

# 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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**SCHWARZENEGGER'S AND STATE  
LEGISLATURE'S APPROVAL RATINGS  
REMAIN LOW. VOTERS WANT SPECIAL  
ELECTION CALLED OFF.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

The erosion in voter approval of Arnold Schwarzenegger's job performance as Governor, first observed early this year and which became more pronounced in June, continues in the most recent *Field Poll* completed earlier this week.

A majority (52%) of voters disapproves of the job Schwarzenegger is doing in office, while 36% approve. This sixteen-point negative gap is similar to what was found by *The Field Poll* two months ago. By contrast, one year ago at this time 65% approved of the Governor and just 22% disapproved.

One factor that has been turning off voters with regard to the Governor is his call for a November special election to deal with various initiatives he has proposed. Statewide, almost six in ten oppose the Governor's call for a special election and would support the possibility of calling off the election.

Whereas voters continue to rate the Governor's job performance in a negative light, their assessment of the job the state legislature is doing is even more unfavorable. Statewide, just 27% approve of the legislature's performance overall, while twice as many (54%) disapprove.

### **Trend in Schwarzenegger's job ratings**

Beginning in January 2004 and continuing through February of this year, majorities of voters approved of the job Schwarzenegger was doing as Governor. In fact, during a four month span between May and September 2004, two-thirds of voters consistently gave the Governor high job marks. That changed this past June, when a majority for the first time gave Schwarzenegger an unfavorable rating. The current poll finds most voters continuing to hold a negative view of the Governor's performance.

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**Table 1**  
**Trend of Arnold Schwarzenegger's job performance as Governor**  
**(among registered voters)**

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|                  | <u>Approve</u> | <u>Disapprove</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Late August 2005 | 36%            | 52                | 12                |
| June 2005        | 37%            | 53                | 10                |
| February 2005    | 55%            | 35                | 10                |
| September 2004   | 65%            | 22                | 13                |
| August 2004      | 65%            | 22                | 13                |
| May 2004         | 65%            | 23                | 12                |
| February 2004    | 56%            | 26                | 18                |
| January 2004     | 52%            | 27                | 21                |

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### **Big changes in ratings by sub-groups**

A comparison of the Governor's current job ratings with those he received one year ago shows just how dramatic and broad-based the reversal of voter opinion toward the Governor has been.

While the declines are greatest among Democrats, non-partisans, political moderates and liberals, a significant minority of Republicans and conservatives also disapproves of the Governor's performance.

Whereas majorities of voters across all major regions of the state approved of the job Schwarzenegger was doing last year, now large majorities in both Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area disapprove. In other regions of the state the Governor gets only mixed reviews from voters.

A gender gap has appeared as well, with women now more likely than men to be critical of the Governor. One year ago this was not the case.

The Governor's performance is also viewed quite negatively by Latino voters, as well as blacks and Asians, a reversal from opinions held last year. White non-Hispanics, who last year were overwhelmingly positive in their assessment of Schwarzenegger, now have a mixed view of him.

**Table 2**  
**Comparing Schwarzenegger's current job performance**  
**to his ratings one year ago – by subgroup**  
**(among registered voters)**

|  | <u>Late August 2005</u> |                   | <u>August 2004</u> |                   |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
|  | <u>Approve</u>          | <u>Disapprove</u> | <u>Approve</u>     | <u>Disapprove</u> |
| Total statewide                              | 36%                     | 52                | 65%                | 22                |
| <u>Likely voter in 2005 special election</u> |                         |                   |                    |                   |
| Yes  | 40%                     | 51                | N/A                | N/A               |
| No   | 29%                     | 54                | N/A                | N/A               |
| <u>Party</u>                                 |                         |                   |                    |                   |
| Democrats                                    | 17%                     | 73                | 45%                | 36                |
| Republicans                                  | 67%                     | 21                | 90%                | 5                 |
| Non-partisans/others                         | 28%                     | 57                | 61%                | 23                |
| <u>Region</u>                                |                         |                   |                    |                   |
| Los Angeles County                           | 32%                     | 59                | 66%                | 23                |
| Other Southern California                    | 43%                     | 43                | 71%                | 17                |
| Central Valley                               | 42%                     | 46                | 68%                | 20                |
| San Francisco Bay Area                       | 26%                     | 62                | 55%                | 27                |
| Other Northern California*                   | 44%                     | 46                | 58%                | 29                |
| <u>Gender</u>                                |                         |                   |                    |                   |
| Male   | 41%                     | 49                | 66%                | 22                |
| Female                                       | 32%                     | 54                | 63%                | 23                |
| <u>Race/ethnicity</u>                        |                         |                   |                    |                   |
| White non-Hispanic                           | 43%                     | 44                | 70%                | 18                |
| Latino                                       | 20%                     | 73                | 56%                | 32                |
| Black/Asian/other                            | 26%                     | 59                | 55%                | 33                |
| <u>Age</u>                                   |                         |                   |                    |                   |
| 18-39  | 33%                     | 53                | 68%                | 21                |
| 40-64  | 39%                     | 51                | 64%                | 22                |
| 65 or older                                  | 37%                     | 52                | 59%                | 24                |
| <u>Political ideology</u>                    |                         |                   |                    |                   |
| Conservative                                 | 64%                     | 26                | 79%                | 13                |
| Moderate                                     | 29%                     | 56                | 67%                | 20                |
| Liberal                                      | 15%                     | 78                | 40%                | 37                |

\* Small sample size.

N/A: Not applicable in 2004.

Note: differences between 100% and the sum of each subgroup's percentages equal the proportion with no opinion in each poll.

### **Performance not meeting expectations**

Schwarzenegger took office in November 2003 after a dramatic victory in a special recall election that saw Democratic Governor Gray Davis ousted from office. After Schwarzenegger's first six months in office, a huge proportion of voters (64%) felt that he was doing a better job than they had expected, and only 11% thought he was doing a worse job than they felt he would.

With the passage of time, however, voters have become much more disappointed. Almost one-half of the voting electorate (47%) say that the Governor is now doing a worse job than they expected, while just 28% see him exceeding their expectations.

Two-thirds (66%) of Democrats, 26% of Republicans and 42% of non-partisans now consider Schwarzenegger's performance as being worse than they expected when he was elected almost two years ago.

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**Table 3**  
**Do you think Schwarzenegger is doing a better job as Governor than you expected or a worse job than you expected? (among registered voters)**

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|                                   | <b><u>Worse job</u></b> | <b><u>Better job</u></b> | <b><u>About what I expected</u></b> | <b><u>No opinion</u></b> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Late August 2005                  | 47%                     | 28                       | 21                                  | 4                        |
| August 2004                       | 13%                     | 54                       | 24                                  | 9                        |
| May 2004                          | 11%                     | 64                       | 15                                  | 10                       |
| <b><u>Party (August 2005)</u></b> |                         |                          |                                     |                          |
| Democrats                         | 66%                     | 12                       | 19                                  | 3                        |
| Republicans                       | 26%                     | 46                       | 25                                  | 3                        |
| Non-partisans/others              | 42%                     | 32                       | 19                                  | 7                        |

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### **Negative reaction to special election**

Opposition to the idea of holding a special election this fall has been growing ever since Schwarzenegger first suggested it earlier this year. At present, 57% oppose the idea of holding a special election in November. When the costs of holding the election are cited, opposition grows even more.

**Table 4**  
**Voter reaction to the Governor's call for a special election this year**  
**(among registered voters)**

|   | <u>Oppose</u> | <u>Favor</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|---|---------------|--------------|-------------------|
| <u>Without mention of its cost</u>      |               |              |                   |
| Late August 2005                        | 57%           | 30           | 13                |
| June 2005                               | 52%           | 37           | 11                |
| February 2005                           | 45%           | 51           | 4                 |
| <u>When its potential cost is cited</u> |               |              |                   |
| Late August 2005                        | 63%           | 30           | 7                 |
| June 2005                               | 61%           | 28           | 11                |
| February 2005                           | 67%           | 30           | 3                 |

In addition, 57% of voters now say they would support the idea of the Governor calling off the special election. While large majorities of Democrats (78%) and non-partisans (61%) favor canceling the special election, a significant proportion of Republicans (29%) also feel this way.

**Table 5**  
**Should the Governor proceed with the special election or call it off?**  
**(among registered voters)**

|                                       | <u>Call off election</u> | <u>Proceed with it</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Total voters                          | 57%                      | 34                     | 9                 |
| <u>Party</u>                          |                          |                        |                   |
| Democrats                             | 78%                      | 12                     | 10                |
| Republicans                           | 29%                      | 62                     | 9                 |
| Non-partisans/others                  | 61%                      | 31                     | 8                 |
| <u>Likelihood to vote in election</u> |                          |                        |                   |
| Likely voter                          | 51%                      | 42                     | 7                 |
| Not a likely voter                    | 71%                      | 14                     | 15                |

**State legislature ratings even lower than Governor's**

As poorly as voters view the Governor's performance, their assessment of the job the state legislature is doing is even more negative. More than one-half (54%) now disapprove of the job that the lawmakers are doing and just 27% approve. Since *The Field Poll* began rating the performance of the state legislature more than twenty years ago, voter assessments of that body over the past two and one-half years have been among its poorest.

Voters of all political parties have a more negative than positive view of the legislature's performance.

**Table 6**  
**Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing**  
**(among registered voters)**

|                                 | <u>Approve</u> | <u>Disapprove</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Late August 2005                | 27%            | 54                | 19                |
| June 2005                       | 24%            | 57                | 19                |
| February 2005                   | 34%            | 52                | 14                |
| September 2004                  | 33%            | 46                | 21                |
| August 2004                     | 33%            | 49                | 18                |
| May 2004                        | 27%            | 52                | 21                |
| February 2004                   | 26%            | 58                | 16                |
| January 2004                    | 23%            | 62                | 15                |
| July 2003                       | 19%            | 67                | 14                |
| April 2003                      | 31%            | 51                | 18                |
| September 2002                  | 35%            | 46                | 19                |
| July 2002                       | 45%            | 36                | 9                 |
| April 2002                      | 39%            | 41                | 20                |
| January 2002                    | 40%            | 36                | 24                |
| December 2001                   | 44%            | 33                | 23                |
| September 2001                  | 41%            | 39                | 20                |
| May 2001                        | 35%            | 48                | 17                |
| January 2001                    | 51%            | 29                | 20                |
| June 2000                       | 47%            | 27                | 26                |
| February 2000                   | 49%            | 22                | 29                |
| October 1999                    | 46%            | 29                | 25                |
| August 1999                     | 43%            | 27                | 30                |
| March 1999                      | 47%            | 28                | 25                |
| August 1998                     | 45%            | 33                | 22                |
| August 1997                     | 37%            | 46                | 17                |
| February 1997                   | 39%            | 34                | 27                |
| September 1996                  | 43%            | 45                | 12                |
| June 1996                       | 38%            | 53                | 9                 |
| February 1995                   | 34%            | 59                | 7                 |
| May 1993                        | 28%            | 64                | 8                 |
| September 1992                  | 28%            | 67                | 5                 |
| July 1992                       | 26%            | 68                | 6                 |
| January 1992                    | 41%            | 57                | 3                 |
| August 1990                     | 45%            | 48                | 7                 |
| February 1988                   | 57%            | 36                | 7                 |
| June 1983                       | 43%            | 49                | 8                 |
| <u>Party (Late August 2005)</u> |                |                   |                   |
| Democrats                       | 34%            | 46                | 20                |
| Republicans                     | 24%            | 63                | 13                |
| Non-partisan/other              | 16%            | 54                | 30                |

*Note: Measures prior to 1997 conducted among all adults using a three- or five-point response scale, which was converted to the current two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes.*

### **Reaction to pro and con statements about Governor Schwarzenegger**

In recent months the media has been reporting a number of charges and counter charges about Schwarzenegger's style and activities as Governor. In this survey some of these media comments were presented to voters in a series of statements. For each, voters were asked about whether they agreed or disagreed. Results show that views of the Governor's style and leadership qualities are mixed.

A large majority of voters (64%) agree that "Governor Schwarzenegger should scale back his confrontational style with the legislature and rely more on negotiation and compromise." This compares to about one in four (27%) who disagree and 9% who have no opinion.

On the other hand, 80% also agree that "whether or not Schwarzenegger had affairs with women before he became Governor, (this) is not relevant to his ability to successfully carry out his current duties and responsibilities as Governor." Just 15% disagree and 5% have no opinion.

About twice as many voters agree (50%) as disagree (25%) with this statement: "Governor Schwarzenegger talks about reducing the power of special interests in Sacramento, but he is taking as much if not more money from them than previous California governors." And, by a 45% to 30% plurality, voters also concur that "Governor Schwarzenegger has not been completely truthful when it comes to reporting where his campaign contributions come from."

On the other hand, the legislature shoulders more of the blame than the Governor when voters are asked which group is more at fault for blocking needed reforms of state government. In response to the statement, "the state legislature is more to blame than Governor Schwarzenegger for blocking reforms needed to improve the way state government is run," 49% agree and 35% disagree.

Finally, 56% disagree and 38% agree with the view that "Governor Schwarzenegger is providing the kind of leadership that California needs right now."

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**Table 7**  
**Reaction to pro and con statements about Governor Schwarzenegger**  
**(among registered voters)**

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|   | <u>Agree</u> | <u>Disagree</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|---|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <u>Pro</u>  |              |                 |                   |
| Whether or not Schwarzenegger had affairs with women before he became Governor is not relevant to his ability to successfully carry out his current duties and responsibilities as Governor | 80%          | 15              | 5                 |
| The state legislature is more to blame than Governor Schwarzenegger for blocking the reforms needed to improve the way state government is run  | 49%          | 35              | 16                |
| Governor Schwarzenegger is providing the kind of leadership that California needs right now   | 38%          | 56              | 6                 |
| <u>Con</u>  |              |                 |                   |
| Governor Schwarzenegger should scale back his confrontational style with the legislature and rely more on negotiation and compromise  | 64%          | 27              | 9                 |
| Governor Schwarzenegger talks about reducing the power of special interests in Sacramento, but he is taking as much if not more money from them than previous California governors          | 50%          | 26              | 24                |
| Governor Schwarzenegger has not been completely truthful when it comes to reporting where his campaign contributions are coming from  | 45%          | 30              | 25                |

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## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a survey of a random sample of 1,301 California adults contacted by telephone August 19-29, 2005 in English and Spanish, including 891 registered voters. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize possible voter fatigue, the overall sample of registered voters was divided into two approximately equal-sized subsamples on some of the questions.

Households were sampled using a random digit dial methodology, which randomly selects operating telephone exchanges within all areas codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange, telephone numbers are created by adding random digits to the selected telephone exchange. This method permits access to all landline telephone numbers statewide, both listed and unlisted, and gives each residential phone listing an equal chance of being selected.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall registered voter sample have a sampling error of +/- 3.4 percentage points, while findings from each of the random subsamples have a sampling error of +/- 4.7 percentage points.

### **Questions Asked**

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as Governor of California?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the California state legislature is doing its job?

Governor Schwarzenegger has called a special statewide election for November 8 in which voters will be asked to decide on a number of statewide ballot propositions. (Holding the special election is expected to cost the state between 45 and 80 million dollars.) Do you favor or oppose the Governor's call for a special election on November 8? (HALF OF THE SAMPLE WERE TOLD OF THE ELECTION COSTS, WHILE HALF WERE NOT)

Some people are advising Schwarzenegger to call off the special election this year. Others say the election should move forward. What do you think? Do you think Schwarzenegger should proceed with his call for the special election or should he call it off?

As you know, Governor Schwarzenegger took office almost two years ago. Do you think Schwarzenegger is doing a better job as Governor than you expected or a worse job than you expected?

Next, I am going to read some statements that have been made about Governor Schwarzenegger. For each one, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with it. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER) Do you agree or disagree? (SEE RELEASE FOR STATEMENTS READ)