

# 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 CONTINUE TO FAVOR BOTH**  
**PRIMARY ELECTION RULES BALLOT**  
**PROPOSITIONS, ALTHOUGH MANY**  
**ARE UNDECIDED.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Two initiatives that voters will decide in the November election – Props. 62 and 60 – have to do with rules governing how primary elections are held in the state. While both appear to have more support than opposition, many voters remain undecided.

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

Proposition 60 calls for primary elections to remain partisan by guaranteeing that the political parties participating in the primary each have their leading vote-getter in the general election.

If both propositions should pass, the measure receiving the most votes would become law.

In three statewide surveys completed this year *The Field Poll* finds Prop. 62 holding a double-digit lead. In both the current and August surveys, voter opinions divide 44% yes, 31% no and 25% undecided. For Prop. 60, the yes side is ahead 34% to 16%, but a huge 50% of voters undecided. This is similar to what was found in the August survey.

Relatively few voters (24%) report having heard of either proposition prior to their being read its official ballot description.

**Prop. 62**

Likely voters were read a summary of Prop. 62’s official ballot label that voters will see when they go to the polls to vote, and asked how they would vote if the election were held today.

Overall, 44% say they would be inclined to vote Yes and 31% No, with 25% undecided. Democrats are currently supporting the measure 43% to 32%, while Republicans are more evenly divided. Non-partisans divide 56% yes and 21% no.

<b>Table 1</b>			
<b>Voter preferences regarding Proposition 62, the Elections, Primaries initiative (among likely voters)</b>			
	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>	<b><u>Undecided</u></b>
Total – Early October	44%	31	25
– August	44%	31	25
– May	50%	37	13
<b><u>Party</u></b>			
Democrats	43%	32	25
Republicans	39%	35	26
Non-partisans/others	56%	21	23

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

**Prop. 60**

When a summary of Prop. 60’s official ballot description was read to voters, 34% say they are inclined to vote yes, 16% would vote no, and a huge 50% are undecided. Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans currently favor Prop. 60.

<b>Table 2</b>			
<b>Voter preferences regarding Proposition 60, the Election Rights of Political Parties Legislative Constitutional Amendment (among likely voters)</b>			
	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>	<b><u>Undecided</u></b>
Total – Early October	34%	16	50
– August	39%	15	46
<b><u>Party</u></b>			
Democrats	39%	14	47
Republicans	29%	18	53
Non-partisans/others	33%	17	50

*Note: Not measured in May.*

## **Background**

In 1996, a nearly 60% majority of California voters approved Proposition 198, which called for enacting an open primary election system. Similar to Prop. 62, it allowed voters, regardless of their party affiliation, to vote for any candidate in primary elections. However, unlike Prop. 62, 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 that the Supreme Court deemed unconstitutional.

Proposition 60 was placed on the ballot by the legislature to counter Proposition 62. It would essentially preserve the state's 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.

If both Propositions 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 586 Californians likely to vote in the November general election. Interviews were conducted by telephone in English and Spanish September 30-October 3, 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 four 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 +/- 4.2 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**

Two initiatives on the November election ballot, Propositions 60 and 62, have to do with how primary elections are conducted in California. Have you seen, read or heard anything about these initiatives?

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?

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?