

# 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 JOB RATING  
DECLINES. BUT, A GREATER THAN  
TWO TO ONE MAJORITY OPPOSES  
RECALLING HIM FROM OFFICE.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's job performance rating continues to decline among California voters, with 52% disapproving and just 38% approving. In addition, by a 70% to 22% margin voters view the state as seriously off on the wrong track.

Yet, at a time when an effort is being launched to recall Schwarzenegger from office, the governor's approval rating is not as low as was given former Governor Gray Davis (24%) when an effort began to recall him from office in early 2003.

Voters are also much less supportive of the recall drive against Schwarzenegger as they were of Davis. By a greater than two to one margin (63% to 29%), Californians say they would vote to oppose recalling the Governor if the move by the state prison guard's union to oust Schwarzenegger from office qualifies for the ballot. By contrast, in April 2003 a plurality of this state's voters (46%) supported recalling Davis in the early stages of that campaign.

By a greater than four to one margin (77% to 17%) voters believe recalling Schwarzenegger would be a bad thing for California, and just 17% say they would sign a petition to remove him from office if asked.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* completed last week among a random sample of 1,008 voters statewide.

**Governor's job rating continues to decline**

Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's job performance rating has fluctuated a great deal throughout his nearly five-year tenure in office. During the Governor's first year in office almost two-thirds (65%) of registered voters approved of the job that he was doing, while 22% disapproved.

However, during the following year, the public's positive regard for the Governor's performance declined to the point where just 36% approved and 52% disapproved. Voter opinions of Schwarzenegger rebounded in 2007, reaching 60% approval in March and December of last year. Now, voter opinions have declined again, with 38% now approving and 52% disapproving.

Democrats hold a particularly critical view of the Governor, with 60% holding a negative view and 29% rating him positively. The views of Republicans and non-partisans are more mixed. Among Republicans 45% disapprove, while 45% approve. Among non-partisans 46% disapprove while 43% approve.

	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>September 2008</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>10</b>
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
<b>Party (Sept. 2008)</b>			
Democrats	29%	60	11
Republicans	45%	45	10
Non-partisans/others	43%	46	11

**Comparing the performance of Schwarzenegger to Davis during the early stages of his recall**

Former Governor Gray Davis was viewed most unfavorably in April 2003 when efforts were just getting under way to recall him from office. At the time 65% disapproved and 24% approved of the job he was doing, a harsher assessment than what Schwarzenegger is getting today.

**Table 2**  
**Comparing the current job ratings of Governor Schwarzenegger to those of Governor Gray Davis when a recall drive against him were first being discussed in April 2003 (among registered voters)**

	Schwarzenegger (September 2008)		Davis (April 2003)	
	Approve	Disapprove	Approve	Disapprove
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>65</b>
<u>Party</u>				
Democrat	29%	60	36%	51
Republican	45%	45	8%	85
Non-partisan/other	43%	46	23%	61

*Differences between 100% and the sum of the percentages for each Governor equal the proportions with no opinion.*

**Recall Schwarzenegger?**

A recall drive now threatens Schwarzenegger, as last week the state prison guard's union announced they were launching an effort to remove him from office.

In the current poll, *The Field Poll* repeated the same questions it asked voters about Davis in April 2003 during the initial stages of the recall drive against him. The results indicate that voters are much less supportive of recalling Schwarzenegger than they were Davis.

By a greater than two to one margin – 63% to 29% – voters today say they would vote No if an election to recall Schwarzenegger were held. By contrast, five and one-half years ago when the recall drive against Davis first began, a plurality of voters (46% to 43%) favored his recall.

Today, very large majorities of Republicans (78%) and non-partisans (63%) say they would vote No in a recall election against Schwarzenegger. A somewhat smaller proportion of Democrats (52%) also opposes the Governor's recall.

**Table 3**  
**Voter predispositions regarding a possible recall election against Governor Schwarzenegger compared to those given Governor Davis in April 2003 (among registered voters)**

	Schwarzenegger (September 2008)		Davis (April 2003)	
	Yes to recall	No to retain	Yes to recall	No to retain
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>43</b>
<u>Party</u>				
Democrat	40%	52	28%	61
Republican	14%	78	69%	22
Non-partisan/other	29%	63	45%	39

*Differences between 100% and the sum of the percentages for each Governor equal the proportions with no opinion.*

**Would a recall be good or bad for California**

At the start of the 2003 recall proceedings against Davis, almost six in ten voters (59%) thought it would be a bad thing for California to remove him from office, while 33% felt it would be a good thing.

Today, a much larger proportion (77%) believes the idea of recalling Schwarzenegger would be a bad thing for the state, while just 17% say it would be good for California.

Large majorities of Democrats (67%), Republicans (92%) and non-partisans (73%) currently maintain that recalling Schwarzenegger would be bad for California.

**Table 4**  
**Would a recall of Governor Schwarzenegger/Davis be a good thing or a bad thing for California? (among registered voters)**

	Schwarzenegger (September 2008)		Davis (April 2003)	
	Good thing	Bad thing	Good thing	Bad thing
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>59</b>
<u>Party</u>				
Democrat	27%	67	19%	76
Republican	4%	92	50%	41
Non-partisan/other	18%	73	36%	53

*Differences between 100% and the sum of the percentages for each Governor equal the proportions with no opinion.*

### **Sign a recall petition?**

At the beginning of the drive to recall Davis in 2003, one in three voters (33%) said they would be inclined to sign a petition to remove the governor from office if asked. When a similar question is posed today about Schwarzenegger, a much smaller proportion of voters (17%) reports that they would sign such a petition.

	<b>Schwarzenegger (September 2008)</b>	<b>Davis (April 2003)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b><u>17%</u></b>	<b><u>33%</u></b>
<b><u>Party</u></b>		
Democrat	27	18
Republican	5	53
Non-partisan/other	17	30

### **Seven in ten feel state is seriously off on wrong track**

Voters continue to have a very negative opinion of the overall direction that California is moving. At present, 70% believe the state is seriously off on the wrong track, while just 22% think it is heading in the right direction.

This bleak assessment is similar to the last *Field Poll* in July 2008, when 68% described the state as seriously off track and 21% saying it was moving in the right direction.

**Table 6**  
**Overall direction that California is heading**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>September 2008</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>8</b>
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
<u>Party (Sept. 2008)</u>			
Democrats	20%	73	7
Republicans	18%	74	8
Non-partisan/other*	30%	57	13

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 1,008 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period September 5-14, 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.

The 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 1,008 registered voters is +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while the maximum sampling error for questions asked of the random subsample of voters is +/- 4.4 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**

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

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 THE TOTAL SAMPLE)

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

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

Some groups are trying to organize an effort to gather signatures to hold a special statewide election to ask voters whether or not they want to remove Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger from office. Generally speaking, do you think holding a recall election of Governor Schwarzenegger would be a good thing or bad thing for California?

If you were approached by a group asking you to sign a petition to recall Governor Schwarzenegger would you be likely to do or not?

Suppose the Schwarzenegger recall effort does qualify for the ballot and there is a special statewide election. If you were voting today, would you vote YES to remove Schwarzenegger from office or NO to keep Schwarzenegger as Governor?