

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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OPINIONS OF SCHWARZENEGGER HAVE REBOUNDED FROM LAST YEAR, BUT HAVE NOT RETURNED TO THEIR FORMER 2004 LEVELS.

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

The views that registered voters have of Arnold Schwarzenegger and his performance in office have changed considerably over his nearly three years as Governor.

- More voters now approve (48%) than disapprove (37%) of Schwarzenegger's overall job performance, a reversal from much more negative appraisals he received throughout most of 2005. However, the Governor's job ratings have not returned to the near historic highs he received during his first year in office, when voters rated his performance positively nearly three to one.
- More voters now hold a favorable (49%) than unfavorable (41%) view of the Governor as a person. This represents an improvement in Schwarzenegger's image rating from late last year and earlier this year when more voters gave a negative assessment, but remains lower than the extremely positive image voters had of him in 2004 and early 2005.
- About twice as many voters now say that Schwarzenegger is doing a better job as Governor than they expected (50%) as feel his performance is worse than they expected (27%). This is a complete reversal from last year, but is also not as positive an assessment as those he received in his first year.
- With regard to Schwarzenegger's leadership capabilities, a 51% to 43% majority now agree that he is "providing the leadership that California needs right now." This is a big improvement over how voters felt about the Governor's leadership last year, when 56% disagreed and 38% agreed with this statement.

- One negative shift in voter perceptions of the Governor that has occurred over the past two years is that more voters now believe that when making decisions on important policy matters Schwarzenegger is more likely to do what is politically popular (48%) than what he believes is right (41%). This contrasts with the views that voters held in 2004 when, by a 61% to 28% margin, voters felt Schwarzenegger made such decisions more on what he believed than what was politically expedient.
- Another area where voters are now more critical of the Governor relates to his 2003 recall election campaign promise to reduce the power of special interests in Sacramento. The current survey finds that a majority (51%) of voters thinks Schwarzenegger has done little or nothing to reduce the influence of special interests, while 41% feel he has done a great deal or some in this regard. Two years ago fewer voters (41%) felt the Governor had done little or nothing in reducing the power of special interests.
- Voters offer a less positive assessment of whether the Governor has followed through on his promise to change the way state government is run. Statewide 49% believe he has done so to some extent, but 47% feel he has only little or nothing in this area. This is a more critical appraisal than was observed two years ago, when the question was last posed.
- Voters are divided when asked whom they'd be more inclined to support if Schwarzenegger and the state legislature disagreed on an important state issue, with 40% saying they'd side with leaders in the legislature, and 39% siding with the Governor. While this represents a slight improvement in the Governor's standing vis-à-vis the legislature from last year, he is currently in a weaker position than he was throughout all of 2004.
- The job ratings that voters give to the state legislature remain more negative (46%) than positive (34%), although this represents an improvement since May. One factor contributing to this negative assessment is the view, shared by a 59% majority, that the legislature is more to blame than the Governor for blocking the reforms needed to improve the way the state is run.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* conducted September 14 – 24 among a representative sample of 739 registered voters.

Upward trend in Schwarzenegger's overall job performance job ratings

By a 48% to 37% margin, more voters now approve than disapprove of the job Schwarzenegger is doing as governor. This assessment continues a trend of more positive voter assessments of his performance throughout 2006 and represents a big improvement from the much more negative than positive views that voters had of the Governor throughout most of 2005. Yet, the Governor's current ratings are not nearly as positive as those he received throughout 2004, when three to one majorities of voters viewed his performance in a positive light.

Opinions of the Governor’s job performance are highly partisan, with a 59% to 28% majority of Democrats having a negative opinion, while Republicans view his performance positively by a 76% to 13% margin. Among non-partisans 44% approve, 31% disapprove, and 25% are undecided.

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

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late September 2006	48%	37	15
July 2006	49%	40	11
Late May 2006	41%	46	13
April 2006	39%	47	14
February 2006	40%	49	11
October 2005	37%	56	7
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
<u>Party (Late Sept. 2006)</u>			
Democrats	28%	59	13
Republicans	76%	13	11
Non-partisans/others*	44%	31	25

* Small sample sizes.

Changes in voter impressions

When Schwarzenegger first burst upon the political scene in 2003 after a successful career as a movie and body building celebrity, voters initially held a mixed view of him as a political personality, with about as many holding a unfavorable view as a favorable view.

However, following Schwarzenegger’s victory in the historic October 2003 recall election and his early successes as Governor in working with the legislature to first place on the ballot and then persuade voters to approve Proposition 57, the Economic Recovery Bond Act, voter impressions of the Governor soared. A May 2004 *Field Poll* found 64% of voters holding a favorable impression of opinion and just 25% an unfavorable view.

During 2005 Schwarzenegger’s standing with voters plummeted, as he took a more confrontation stance with the legislature and he called what turned out to be a very unpopular special election to

enact a number of initiatives that he proposed or backed, all of which were rejected by the voters. It was at that time that voter impressions of Schwarzenegger reached a low point, with 54% viewing him unfavorably and 38% holding a favorable view.

In two subsequent *Field Poll* surveys taken earlier this year, voter perceptions of the Governor became somewhat less critical. In July his image returned to positive territory, with 51% holding a favorable view and 44% unfavorable.

The current survey finds voters remaining more positive than negative in their assessments of Schwarzenegger, with 49% now viewing him positively and 41% negatively.

Table 2
Trend of voter image ratings of Arnold Schwarzenegger
(among registered voters)

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late September 2006*	49%	41	10
July 2006	51%	44	5
Late-May 2006	46%	46	8
February 2006	44%	49	7
October 2005	38%	54	8
February 2005	62%	33	5
May 2004	64%	25	11
Early October 2003	48%	41	11
Late September 2003	46%	48	6
Early September 2003	42%	41	17
Early August 2003	44%	37	19
<u>Party (Late Sept. 2006)*</u>			
Democrats	26%	63	11
Republicans	80%	14	6
Non-partisans/others	50%	38	12

* Current survey conducted among likely voters in the November general election.

More say the Governor is performing better than they expected

Almost twice as many voters (50%) say that Schwarzenegger is doing a better job than they expected as feel he is doing worse than they expected (27%). Another 19% see him performing about as they expected and 4% have no opinion. This generally positive assessment represents a reversal from opinions expressed last year, when 47% felt he was doing worse than they expected and just 28% thought he was doing better than expected. On the other hand, current assessments are not nearly as positive as they were in 2004 when the proportion of voters who thought the Governor was doing better than expected exceeded those who felt he was doing poorer than expected by margins of five and six to one.

The view that Schwarzenegger's performance is exceeding voters' own personal expectations crosses party lines, with pluralities of Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans feeling this way.

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

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>As expected</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late September 2006	50%	27	19	4
August 2005	28%	47	21	4
August 2004	54%	13	24	9
May 2004	64%	11	15	10
<u>Democrats</u>				
Late September 2006	47%	33	17	3
August 2005	12%	66	19	3
August 2004	44%	18	28	10
May 2004	55%	17	17	11
<u>Republicans</u>				
Late September 2006	54%	20	24	2
August 2005	46%	26	25	3
August 2004	66%	8	22	4
May 2004	77%	2	14	7
<u>Non-partisans/others*</u>				
Late September 2006	49%	27	17	7
August 2005	32%	42	19	7
August 2004	55%	10	22	13
May 2004	60%	16	14	10

* Small sample sizes

More now feel the Governor does what is politically expedient on important policy matters

One of the biggest changes in voter opinions of Schwarzenegger over the past two years is that a plurality (48%) now believe that on important policy matters he does what is politically popular rather than what he believes is right (41%). By contrast, in February 2004 61% felt the Governor acted more on conviction and just 28% felt he tended to do what was politically popular.

By a 61% to 24% margin Democrats feel Schwarzenegger does what is politically expedient than what he believes is right. This contrasts with the view of Republicans, a majority of whom feel Schwarzenegger acts more out of conviction when making important policy decisions. Non-partisans are about evenly divided on this question.

Table 4
When making decisions on important policy matters, is Governor Schwarzenegger more likely to do what he really believes is right or what is politically popular?
(among registered voters)

	<u>What he believes is right</u>	<u>What is popular</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late September 2006	41%	48	11
February 2004	61%	28	11
<u>Democrats</u>			
Late September 2006	24%	61	15
February 2004	44%	42	14
<u>Republicans</u>			
Late September 2006	56%	31	13
February 2004	82%	10	8
<u>Non-partisans/others*</u>			
Late September 2006	48%	47	5
February 2004	58%	29	13

* Small sample sizes.

Improved views of Governor's leadership abilities

Last year a five to three majority of voters disagreed that Schwarzenegger was “providing the leadership that California needs right now.” Now, more voters agree (51%) than disagree (43%) with this statement.

There continues to be big partisan differences of opinion on this, with two in three Democrats disagreeing and seven in ten Republicans agreeing. However, there has been a decided shift in the opinions of non-partisans with regard to the Governor's leadership abilities over the past year. Currently, by a 60% to 38% margin non-partisans agree that Schwarzenegger is providing the leadership the state needs right now, a reversal from a 56% to 35% negative appraisal last year.

Table 5
**Agree/Disagree: “Governor Schwarzenegger is providing the
 kind of leadership that California needs right now.”**
(among registered voters)

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late September 2006	51%	43	6
August 2005	38%	56	6
<u>Democrats</u>			
Late September 2006	30%	65	5
August 2005	16%	81	4
<u>Republicans</u>			
Late September 2006	71%	19	10
August 2005	67%	27	6
<u>Non-partisans/others*</u>			
Late September 2006	60%	38	2
August 2005	35%	56	9

* Small sample sizes.

Majority sees Governor doing little or nothing to reduce the power of special interests

When Schwarzenegger first ran for Governor in the 2003 recall election, one of his main campaign pledges was to reduce the power of special interests in Sacramento. When voters are asked the extent to which he has followed through on this promise, a majority (51%) feels he has done little or nothing, while 41% maintain that he has done a great deal or some in this area. This is a more critical assessment than how voters viewed Schwarzenegger on this score two years ago, when voters were more divided in their assessments.

Democrats are much more critical of Schwarzenegger on this score than Republicans. Among Democrats 70% feel he has done little or nothing to reduce the influence of special interests, and just 26% believing he has done a great deal or something. By contrast, a 61% majority of Republicans see him as doing a great deal or something about this, while 30% feel he is doing little or nothing. The views of non-partisans are close to the views of the overall electorate, with 49% feeling he has done little or nothing in this area and 39% saying he has done a great deal or something.

Table 6
To what extent has Governor Schwarzenegger followed through
on his promise to reduce the power of special interests
(among registered voters)

	Great deal/ some	Little/not at all	No opinion
Late September 2006	41%	51	8
October 2004	37%	41	22
<u>Democrats</u>			
Late September 2006	26%	70	4
October 2004	23%	57	20
<u>Republicans</u>			
Late September 2006	61%	30	9
October 2004	52%	21	27
<u>Non-partisans/others*</u>			
Late September 2006	39%	49	12
October 2004	42%	42	18

* Small sample sizes.

Mixed views about whether Schwarzenegger has changed the way state government is run

Another of Governor Schwarzenegger's campaign promises during the 2003 recall election was that he would change the way state government was run. Voters currently hold divided views as to whether he has followed through on this pledge. Currently, 49% of voters say that Schwarzenegger has done a great deal or some, while 47% had that he has done little or nothing about this. This is also a more critical assessment than the one voters held of the Governor two years ago in this regard.

A majority of Democrats (61%) now feel Schwarzenegger has done little or nothing to change the way state government is done, while 64% of Republicans say he has done a great deal or something about this. Non-partisans are about evenly divided.

Table 7
To what extent has Governor Schwarzenegger followed through
on his promise to change the way state government is run
(among registered voters)

	Great deal/ some	Little/not at all	No opinion
Late September 2006	49%	47	4
October 2004	54%	38	8
<u>Democrats</u>			
Late September 2006	37%	61	2
October 2004	41%	55	4
<u>Republicans</u>			
Late September 2006	64%	31	5
October 2004	72%	17	11
<u>Non-partisans/others*</u>			
Late September 2006	50%	45	5
October 2004	50%	39	11

* Small sample sizes.

Voters divided over whom they'd support if the Governor and state legislature disagreed on an important policy matter

Voters are now about evenly divided with regard to whom they would support if the Governor and leaders in the state legislature disagreed on an important policy issue. At present, 40% say they would be inclined to side with leaders in the legislature, while 39% would side with the Governor. These findings represent a slight improvement for the Governor compared to a similar measure taken in June of last year, but are not as positive as they were in 2004, when pluralities of voters tended to side more with the Governor than the legislature on these matters.

Views about this are highly partisan, with Democrats inclined to support leaders in the legislature by a three to one margin and Republicans more inclined to back the Governor greater than five to one. Non-partisans hold views more closely aligned with the Democrats than the Republicans about this.

Table 8
If the Governor and leaders in the state legislature disagreed on an important policy issue, whose position would you be more inclined to support?
(among registered voters)

	<u>The Governor</u>	<u>Leaders in the state legislature</u>	<u>Neither/ No opinion</u>
Late September 2006	39%	40	21
June 2005	33%	44	23
February 2005	37%	40	23
May 2004	47%	29	24
February 2004	43%	32	25
January 2004	48%	30	22
<i>Party (Late Sept. 2006)</i>			
Democrats	19%	57	24
Republicans	67%	12	21
Non-partisans/others*	31%	50	19

* Small sample size.

Job ratings of the legislature improve some, but remain more negative than positive

Californians have held a critical view of the job performance of the state legislature for the past four years. While voter assessments of the legislature remain more negative than positive, they have improved some compared to recent measures. Currently 34% of voters approve of the job the state legislature is doing overall, while 46% disapprove.

Republicans are the most critical of the legislature's job performance, giving it a two to one negative assessment (57% to 28%). Democrats are slightly more inclined to approve than disapprove by a narrow margin, while more non-partisans disapprove than approve.

Table 9
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 September 2006	34%	46	20
Late May 2006	26%	51	23
April 2006	28%	56	16
February 2006	31%	48	21
October 2005	26%	58	16
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
2002 (average)	40%	40	20
2001 (average)	43%	37	20
2000 (average)	48%	25	27
1999 (average)	45%	28	27
1998 (average)	45%	33	22
1997 (average)	38%	40	22
1996 (average)	41%	49	10
1995 (average)	34%	59	7
1993 (average)	28%	64	8
1992 (average)	32%	64	4
1990 (average)	45%	48	7
1988 (average)	57%	36	7
1983 (average)	43%	49	8
<u>Party (Late Sept. 2006)</u>			
Democrats	42%	38	20
Republicans	28%	57	15
Non-partisan/other*	29%	45	26

Note: Measures prior to 1996 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.

** Small sample size.*

Voters feel the legislature is more to blame than the Governor in blocking needed reforms

By a nearly two to one margin (59% to 31%) voters feel that “the state legislature is more to blame than Governor Schwarzenegger for blocking the reforms needed to improve the way state government is run.” This is an even more critical view of the legislature vis-à-vis the Governor than voters held last year.

Republicans are nearly unanimous in their view that the legislature is more to blame than the Governor in blocking needed reforms, while Democrats are more divided. Non-partisans fault the state legislature more than the Governor on this by a five to three margin.

Table 10
Agree/Disagree: “The state legislature is more to blame than Governor Schwarzenegger for blocking the reforms needed to improve the way state government is run.”
(among registered voters)

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late September 2006	59%	31	10
August 2005	49%	35	16
<u>Democrats</u>			
Late September 2006	42%	49	9
August 2005	34%	49	17
<u>Republicans</u>			
Late September 2006	86%	10	4
August 2005	68%	22	10
<u>Non-partisans/others*</u>			
Late September 2006	53%	31	16
August 2005	49%	29	22

* Small sample sizes.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 739 California registered voters. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period September 14 – 24, 2006. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize respondent fatigue, most of the questions in this report were administered to a random subsample of either 370 or 369 registered voters statewide.

The voters interviewed in this survey were drawn from telephone listings of individual voters selected from a stratified random sample of registered voters listed on official registered voter rolls in California. Once a voter's name and telephone number are selected, interviews are attempted only with the specific voter selected.

In an effort to include "hard to reach" voters" into the sample, up to 8 attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day. Results from the overall registered voter sample were weighted following the completion of interviewing to conform to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the likely voter sample have a sampling error of +/- 5.3 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, the sequencing of questions, the rigor with which sampling procedures were implemented, as well as through undetected errors or omissions in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

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

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the California state legislature is doing its job?

Do you think Schwarzenegger is doing a better job as Governor than you expected or a worse job than you expected?

When making decisions on important policy matters facing the state, do you think Governor Schwarzenegger is more likely to do what he really believes is right or do what is politically popular?

When Governor Schwarzenegger was first running for governor in 2003 he proposed to change the way state government is run. To what extent do you think Schwarzenegger has followed through on his promise – a great deal, some a little or not at all?

When Governor Schwarzenegger was first running for governor in 2003 he proposed to reduce the power of special interests in Sacramento. To what extent do you think Schwarzenegger has followed through on his promise – a great deal, some a little or not at all?

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. (STATEMENTS READ IN RANDOM ORDER)

- (1) Governor Schwarzenegger is providing the kind of leadership that California needs right now. Do you agree or disagree?
- (2) The state legislature is more to blame than Governor Schwarzenegger for blocking the reforms needed to improve the way state government is run. Do you agree or disagree?

If Governor Schwarzenegger's position on an important state issue differed from that of the leaders in the state legislature, whose position would you be more inclined to support – Governor Schwarzenegger's or the leaders in the state legislature?