44%	43%	46%	44%
Disagree	49	52	48	48
No opinion	7	5	6	8
<u>Negative statements</u>				
The plan is a bad idea because it consolidates too much power in the hands of fewer people in the executive branch				
Agree	51%	58%	39%	55%
Disagree	40	31	53	36
No opinion	9	11	8	9
Eliminating many of the state's independent boards and commissions will weaken government oversight in important areas, like air and water quality				
Agree	40%	51%	28%	35%
Disagree	50	38	63	53
No opinion	10	11	9	12
Reducing the number of state agencies will end up reducing the quality of government programs and services				
Agree	39%	46%	32%	35%
Disagree	53	45	61	55
No opinion	8	9	7	10

Information About the Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on interviews conducted among a random sample of 608 registered voters. Interviews were conducted by telephone in English and Spanish August 3-8, 2004. Sampling was carried out using random digit dial methodology which gives all voters, including those whose phone number is listed and unlisted, an equal chance of being contacted. Up to five attempts were made to reach a randomly selected voter at each number dialed. Assessments of expanding the state lottery were asked of a random sample of 351 registered voters interviewed in the final three days of polling, August 6-8. After the completion of interviewing the larger registered voter sample was weighted to Field Poll estimates of the state's total registered voter population.

According to statistical theory, the overall results in this report have a sampling error of +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings on changing the state lottery have a sampling error of +/- 5.5 percentage points. These are other possible sources of error in any survey in addition to sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sequencing or through omissions or errors in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Governor Schwarzenegger recently received recommendations from a panel of experts calling for a consolidation and reorganization of state government. I am going to read some parts of the reorganization plan and for each, please tell me whether you favor or oppose it. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Do you favor or oppose this? (SEE RELEASE FOR ITEMS READ) *(Note: The above introduction was modified slightly after the first two days of interviewing to more accurately describe the CPR committee.)*

I am going to read some statements that people have made about the reorganization plan. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each one. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Do you agree or disagree? (SEE RELEASE FOR ITEMS READ)