

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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NEW LOWS IN VOTER APPROVAL OF STATE LEGISLATURE AND SCHWARZENEGGER. VIEWS OF THE GOVERNOR AND STATE LEGISLATURE RELATED TO LIKELY VOTER PREFERENCES IN THE SPECIAL ELECTION.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

California voter appraisals of the job performance of the state legislature and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger are reaching new lows.

In a just completed statewide *Field Poll* only 14% of the state's registered voters now approve of the job that the state legislature is doing, while three out of four (74%) disapprove. This is the poorest rating of the state legislature ever recorded by *The Field Poll* in trend measures dating back to the early 1980s.

In addition, just one in three voters (33%) approve of the job Schwarzenegger is doing, also a new low.

Appraisals of the governor and the state legislature are related to voting preferences in the upcoming May 19th special election. Those holding a negative view of each are much more likely to be withholding their support on the first five ballot measures, Props. 1A-1E, which the governor and legislative leaders are supporting.

These are the findings from the latest statewide *Field Poll* conducted among a random sample of 901 registered voters in California.

Record low job rating of the state legislature

Only 14% of registered voters in California now approve of the job the state legislature is doing, while nearly three in four (74%) disapprove, the lowest job performance rating ever given that legislative body in *Field Poll* measures dating back to 1983.

The following is a summary of the trend in *Field Poll* voter assessments of the legislature's performance. They show that the proportions of voters disapproving of the legislature's job performance has exceeded 70% in each of the past three measures.

Table 1
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Late-April 2009	14%	74	12
March 2009	18%	72	10
September 2008	15%	73	12
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
2005 (average)	28%	55	17
2004 (average)	28%	53	19
2003 (average)	25%	59	16
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

Note: For surveys conducted prior to 1996 conducted among all adults. In addition, response scales from these surveys were converted to the current two-point approve/disapprove scales.

** Small sample base.*

Negative view of the legislature spans all demographic and regional subgroups

The dismal view that voters have of the state legislature spans all segments of the registered voter population -- gender, age, race/ethnicity and region of the state. Republicans are the most critical of the legislature, with 83% disapproving. But even seven in Democrats and non-partisans take this view.

Table 2			
Voter opinion of the job performance of the state legislature across subgroups of the registered voter population			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Total	14%	74	12
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	19%	69	13
Republicans	11%	83	6
Non-partisans/others	12%	71	17
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	13%	74	13
Other Southern California	14%	77	9
Central Valley	12%	80	8
San Francisco Bay Area	20%	66	14
Other Northern California*	12%	70	18
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	17%	75	8
Female	12%	73	15
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 39	20%	67	13
40 – 49	11%	80	9
50 – 64	11%	83	16
65 or older	15%	69	16
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	11%	81	8
Latino	22%	62	16
Black/Asian/other	18%	62	20

* Small sample base.

Record low approval of Governor Schwarzenegger

The current survey finds just 33% of registered voters approving of the job Schwarzenegger is doing as governor, while 55% disapprove.

The 33% approval rating is lowest assessment that voters have given the Governor in twenty-three separate *Field Poll* measures taken since his election in late 2003. Schwarzenegger's ratings are now lower than those he received in the fall of 2005, immediately before voters rejected each of four ballot measures the governor placed on that year's special election.

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Late-April 2009	33%	55	12
March 2009	38%	54	8
September 2008	38%	52	10
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

Bi-partisan criticism of Schwarzenegger

Voters' low approval ratings of the Governor are shared almost evenly among Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans, with 52% – 57% majorities disapproving of his performance.

Schwarzenegger's approval rating is highest (45%) among voters in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, while he receives his lowest ratings among voters in Los Angeles County, where 67% hold a negative view.

Table 4			
Voter opinion of the job performance of Arnold Schwarzenegger as Governor across subgroups of the registered voter population			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Total	33%	55	12
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	32%	56	12
Republicans	30%	57	13
Non-partisans/others	36%	52	12
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	26%	67	7
Other Southern California	27%	60	13
Central Valley	39%	50	11
San Francisco Bay Area	45%	43	12
Other Northern California*	32%	38	30
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	37%	52	11
Female	29%	59	12
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 39	30%	58	12
40 – 49	32%	59	9
50 – 64	35%	57	8
65 or older	37%	47	16
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	36%	51	13
Latino	26%	66	8
Black/Asian/other	27%	58	15

* Small sample base.

Views of the governor and legislature related to voter preferences in the May 19th special election

A *Field Poll* released earlier this week found that more likely voters were intending to vote No rather than Yes on each of the first five ballot measures in the May 19 special election, Props. 1A-1E, which are supported by the governor and legislative leaders.

The current poll finds that voters’ job appraisals of the governor and state legislature are related to their voting preferences in the upcoming May 19 special election. For example, among likely voters who disapprove of the job Schwarzenegger is doing, a significant bloc (43%) is not supporting any of the first five ballot measures, Propositions 1A-1E, which the Governor is promoting.

Similarly, likely voters who disapprove of the job the legislature is doing are also more than twice as likely than those approving to be withholding their support on each of these ballot measures.

Table 5			
Relationship between the job ratings of the state legislature and the Governor and the preferences of likely voters in the May 19 special election			
	Vote preferences on Props. 1A-1E		
	Not supporting any	Supporting some but not all	Supporting all
Total likely voters	33%	54	13
<u>Job ratings of the Governor</u>			
Approve	16%	68	16
Disapprove	43%	47	10
<u>Job ratings of the legislature</u>			
Approve	15%	65	20
Disapprove	36%	51	13

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 901 registered voters in California. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between April 16-26, 2009. 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.

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 to return this disproportionate sample allocation to the actual distribution of registered voters by party and by various other demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depend on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of registered voters is +/- 3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. 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

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?