

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

Field Research Corporation

601 California Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94108-2814
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541
EMAIL: fieldpoll@field.com
www.field.com/fieldpollonline

FOR ADVANCE PUBLICATION BY SUBSCRIBERS ONLY.

COPYRIGHT 2009 BY FIELD RESEARCH CORPORATION.

Release #2315

Release Date and Time: **6:00 a.m., Tuesday, October 13, 2009**

NEW RECORD LOW JOB RATINGS FOR BOTH SCHWARZENEGGER AND THE STATE LEGISLATURE.

IMPORTANT: Contract for this service is subject to revocation if publication or broadcast takes place before release date or if contents are divulged to persons outside of subscriber staff prior to release time. (ISSN 0195-4520)

By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

The downward trend in voter appraisals of the job performance of both Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the state legislature continues.

The most recent *Field Poll* completed last week finds that just 27% of this state's voters approve of the governor's performance, the first time in his nearly six-year tenure that his job ratings have dropped below 30%. The governor's disapproval rating has also reached a new high – 65%.

Voter appraisal of the state legislature is even lower, with just 13% of voters approving and 78% disapproving, the lowest rating *The Field Poll* has ever obtained for that institution.

Large majorities support the governor calling the legislature into special session to deal with two of the state's more pressing issues, water and taxes.

Governor's approval rating dips

Only slightly more than one in four voters statewide (27%) now approves of the job Schwarzenegger is doing as governor, while 65% disapprove. This is the lowest rating the governor has received since taking office following the 2003 recall election and is almost a complete reversal from his standing with voters five years ago. In September 2004 65% approved and 22% disapproved of his job performance.

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

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
October 2009	27%	65	8
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

Comparison with previous governors

Of the six previous California governors who have served during the past fifty years, just one ever achieved a lower rating than what Schwarzenegger receives today. That was the assessment given to Democrat Gray Davis shortly before he was recalled from office in 2003. An August 2003 *Field Poll* found just 22% approving and 70% disapproving of the job Davis was doing at the time.

Table 2
Comparing Governor Schwarzenegger's lowest and highest approval ratings with his six immediate predecessors

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
<u>Schwarzenegger (R)</u>			
Lowest – October 2009	27%	65	8
Highest – September and August 2004	65%	22	13
<u>Davis (D)</u>			
Lowest – August 2003	22%	70	8
Highest – February 2000	62%	20	18
<u>Wilson (R)</u>			
Lowest – September 1992	33%	63	4
Highest – February 1991	52%	27	21
<u>Deukmejian (R)</u>			
Lowest – August 1990	53%	45	2
Highest – August 1985	73%	24	3
<u>J. Brown (D)</u>			
Lowest – April 1980	38%	61	1
Highest – March 1976	69%	25	6
<u>Reagan (R)</u>			
Lowest – August 1971	46%	52	2
Highest – February 1969	60%	33	7
<u>P. Brown (D)</u>			
Lowest – October 1961	35%	50	15
Highest – June 1959	51%	22	27

Note: For measures conducted prior to 1994, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which was converted to the current two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes.

(D) denotes Democrat, (R) denotes Republican

Governor's low ratings span all demographic subgroups of voters

The negative appraisal of Schwarzenegger cuts across voters in all population subgroups. The voter groups that give the governor slightly higher grades – in the lower 30 percent range – are voters age 65 or older (34%), men (33%), those living in the San Francisco Bay Area (33%), white non-Hispanics (32%) and Republicans (31%). At the other extreme, just 10% of blacks and 15% of Latinos approve of the job the governor is doing.

Table 3			
Voter appraisal of the job performance of Arnold Schwarzenegger as Governor across subgroups of the registered voter population – October 2009			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Total	27%	65	8
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	24%	69	7
Republicans	31%	59	10
Non-partisans/others	28%	65	7
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	23%	67	10
Other Southern California	25%	65	10
Central Valley	27%	66	7
San Francisco Bay Area	33%	62	5
Other Northern California*	25%	66	9
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	33%	60	7
Female	21%	70	9
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 29	20%	76	4
30 – 39	25%	66	9
40 – 49	22%	67	11
50 – 64	30%	63	7
65 or older	34%	57	9
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	32%	59	9
Latino	15%	80	5
Black*	10%	85	5
Asian/other	25%	66	9

* Small sample base.

New low in voter regard for the state legislature

Voter impressions of the job the state legislature is doing continue to set new lows. Statewide just 13% of voters approve of the legislature’s performance, while 78% disapprove. The legislature’s job rating dipped below the 20% approval level for the first time in September of last year and has remained below that dismal level ever since. Voters’ current 78% disapproval rating of the legislature is the lowest ever obtained by *The Field Poll* for that institution in measures dating back to 1983.

Table 4
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing
(among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
October 2009	13%	78	9
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
Party registration (Oct. 2009)			
Democrats	16%	72	12
Republicans	7%	86	7
Non-partisans/others	12%	77	11

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 were conducted among all adults. In addition, response scales from these surveys were converted from their original five-point scale to the current two-point approve/disapprove scales for comparative purposes.

Large majorities support the governor’s calling the legislature into special session

Majorities of voters, including large proportions of Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans, favor the governor calling a special session of the legislature to deal with two of the state’s most pressing issues – water and taxes.

Greater than seven in ten voters (73%) support the governor calling a special session to deal with the water supply issues, while 62% also support a special session to address tax reform issues. Support extends across all partisan subgroups.

Table 5			
Voter opinion of the governor calling a special session of the state legislature to deal with water supply issues or tax reform issues (among registered voters)			
	Favor	Oppose	No opinion
<u>Water supply issues</u>			
Total	<u>73%</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>11</u>
Democrats	73%	17	10
Republicans	73%	13	14
Non-partisans/others	73%	17	10
<u>Tax reform issues</u>			
Total	<u>62%</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>13</u>
Democrats	59%	27	14
Republicans	66%	22	12
Non-partisans/others	64%	25	11

About This Report

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 1,005 registered voters in California. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between September 18 and October 5, 2009. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize potential respondent fatigue, the overall registered voter sample was divided into two random sub samples of 509 and 496 voters each on some 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 had been selected, interviews were attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews were conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file and the preference of the voter. 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. After the completion of interviewing, the results were weighted to known distributions of registered voters by party and by 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 +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from each random subsample have a sampling error of +/- 4.5 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 ALL VOTERS)

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)

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

Suppose the governor were to call a special session of the state legislature before the end of the year to deal with water supply issues facing California. Do you favor or oppose the governor calling a special session of the state legislature for this purpose?

Suppose that the governor were to call a special session of the state legislature before the end of the year to deal with some proposed changes to the way taxes are assessed in California. Do you favor or oppose the governor calling a special session of the state legislature for this purpose?