

# 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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**GROWING DISPARITY BETWEEN HOW CALIFORNIANS' APPRAISE THE JOBS BUSH AND SCHWARZENEGGER ARE DOING. SEE U.S. AND CALIFORNIA HEADING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

One of the more unusual aspects of California public opinion in 2006 has been the growing disparity between the way voters are appraising the job performance of the two top Republican office holders – President George W. Bush and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Californians' view of the overall performance of President Bush remains in a very deep trough. At present, just 29% of this state's registered voters approve of the job Bush is doing as President, while 61% disapprove. By contrast, voter opinions of Schwarzenegger's performance have improved throughout 2006, with 48% now approving and 37% disapproving of the job he is doing as Governor.

A similar distinct gulf exists in the way voters perceive the overall direction the U.S. is heading vs. the direction that California is heading.

Voters here continue to view the overall direction the U.S. is heading in a very negative light, with 57% feeling the U.S. is seriously off on the wrong track and just 30% thinking it is moving in the right direction. On the other hand, more voters see California heading in the right direction (49%) than think it is seriously off on the wrong track (36%).

### **Bush's job performance continues to be viewed very negatively in California**

California voters have not budged in their long standing negative appraisal of President George W. Bush in his overall job rating. Overall disapproval of the job Bush is doing as President (61%) is greater than two times the proportion who approve of his performance (29%). This is in sharp contrast to the generally positive view that Californians now have of the job Schwarzenegger is doing as Governor.

Table 1 compares the trends in how Californians have rated the job performances of Bush and Schwarzenegger at comparable points in time over the past three years.

**Table 1**  
**Comparing the trend in overall job appraisals of George W. Bush as President**  
**to Arnold Schwarzenegger as Governor**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>George W. Bush</u>			<u>Arnold Schwarzenegger</u>		
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>Late Sept. 2006</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>15</b>
July 2006	32%	61	7	49%	40	11
Late May 2006	28%	65	7	41%	46	13
April 2006	32%	62	6	39%	47	14
Feb. 2006	38%	56	6	40%	49	11
Oct. 2005	34%	60	6	37%	56	7
Aug. 2005	38%	55	7	36%	52	12
June 2005	36%	56	8	37%	53	10
Feb. 2005	41%	56	3	55%	35	10
Oct. 2004	43%	54	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sept. 2004	N/A	N/A	N/A	65%	22	13
Aug. 2004	41%	55	4	65%	22	13
May 2004	43%	52	5	65%	23	12
Feb. 2004	43%	51	6	56%	26	18
Jan. 2004	52%	42	6	52%	27	21
Sept. 2003	46%	48	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
Aug. 2003	50%	45	5	N/A	N/A	N/A
July 2003	51%	43	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
July 2002	63%	28	9	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jan. 2002	72%	21	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sept. 2001 (post-9/11 attack)	74%	16	10	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sept. 2001 (pre-9/11 attack)	41%	48	11	N/A	N/A	N/A
May 2001	42%	44	14	N/A	N/A	N/A
<u>Party (Late Sept. 2006)</u>						
Democrats	8%	86	6	28%	59	13
Republicans	61%	25	14	76%	13	11
Non-partisans/others*	18%	68	14	44%	31	25

\* Small sample base.

N/A: Not asked.

### **Nearly seven in ten disapprove of Bush's handling of the war in Iraq**

A big factor in Bush's current negative appraisal is the growing disapproval of the President's handling of the war in Iraq. In ten previous surveys going back more than two years large majorities have disapproved of Bush's handling of the war in Iraq. Now, disapproval has reach a new high – 69%.

**Table 2**  
**Trend of voter appraisals of the job President Bush is doing**  
**in handling the war in Iraq**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>Late September 2006</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>5</b>
July 2006	28%	67	5
April 2006	31%	65	4
February 2006	35%	61	4
Late October 2005	33%	64	3
August 2005	34%	60	6
June 2005	36%	60	5
February 2005	39%	58	3
October 2004	37%	60	3
August 2004	36%	61	3
May 2004	37%	60	3
February 2004	43%	52	5
January 2004	51%	45	4
September 2003	40%	52	8
August 2003	52%	44	4
April 2003	60%	37	3
<u>Party (Late Sept. 2006)</u>			
Democrats	7%	89	4
Republicans	57%	38	5
Non-partisans/others*	12%	76	12

\* Small sample base.

### **Majority disapproves of the President's efforts in reducing the terrorist threat**

Between January 2002 and October 2004, voters by varying margins approved of the job the President was doing in reducing the terrorist threat. Now, for the first time, a plurality of Californians disapprove of the President in this regard, with 51% disapproving and 42% approving.

**Table 3**  
**Trend of voter appraisals of the job President Bush**  
**is doing in reducing the terrorist threat**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>Late September 2006</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>7</b>
Early October 2004	53%	44	3
August 2004	47%	48	5
February 2004	59%	33	8
September 2003	64%	31	5
September 2002*	63%	32	5
July 2002*	72%	21	7
April 2002*	69%	25	6
January 2002*	82%	13	5
<u>Party (Late Sept. 2006)</u>			
Democrats	23%	70	7
Republicans	72%	23	5
Non-partisans/others**	35%	56	9

\* Wording of question asked about Bush's handling of "the war against terrorism."

\*\* Small sample base.

### **Californians see U.S. and California heading in different directions**

Californians remain quite pessimistic when asked to assess the overall direction that the U.S. is heading. At present, just 30% of voters feels the country is heading in the right direction, while 57% see it moving seriously off on the wrong track. These findings are similar to those found in July and have remained more negative than positive in each Field Poll measure conducted over the past three years.

By contrast, voters have become more optimistic about the direction the state is heading. Currently, more Californians see the state moving in the right direction (49%) than see it heading on the wrong track (36%). The current poll represents a continuing improvement in voter appraisals of the direction of the state from July, after a near continuous set of negative appraisals over the previous five-year period.

**Table 4**  
**Comparing voter perceptions of the overall directions**  
**that the U.S. and California are heading**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>Direction of U.S.</u>			<u>Direction of CA</u>		
	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>Late Sept. 2006</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>15</b>
July 2006	30%	60	10	47%	41	12
May 2006	28%	64	8	32%	57	11
April 2006	26%	64	10	28%	56	16
Feb. 2006	36%	55	9	31%	55	14
Oct. 2005	30%	60	10	30%	63	7
Aug. 2005	33%	60	7	30%	57	13
June 2005	34%	58	8	28%	60	12
Feb. 2005	36%	57	7	35%	53	12
Oct. 2004	38%	58	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sept. 2004	N/A	N/A	N/A	46%	38	16
May 2004	37%	54	9	37%	51	12
Feb. 2004	35%	52	13	35%	54	11
Aug. 2003	44%	50	6	16%	76	8
July 2003	43%	50	7	18%	75	7
Sept. 2002	47%	41	12	33%	54	12
Jan. 2002	60%	26	14	41%	50	9
2001 (average)	55%	27	8	43%	50	7
2000 (average)	67%	25	8	58%	35	7
1999 (average)	54%	37	9	52%	34	14
1998 (average)	57%	32	11	48%	42	10
1997 (average)	44%	45	11	36%	54	10
1996 (average)	34%	49	17	39%	49	12
1995 (average)	33%	54	13	32%	57	11
1994 (average)	41%	50	9	21%	70	9
1993 (average)	42%	50	8	11%	83	6
1992 (average)	16%	82	2	7%	90	3
<u>Party (Late Sept. 2006)</u>						
Democrats	14%	77	9	44%	40	15
Republicans	52%	32	16	62%	27	11
Non-partisans/others*	26%	58	16	39%	42	19

\* Small sample base.

N/A: Not asked.

## **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, the questions in this report were administered to random subsamples of 369 and 370 voters each.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected randomly from a statewide list of all registered voters in California. When drawing samples from registration-based lists, *The Field Poll* employs a systematic random selection procedure, giving all voters with phone numbers within each of seven regions of the state an equal chance of being selected. 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 each registered voter subsample have a sampling error of +/- 5.2 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**

Thinking about the country overall, do you think things in the U.S. are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Bush is doing in reducing the terrorist threat?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Bush is doing in handling the war in Iraq?

Thinking about the state, do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?

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