

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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NO IMPROVEMENT IN LOW JOB RATINGS FOR SCHWARZENEGGER AND THE LEGISLATURE. BUDGET DEFICIT SEEN AS INCREASINGLY SERIOUS. DECLINING CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNOR OR LEGISLATURE TO RESOLVE IT.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

There has been no improvement in voter impressions of the job Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the state legislature are doing. While more disapprove (46%) than approve (40%) of the governor's performance, voter assessments of the state legislature are even worse, with more than twice as many holding a negative (57%) than positive (27%) view.

An increasing proportion of Californians (68%) views the state budget deficit as a very serious problem. There is also declining confidence in the governor and state legislature in resolving the deficit situation. Currently 41% of voters do not have much confidence in Schwarzenegger to do what is right to resolve the deficit, while 52% say this about the state legislature.

In addition, 68% now feel the state is seriously off on the wrong track, while just 21% think it is moving in the right direction.

These are the findings from the latest statewide Field Poll conducted July 8-14 among 809 registered voters.

Schwarzenegger job ratings remain more negative than positive

Since first becoming governor almost five years ago, Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger's popularity with voters has had its ups and downs.

For many months early in his tenure, very large majorities of voters approved of Schwarzenegger's performance. However, beginning in the middle of 2005 and continuing for about a year, voter appraisals became more negative than positive. Schwarzenegger's standing with the voters improved following his 2006 re-election victory and remained nearly two to one positive throughout 2007.

However, in two measurements taken by The Field Poll this year, Schwarzenegger’s job approval rating has again declined precipitously – from 60% approval in December of last year to 40% today.

Republicans and non-partisans hold mixed views of the governor, with about as many rating him positively as negatively. By contrast, Democrats disapprove of the job Schwarzenegger is doing by a 47% to 34% margin.

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
July 2008	40%	46	14
May 2008	41%	48	11
December 2007	60%	31	9
October 2007	56%	32	12
August 2007	57%	31	12
March 2007	60%	29	11
September 2006	48%	37	15
July 2006	49%	40	11
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 (July 2008)</u>			
Democrats	34%	47	19
Republicans	48%	46	6
Non-partisans/others	42%	45	13

Twice as many hold negative as positive view of state legislature's performance

For the past twenty-five years the opinions that voters have had of the job performance of the state legislature as a whole has rarely been more positive than negative.

Today, more than twice as many voters view the legislature negatively (57%) as positively (27%).

Table 2
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing overall
(among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
July 2008	27%	57	16
May 2008	30%	57	13
December 2007	39%	42	19
October 2007	38%	40	22
August 2007	33%	51	16
March 2007	42%	40	18
September 2006	34%	46	20
May 2006	26%	51	23
April 2006	28%	56	16
February 2006	31%	48	21
October 2005	26%	58	16
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
Party (July 2008)			
Democrats	35%	47	18
Republicans	17%	72	11
Non-partisan/other*	24%	57	19

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 base.*

Increasing number of voters views the state's budget deficit as very serious

For many months both the governor and the legislature have been discussing what to do about the state's budget deficit, estimated to be about \$15 billion.

While a variety of proposals have been offered, the July 1 statutory deadline for reaching agreement on the budget has passed, and the budget will again be late this year.

When voters are asked their views of the budget, an increasing proportion says the situation is very serious. Two voters in three (68%) view the budget deficit as a very serious matter, up from 58% who said this six months ago. Another 24% see it as somewhat serious, while just one in twenty (5%) think the budget deficit is not serious.

Regardless of their partisanship, voters are of a like mind in viewing the seriousness of the budget deficit. Seventy-one percent of Democrats, 66% of Republicans and 65% of non-partisans describe the problem as very serious.

Table 3
Perceived seriousness of the state's budget deficit
(among registered voters)

	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not serious	No opinion
Statewide - July 2008	68%	24	5	3
December 2007	58	32	5	5
<u>Party (July 2008)</u>				
Democrats	71%	22	5	2
Republicans	66%	26	6	2
Non-partisans/others	65%	26	4	5

Declining confidence in governor and state legislature in resolving the deficit

There is also less voter confidence in both the governor and state legislature to resolve the deficit than there was six months ago. At present, 41% of voters say they do not have much confidence in the governor and 52% say that about the state legislature to do what is right to resolve the matter. This compares to 29% and 40%, respectively, who felt this way in December 2007.

Table 4
Confidence in Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature
to do what is right to resolve the state's budget deficit
(among registered voters)

	Great deal	Some	Not much	No opinion
<u>Governor Schwarzenegger</u>				
July 2008	14%	44	41	1
December 2007	23%	46	29	2
<u>State legislature</u>				
July 2008	4%	42	52	2
December 2007	7%	48	40	5

Most think state is on wrong track

For most of the past five years voters have had a more pessimistic than optimistic view of the direction to which the state was heading. In the current survey the reading on this question is more negative than it has been since the middle of 2003.

Currently 68% think the state is seriously off on the wrong track, compared to 21% who believe it is heading in the right direction.

There is virtually no difference in the dismal appraisal offered by Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans.

Table 5
Overall direction that California is heading
(among registered voters)

	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
July 2008	21%	68	11
May 2008	23%	68	9
December 2007	43%	47	10
October 2007	42%	42	16
August 2007	42%	45	13
March 2007	52%	38	10
September 2006	49%	36	15
July 2006	47%	41	12
May 2006	32%	57	11
April 2006	28%	56	16
February 2006	31%	55	14
October 2005	30%	63	7
August 2005	30%	57	13
June 2005	28%	60	12
February 2005	35%	53	12
September 2004	46%	38	16
May 2004	37%	51	12
February 2004	35%	54	11
August 2003	16%	76	8
July 2003	18%	75	7
April 2003	26%	65	9
September 2002	33%	54	13
January 2002	41%	50	9
December 2001	45%	45	10
September 2001 (pre-9/11)	39%	54	7
January 2001	44%	50	6
2000 (average)	58%	35	7
1999 (average)	52%	34	14
1998 (average)	48%	42	10
1997 (average)	36%	54	10
1996 (average)	39%	49	12
1995 (average)	32%	57	11
1994 (average)	21%	70	9
1993 (average)	11%	83	6
1992 (average)	7%	90	3
1989 (average)	50%	42	8
1988 (average)	52%	43	5
Party (July 2008)			
Democrats	23%	64	13
Republicans	20%	71	9
Non-partisan/other*	21%	71	8

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 conducted among all California adults, not just registered adults.

* Small sample base.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 809 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish July 8-14, 2008. Up to six attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize voter fatigue, the overall voter sample was divided into two random subsamples on some of the questions. Because of this, some of the questions in this report are based on a random subsample of either 422 or 387 registered voters statewide.

The overall sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depends on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of 809 registered voters is +/- 3.9 percentage points, while findings from the random subsamples have a maximum sampling error of +/- 5.0 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages +-in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (percentages around 10% or around 90%) have a smaller margin of error. While there are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error, the overall design and execution of the survey minimized the potential for these other sources of error. The maximum sampling error will be larger for analyses based on subgroups of the overall sample.

Questions Asked

Thinking about things here in this 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? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

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? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature are currently dealing with a large state budget deficit. How serious do you think the state's budget situation is – very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

How much confidence do you have in Governor Schwarzenegger to do what is right to resolve the state budget deficit – a great deal of confidence, some confidence or not much confidence? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

Overall, how much confidence do you have in the state legislature to do what is right to resolve the state budget deficit – a great deal of confidence, some confidence or not much confidence? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)