

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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Release #**2153**

**VOTERS NARROWLY BACK GOVERNOR'S
LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING PLAN.
SOME INITIAL SUPPORT FOR OTHER
SCHWARZENEGGER REFORM PROPOSALS.
BROAD DISAPPROVAL OF A SPECIAL
ELECTION IF IT COSTS \$50 – \$70 MILLION.**

Release Date: **Thursday, February 24, 2005**

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(ISSN 0195-4520)

by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

California voters think the way legislative districts were redrawn after the last census gave an unfair advantage to incumbents, and by a 48% to 40% margin initially support Governor's Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposal to change the way district lines are drawn.

There is also early voter support for four other reform proposals that Schwarzenegger announced in his state of the state message last month. These include tying teachers' salaries to classroom performance rather than tenure, consolidating many of the state's independent agencies into fewer, but larger agencies (which Schwarzenegger has subsequently withdrawn), doing away with the state's pension system for newly hired government employees and replacing it with a 401k retirement savings plan, and limiting increases in state spending to increases in the amount the state takes in and requiring across-the-board cuts to state programs when there are deficits.

By a 51% to 45% margin, voters narrowly approve of Schwarzenegger's threat to call a special election if the legislature fails to act on his reform proposals. However, once voters are told of its \$50 to \$70 million election cost, they reject the idea by a greater than two to one margin (67% to 30%).

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll*, completed last week among a random sampling of California adults and voters.

Is the state's current redistricting process fair?

The Schwarzenegger proposal drawing the most state and national attention is the governor's plan to take the power to draw legislative district lines away from the state legislature and give it to a panel of retired judges.

A preliminary question on this matter asked voters how much they knew about the redistricting process, and the survey finds most know little or nothing about it. Just one in ten voters (11%) maintained they had a great deal of knowledge about this, while another 27% said they knew something about it. By contrast, about six in ten voters (62%) said they knew only a little (34%) or nothing at all (28%) about the state's redistricting process.

When asked about the fairness of the way legislative district lines were drawn after the last census, by a greater than two to one margin (43% to 18%) voters say that it was not fair and balanced, and instead gave unfair advantage to the incumbent party in each district. Another 39% had no opinion.

There is a direct correlation in opinions about the fairness of the current system and a voter's knowledge about the redistricting process. Among voters who knew a great deal or something about the redistricting process, a greater than four to one majority (71% to 16%) believes the current system gives unfair advantage to the incumbent party.

Democrats think the current system is unfair by a three to one margin. Republicans and non-partisans also feel this way, but by narrower two to one margins.

Table 1

Was the way district lines were redrawn after the last census fair and balanced or did it give unfair advantage to the incumbent party in each district?

	<u>Gave unfair advantage</u>	<u>Fair and balanced</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Adults	39%	19	42
Registered voters	43%	18	39
<u>Knowledge of redistricting</u>			
Great deal/some	71%	16	13
Only a little	30%	26	44
Nothing at all	21%	11	68
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	48%	15	37
Republicans	39%	20	41
Non-partisans/others	40%	20	40

Change the redistricting process?

Despite the widespread feeling that the present redistricting process is unfair, only a small plurality of voters (48% to 40%) is currently backing the governor's proposal to change the way district lines are drawn.

Support for the idea of changing the way district lines are drawn is wider – 56% to 33% – among the minority of voters who know a great deal or something about the process.

While Republicans support the governor's proposal overwhelmingly (61% to 24%), Democrats and non-partisans are opposed by 47% to 42% and 52% to 38% margins, respectively.

Table 2
Opinion of Governor Schwarzenegger's proposal to change the way legislative district lines are drawn, taking the power away from the legislature and giving it to a panel of retired judges

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Adults	49%	39	12
Registered voters	48%	40	12
<u>Knowledge of redistricting</u>			
Great deal/some	56%	33	11
Only a little	46%	42	12
Nothing at all	39%	45	16
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	42%	47	11
Republicans	61%	24	15
Non-partisans/others	38%	52	10

Reactions to the governor's other reform proposals

Voters' also initially support each of four other Schwarzenegger proposals to reform the way state government operates.

The proposal receiving the widest backing (60% to 36%) is the idea of tying increases in teachers' salaries to classroom performance rather than tenure.

Three other proposals are supported by smaller majorities. They include consolidating many of the state's independent agencies into fewer, larger agencies (53% to 37%), doing away with the state's pension system for newly hired government employees and replacing it with a 401k retirement savings plan (51% to 38%), and limiting increasing in state spending to gains in the amounts it takes in and then requiring across-the-board cuts to all state programs when there are deficits (51% to 42%).

Large majorities of Republicans, ranging from 61% to 75%, support each of these proposals. On the other hand, while Democrats narrowly support the ideas of tying teacher salaries to performance rather than tenure and consolidating state agencies, they oppose scrapping the state's pension system and requiring across-the-board cuts to state funded programs when there are deficits.

Table 3			
Reactions to four other government reforms proposed by Governor Schwarzenegger (among registered voters)			
	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<u>“Tie increases in the salaries of public school teachers to their classroom performance rather than to their years of service”</u>			
Total registered voters	<u>60%</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>4</u>
Democrats	52%	45	3
Republicans	75%	22	3
Non-partisans/others	51%	45	4
<u>“Consolidate many of the state’s independent agencies, boards and commissions into fewer but larger agencies”</u>			
Total registered voters	<u>53%</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>10</u>
Democrats	49%	42	11
Republicans	61%	26	13
Non-partisans/others	47%	45	8
<u>“Do away with the state’s pension system for newly hired government employees and replace it with a 401k retirement savings plan”</u>			
Total registered voters	<u>51%</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>11</u>
Democrats	37%	50	13
Republicans	65%	26	9
Non-partisans/others	53%	36	11
<u>“Limit increases in total state government spending to increases in the amount of money it receives each year in taxes and require across-the-board cuts to all state-funded programs when there are deficits”</u>			
Total registered voters	<u>51%</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>7</u>
Democrats	41%	51	8
Republicans	64%	27	9
Non-partisans/others	47%	46	7

Special election

Schwarzenegger has threatened to call a special election this year if the legislature fails to act on his reform proposals. When this possibility is posed without any mention of its associated election costs, a small plurality (51% to 45%) of voters approves of the idea. However, when the special election’s potential \$50 to \$70 million in costs are cited, voters reject the governor’s call for a special election by a greater than two to one margin (67% to 30%).

While Republicans overwhelmingly support the idea of a special election (72% to 22%) when costs are not mentioned, they are more divided when the costs of holding such an election are cited (49% approve vs. 45% disapprove). Democrats and non-partisans initially oppose the governor’s plan to call a special election even before its costs are cited, and their opposition increases when its costs are included in the question.

Table 4
Reaction to the Governor’s idea to call a special election this year
if the legislature fails to act on his reform proposals
(with and without mention of its cost)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<u>Without mention of its cost</u>			
Total registered voters	<u>51%</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>4</u>
Democrats	36%	61	3
Republicans	72%	22	6
Non-partisans/others	45%	51	4
<u>When its potential cost of \$50 to \$70 million is cited</u>			
Total registered voters	<u>30%</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>3</u>
Democrats	17%	83	*
Republicans	49%	45	6
Non-partisans/others	27%	67	6

* Less than ½ of 1%.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a telephone survey of Californians conducted in English and Spanish. Interviews were completed during the period February 8 – 17, 2005 among a representative sample of 506 adults, including 404 registered voters.

Households were sampled using a random digit dial methodology, which includes all operating telephone exchanges within all area codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange a random sample of telephone numbers are created by adding random digits to the selected telephone exchange. This permits access to all landline telephone numbers both listed and unlisted.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall adult sample have a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points, while results from the registered voter portion of each random sub-sample have a sampling error of +/- 5.0 percentage points.

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

Questions Asked

Governor Schwarzenegger has proposed a number of changes in how state government functions. I am going to read some of them and for each, please tell me whether you favor or oppose this proposal. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Do you favor or oppose this proposal? (SEE RELEASE FOR ITEMS READ)

Following the 2000 census of the state's population, the state legislature redrew Congressional, State Senate and Assembly district lines throughout California. This is called redistricting. How much have you seen, read or heard about redistricting – a great deal, some, only a little or nothing at all?

Based on anything you may have seen or heard, do you feel that the way the state's district lines were redrawn after the last census was generally fair and balanced, or were they redrawn to give the incumbent party an unfair advantage when running for election in each district?

Governor Schwarzenegger has proposed changing the way district lines are drawn in California by taking this power away from the state legislature and giving it to a panel of retired judges. This change would require the approval of voters in an election. If the Governor's plan to change the way district lines are drawn were put to a vote, would you be inclined to vote YES or NO?

(NEXT TWO QUESTIONS ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLES OF VOTERS)

The Governor is considering calling a special statewide election later this year if the state legislature fails to act upon his government reform proposals. Do you favor or oppose the Governor calling for a special election in this situation?

The Governor is considering calling a special statewide election later this year if the state legislature fails to act upon his government reform proposals. Do you favor or oppose the Governor calling for a special election in this situation, even if it costs the state 50 to 70 million dollars to hold the election?