

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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Release #2334

Release Date and Time: **6:00 a.m., Tuesday, March 23, 2010**

MAJORITIES RATE JOBS/THE ECONOMY, THE STATE BUDGET DEFICIT, EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE AS TOP ISSUES IN THIS YEAR'S GOVERNOR'S RACE.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Majorities of California voters rate four issues as being most important to them when deciding whom they will support in this year's governor's race. They include jobs and the economy (69%), the state budget deficit (68%), education (60%) and health care (51%). Three other issues – taxes, illegal immigration and water – are also rated as top concerns by pluralities ranging from 36% to 47%.

There is bipartisan agreement among registered Democrats and Republicans that jobs/the economy and the state budget deficit are among the most important issues in this year's gubernatorial elections. However, there are significant differences between Democrats and Republicans with regard to the importance of the other top-ranking issues. For example, while six in ten or more Democrats rate education and health care among their top concerns, among Republicans less than half say this. Conversely, while majorities of Republicans rate taxes and illegal immigration among their top issues, fewer Democrats feel this way.

Voters attach higher importance to many of the top issues in this year's election for governor than they did in 2006 prior to the last gubernatorial election. For example, 69% of voters now rate jobs and the economy as a top issue in this year's gubernatorial election, nearly double the 39% who said this in 2006. Similarly, larger proportions of voters now consider education, health care and taxes to be of high importance this year than felt this way in 2006.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* conducted March 9-15 among a random sample of registered voters statewide. The California HealthCare Foundation provided grant funding to include this question series on *The Field Poll's* latest survey and also did so when the poll measured these issues during the 2006 gubernatorial election year.

Importance attached to twelve issues in the governor’s race

California voters were asked to assess the relative importance of twelve issues in deciding whom they will support in this year’s gubernatorial election. For each, voters were asked whether the issue was among their most important issues, an important issue but not among the most important or not an important issue.

The results are ranked in Table 1 according to the proportions rating each as being among the most important issues to them in deciding whom to support in the upcoming gubernatorial election.

Majorities of voters rate four issues among their most important concerns – jobs and the economy (69%), the state budget deficit (68%), education (60%) and health care (51%). Three other issues are rated as top concerns by pluralities ranging from 36% to 47%. These include taxes (47%), illegal immigration (37%) and water (36%).

Five other issues were rated as being of somewhat lower importance to voters in the gubernatorial elections. They are gasoline prices and energy (29%), crime and prisons (28%), environmental protection (26%), reforming the state constitution (25%) and global warming (23%).

Table 1
Importance of twelve issues in deciding whom voters will support for Governor in 2010
(among registered voters)

	Among the most important	Important issue, but not among the most important	Not an important issue	No opinion
Jobs and the economy	69%	28	3	*
The state budget deficit	68%	28	4	*
Education	60%	35	5	*
Health care	51%	40	9	*
Taxes	47%	41	10	2
Illegal immigration	37%	45	17	1
Water	36%	51	12	1
Gasoline prices and energy	29%	54	16	1
Crime and prisons	28%	59	13	*
Environmental protection	26%	51	23	*
Reforming the state constitution	25%	36	33	6
Global warming	23%	41	35	1

* Less than ½ of 1%.

Comparing voters' current issue ratings to those given in the last gubernatorial election

Most of the issues measured in the current poll were included in a *Field Poll* survey conducted in 2006 prior to the state's last gubernatorial election. A comparison of voter opinions now compared to four years ago shows that more voters rate the top issues as being of greater importance this year than felt this way in 2006.

For example, 69% of registered voters say that the candidates' positions on jobs and the economy will be among the most important issues to them in deciding whom to support in this year's gubernatorial elections, compared to 39% four years ago. Similarly, 60% now rate education as a top priority issue this year vs. 45% saying this in 2006. More voters also consider health care (51%) and taxes (47%) among the most important issues in this year's gubernatorial election than said this four years ago (36% and 32%, respectively).

Note: Four of the issues measured in the 2010 survey -- including the state budget deficit -- were not measured in the 2006 survey and thus no trend comparisons can be made for these.

Table 2		
Comparing issues considered to be among the MOST IMPORTANT to voters in the 2010 gubernatorial election to the 2006 gubernatorial election (among registered voters)		
	2010	2006
	%	%
Jobs and the economy	69	39
The state budget deficit	68	N/A
Education	60	45
Health care	51	36
Taxes	47	32
Illegal immigration	37	42
Water	36	N/A
Gasoline prices and energy	29	34
Crime and prisons	28	24
Environmental protection	26	28
Reforming the state constitution	25	N/A
Global warming	23	N/A

*2006 Field Poll conducted by telephone among 992 registered voters in California July 10-23, 2006.
 N/A: Not included in 2006 survey.*

Partisan differences in issue rankings

There is bipartisan agreement among Democrats and Republicans that the state budget deficit and jobs/the economy are among the most important issues to them when deciding whom to support in this year’s gubernatorial elections. However, there are fairly sizable differences in the issue rankings of Democrats and Republicans with regard to the other election issues.

For example, six in ten or more Democrats consider education (67%) and health care (60%) to be among their top issues. Among Republicans, by contrast, fewer than half rate these among their most salient election issues. Similarly, whereas majorities of Republicans consider taxes (61%) and illegal immigration (58%) as top issues in the gubernatorial election, far fewer Democrats hold this view.

There are also significant partisan differences in the way Democrats and Republicans view the issues of environmental protection and global warming, with more Democrats than Republicans considering these to be top priority issues.

Table 3
Proportions who consider each issue to be among the MOST IMPORTANT issues
in deciding whom to support for Governor – by party registration
(among registered voters)

	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Non-partisans/ others
	%	% (rank)	% (rank)	% (rank)
Jobs and the economy	69	72 (1)	68 (2)	64 (2)
The state budget deficit	68	64 (3)	75 (1)	69 (1)
Education	60	67 (2)	46 (5)	63 (3)
Health care	51	60 (4)	41 (6)	48 (4)
Taxes	47	42 (5)	61 (3)	41 (5)
Illegal immigration	37	27 (11)	58 (4)	30 (7)
Water	36	35 (6)	34 (8)	41 (5)
Gasoline prices and energy	29	30 (9)	35 (7)	21 (11)
Crime and prisons	28	29 (10)	30 (9)	22 (10)
Environmental protection	26	35 (6)	14 (11)	25 (9)
Reforming the state constitution	25	25 (12)	22 (10)	29 (8)
Global warming	23	31 (8)	13 (12)	21 (11)

Information About This Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed March 9-15, 2010 among a random sample of 503 registered voters in California.

The Field Poll received grant funding from the California HealthCare Foundation (CHCF) to include these items onto its latest survey. CHCF also provided funding to *The Field Poll* to conduct a similar survey of California registered voters prior to the 2006 gubernatorial election year.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish with live interviewers working from Field Research's central location telephone interviewing facility. Up to eight attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. Interviewing was completed either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. In this survey 17% of all interviews were completed through a cell phone contact. After the completion of interviewing, the overall sample was weighted to align it to its proper statewide proportions by party registration, region, and other demographic characteristics of the registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the overall sample is +/- 4.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error. Findings from subgroups of the overall sample have somewhat larger sampling error levels. There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other sources of error.

Questions Asked

Thinking about the November election for governor, how important will the candidates' positions on each of the following issues be to you in deciding whom you would support? (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) How important will the gubernatorial candidates' positions on this be to you – the most important issue, an important issue but not the most important issue, or not an important issue? (SEE RELEASE FOR ITEMS READ)