

# 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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**PROPS. 62 AND 60:**  
**VOTERS FAVOR CHANGES TO**  
**PRIMARY ELECTION RULES.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Two of the many initiatives that voters will decide in the November election have to do with rules governing primary elections held in the state. Both initiatives are starting out with early preference leads.

One of these initiatives, Proposition 62, has been referred to as the open primary measure. It would allow voters to choose any candidate in the primary, regardless of their or the candidate's party registration. The two top vote-getters would advance to the general election, even if they belong to the same party. Presidential primaries would be exempted and would remain restricted to only voters affiliated with each party.

The other initiative is Proposition 60. It calls for primary elections to remain partisan by guaranteeing the political parties participating in the primary each have a candidate in the general election.

*The Field Poll* in a statewide survey completed earlier this month found sentiment for Prop. 62 dividing 44% Yes, 31% No and 25% undecided. For Prop 60, the ratio was 39% Yes and 15% No and 46% were undecided.

Relatively few voters report having heard of either proposition prior to their being read its official ballot description. Just 16% of likely voters reports some awareness of Prop. 62, while just 6% say they have heard of Prop. 60.

## **Prop. 62**

Likely voters were read the official ballot summary for Prop. 62, which is worded as follows:

*Proposition 62 is the “Election, Primaries” initiative constitutional amendment. It requires primary elections where voters may vote for any state or federal candidate regardless of the party registration of the voter or the candidate. The two primary election candidates receiving the most votes for an office, whether they are candidates with the same or different parties, would be listed on the general election ballot. It exempts presidential nominations. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 62?*

Overall 44% said they would be inclined to vote Yes and 31% No, with 25% undecided. Democrats are currently supporting the measure by better than two to one (53% to 25%), while Republicans are narrowly opposed (42% to 38%). Non-partisans divide 38% Yes and 26% No.

	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>	<b><u>Undecided</u></b>
Total Statewide – August	44%	31	25
– May	50%	37	13
<b><u>Party</u></b>			
Democrats	53%	25	22
Republicans	38%	42	20
Non-partisans/others	38%	26	36

*Note: Wording used in the May survey differed somewhat from the official ballot label description used in the August survey.*

## **Prop. 60**

This issue was posed this way in the survey:

*Proposition 60 is the “Election Rights of Political Parties” legislative constitutional amendment. It requires that the general election ballot include the candidate receiving the most votes from among candidates who ran in each party’s primary election. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or No on Proposition 60?*

Overall, 39% say they are inclined to vote Yes and 15% said would vote No, with a very large 46% saying they were undecided. Democratic, Republican and non-partisans currently favor Prop. 60 by substantial margins.

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**Table 2**  
**Voter preferences regarding Proposition 60, the Election Rights of  
Political Parties Legislative Constitutional Amendment  
(among likely voters)**

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	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Total Statewide	39%	15	46
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	37%	15	48
Republicans	37%	19	44
Non-partisans/others	45%	11	44

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### **Background**

In 1996, a nearly 60% majority of voters approved Proposition 198, which called for enacting an open primary system. Similar to Prop. 60 it allowed voters, regardless of their party affiliation, to vote for any candidate in primary elections. However, unlike Prop. 60, the candidate from each party receiving the most votes in the primary would move on to the general election ballot.

This system was used for the primaries in California in both 1998 and 2000. However, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that this procedure was unconstitutional and as a result the state returned to its previous closed primary election system. Proposition 62 was designed by its backers to remove the features of Prop. 198 which the Supreme Court deemed unconstitutional.

Proposition 60 was placed on the ballot by the legislature to counter Proposition 62. It would essentially preserve the existing modified closed primary system by mandating that the candidate receiving the most votes in each party's primary election would become that party's nominee in the general election. The original version of Prop. 60 as passed by the legislature also included an unrelated provision calling for using the proceeds of state surplus property sales to help pay down the state's bond debt. However, a Sacramento appellate court ruled that the initiative violated the single subject rule, and it was divided into two separate measures. Thus, the provision relating to surplus property sales will appear separately from Prop. 60 on the November ballot, as Prop. 60a.

If both Proposition 62 and 60 pass, the one with the most votes will prevail.

## **Information About the Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on interviews conducted among a random sample of 1,034 Californians likely to vote in the November general election. Interviews were conducted by telephone in English and Spanish July 30 – August 8, 2004. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize possible voter fatigue, the overall sample was divided into two approximately equal sized subsamples. Questions about Props. 60 were asked of 500 likely voters, while questions about Props. 62 were asked of 534 likely voters. 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. 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 for each proposition have a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. 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**

Have you seen read or heard anything about Proposition 60, having to do with the election rights of political parties?

Proposition 60 is the "Election Rights of Political Parties" legislative constitutional amendment. It requires that the general election ballot include the candidate receiving the most votes from among candidates who ran in each party's primary election. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or No on Proposition 60?

Have you seen, read, or heard anything about Proposition 62, having to do with how primary elections are conducted in California?

Proposition 62 is the "Election, Primaries" initiative constitutional amendment. It requires primary elections where voters may vote for any state or federal candidate regardless of the party registration of the voter or the candidate. The two primary election candidates receiving the most votes for an office, whether they are candidates with the same or different parties, would be listed on the general election ballot. It exempts presidential nominations. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 62?