

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
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THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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**BIG INCREASE IN VOTER
AWARENESS OF PROP. 54.
VOTERS MOVING TO THE NO SIDE.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Voter dispositions toward Proposition 54, the so-called Racial Privacy Initiative, have become increasingly negative as more voters have become aware of the measure.

In the latest *Field Poll*, completed about a week before the October 7 election, voters were dividing 49% No and 35% Yes, with 16% undecided. This is the first time in six surveys dating back to April 2002 where opponents have outnumbered supporters.

Four weeks ago, voters were evenly split on the initiative – 40% Yes and 40% No, with 20% undecided. In prior surveys pluralities favored the initiative by eleven to twenty-one points.

Table 1
**Trend of voter preferences on Proposition 54, the “Classification
by Race, Ethnicity, Color or National Origin” initiative**
(among likely voters)

	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Late September 2003	49%	35	16
Early September 2003	40%	40	20
August 2003	35%	46	19
July 2003	29%	50	21
April 2003	33%	48	19
April 2002*	34%	48	18

* Asked of all registered voters

Big increase in awareness

Prop. 54 would prevent state and local governments from collecting racial and ethnic data about state residents, although some exemptions apply. The measure has gotten a lot of attention from the media and among the candidates seeking to replace Governor Gray Davis in the widely publicized recall election contest.

In April of this year, just one in four (26%) likely voters said they had seen or heard anything about the initiative. The awareness level has increased steadily over the months to where in the latest survey 81% of likely voters now say they have heard about it.

	<u>Have heard</u>	<u>Have not heard</u>
Late September	81%	19
Early September	54%	46
August	41%	59
July	25%	75
April	26%	74

Where No vote has a big edge

The following demographic sub-groups are where large majorities of likely voters are intending to vote No on Prop. 54: No voters on the recall of Governor Gray Davis (68%), voters supporting Cruz Bustamante in the gubernatorial replacement election (74%), Democrats (63%), liberals (68%), Latinos (69%), and Black/African Americans (77%).

Those voting blocs who currently favor Prop. 54 include: Republicans (52%), Yes voters on the Davis recall (47%), Schwarzenegger voters (49%) McClintock voters (50%), and conservatives (51%).

There are no large differences in voting preferences on Prop. 54 by section of state, gender, age and prior awareness of this initiative – each tends to take the No position on Prop. 54. White non-Hispanics are dividing 45% No and 38% Yes, while Asians/others split 46% No and 38% Yes.

Compared to *Field Poll* findings in early September there has been a decline in the Yes vote and a corresponding increase in the No vote among most sub-groups of the likely voter population.

Table 3
Voter intentions regarding Prop. 54 – by subgroup
(among likely voters)

	– <u>Late September</u> –			– <u>Early September</u> –		
	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Statewide	49%	35	16	40%	40	20
<u>Vote on Davis recall</u>						
Yes, to remove	36%	47	17	30%	48	22
No, to retain	68%	19	13	55%	31	14
<u>Vote in replacement election</u>						
Schwarzenegger	34%	49	17	29%	53	18
Bustamante	74%	16	10	55%	30	15
McClintock	36%	50	14	33%	46	21
Others*	59%	25	16	54%	32	14
Undecided/none*	39%	30	31	26%	40	34
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	63%	24	13	50%	35	15
Republicans	31%	52	17	29%	47	24
Non-partisan/others	54%	26	20	43%	38	19
<u>Political ideology</u>						
Conservative	33%	51	16	33%	47	20
Middle-of-the-road	52%	30	18	36%	43	21
Liberal	68%	18	14	58%	27	15
<u>Region</u>						
Los Angeles County	53%	31	16	38%	44	18
Other Southern California	45%	38	17	36%	42	22
San Francisco Bay Area	46%	30	14	46%	32	22
Other Northern California	45%	39	16	45%	42	13
<u>Gender</u>						
Men	49%	38	13	41%	41	18
Women	50%	32	18	40%	39	21
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>						
White non-Hispanic	45%	38	17	38%	40	22
Latino	69%	21	10	58%	23	19
Black/African-American*	77%	12	11	50%	44	6
Asian/other*	46%	38	16	37%	50	13
<u>Age</u>						
18-29*	54%	27	19	41%	39	20
30-39	45%	36	19	41%	38	21
40-49	49%	36	15	36%	47	17
50-64	52%	34	14	48%	35	17
65 and older	49%	40	11	33%	45	22
<u>Familiarity with the initiative</u>						
Yes, aware	51%	37	12	44%	40	16
No, not aware	44%	25	31	35%	41	24

* Relatively small sample base.

Reasons for supporting Prop. 54

Those voters who are supporting Prop. 54 were asked to describe in their own words the reasons for their position. One reason dominates among supporters of the initiative – “people shouldn’t be classified by race, ethnicity/we should move toward a colorblind society” (50%). Two other large segments of Yes side voters maintain that “having government classifying people by race is not right, undermines the Constitution/we’re all Americans” (15%) and that they “oppose racial quotas and affirmative action in getting jobs or places in school” (15%).

Other reasons for voting Yes on 54 include: “people of color will be better off” (5%), “it’s a good idea” (5%), and “to protect people’s privacy” (3%).

Table 4a
Reasons offered by Yes voters for supporting Prop. 54
(among likely voters intending to vote Yes)

People shouldn’t be classified by race, ethnicity/we should move toward a color-blind society	50%
Have government classifying people by race is not right, undermines the Constitution / we’re all Americans	15
Oppose racial quotas, affirmative action in getting jobs or places in school	15
People of color will be better off	5
It’s a good idea (non-specific)	5
To protect people’s privacy	3
Because Ward Connerly supports it	1
Other (less than 1% each)	12
No answer	6

(Adds to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)

Reasons for opposing Prop. 54

When asked why they were intending to vote No on the initiative, opponents offer a wide range of reasons. These include: “the information is needed/the statistics are helpful” (19%), “it’s too simplistic/discrimination and racism will still exist” (12%), “racial, ethnic information is important in health care, medicine” (10%), “it’s unfair, it won’t insure equality to minorities” (6%), “it would prevent minorities from getting help/government aid/federal funding” (5%), “Prop. 54 promotes ignorance / would make us blind to racial/ethnic patterns” (4%), “race, ethnicity data are important in education” (3%), and “it’s better to leave things alone, not change the way they are” (3%).

It appears that about one in ten opponents of Prop. 54 (10%) are confused by the initiative and offer the following as a reason for their opposition: “there’s no need to classify people by race.”

Table 4b
Reasons offered by No voters for opposing Prop. 54
(among likely voters intending to vote No)

The information is needed / the statistics are helpful	19%
It's too simplistic / discrimination, racism will still exist / we don't live in a colorblind society	12
Racial, ethnic information is important in health care, medicine, the medical community	10
It's unfair/won't insure equality to minorities	6
Racial/ethnic data help ethnic groups get government aid, federal funding / Prop. 54 would prevent minorities from getting help	5
Prop. 54 promotes ignorance / would make us blind to certain racial, ethnic patterns	4
Race, ethnicity data are important in education	3
It's better to leave things alone, not change the way they are	3
Racial information is needed for security, anti-terrorism efforts	2
It would make it more difficult to prosecute hate crimes / negatively affect minorities with regard to police matters	1
I don't like the people who are supporting it	1
There's no need to classify people by race	10
Other mentions (less than 1% each)	21
No answer	10

(Adds to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)

Knowledge of exemptions

The official description of Prop. 54 states that “various exemptions apply” to the law. Voters were asked what groups or types of organization they felt these exemptions applied to.

About four out of five voters (79%) responded that they didn't know or couldn't volunteer any specific group to which the exemption applied. Of the 21% of voters who do offer an answer to this question, about half (12%) cite medical research, health institutions as being exempted. No other group or organization is cited by more than 4% of likely voters as qualifying for an exemption.

Voters who are undecided on Prop. 54 are less able to volunteer a group or organization to which the exemptions applied than other voters.

Table 5
Groups or types of organizations that voters believe Prop. 54's exemptions apply to
(among likely voters)

	Total likely voters	Vote on Prop. 54		
		Yes voters	No voters	Undecided voters
Don't know / can't mention any	79%	73%	78%	93%
Medical research / health institutions	12	15	12	4
Ethnic organizations	4	5	5	2
Police / law enforcement	4	4	5	*
Government agencies (non-specific)	2	3	2	1
Colleges, universities, schools	1	2	1	1
Private businesses	1	1	1	*
Other mentions (less than 1% each)	3	3	3	*

* Less than 1/2 of 1%.
 (Adds to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)

Impact of Prop. 54's "medical research" exemption on vote preference

Voters were also asked whether Prop. 54's exemption allowing the collection of race and ethnic data on "medical research subjects and patients" made them more or less inclined to support Prop. 54 or whether it had no effect on their vote choice.

Overall, 20% of voters report that they would be more inclined to vote for Prop. 54 when reminded of the exemption, while 8% are less inclined. However, the large majority of voters (60%) say this would have no effect on their voting preference.

Yes voters are more likely than other voters to state that the exemption for medical research subjects and patients makes them more inclined to support Prop. 54.

Table 6
Does Prop. 54's exemption, which allows the collection of race and ethnic data on "medical research subjects and patients" make you more or less inclined to support Prop. 54 or does it have no effect
(among likely voters)

	Total likely voters	Vote on Prop. 54		
		Yes voters	No voters	Undecided voters
More inclined	20%	26%	17%	15%
Less inclined	8	3	13	6
No effect	60	65	64	37
Don't know	12	6	6	42

Perceptions of where gubernatorial candidates stand on Prop. 54

The major candidates running in the October 7 recall election have each taken a public position either in favor of or opposed to Prop. 54. Three of the candidates – Democratic Governor Gray Davis, Democratic Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante, and Republican actor Arnold Schwarzenegger – have come out against the initiative. The other major gubernatorial candidate, Republican State Senator Tom McClintock, is supporting the initiative.

When voters are asked where they think the leading gubernatorial candidates stand on Prop. 54, large proportions don't know – 51% in the case of Davis, 59% regarding Schwarzenegger, 56% relative to McClintock, and 32% with regard to Bustamante. Among those voters who believe they know where each of the gubernatorial candidates stand on Prop. 54, large proportions of voters correctly identify Davis and Bustamante as being opposed and McClintock as being in favor.

However, there is considerable voter confusion as to where Schwarzenegger stands on the issue, with 22% incorrectly believing he favors it and 19% correctly stating that he opposes it.

Table 7
Voter perceptions of where the leading gubernatorial candidates stand on Prop. 54
(among likely voters)

	<u>Favors it</u>	<u>Opposes it</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Gray Davis (D)	11%	38	51
Arnold Schwarzenegger (R)	22%	19	59
Cruz Bustamante (D)	16%	52	32
Tom McClintock (R)	34%	10	56

(D) denotes Democrat
(R) denotes Republican

Information About the Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a telephone survey conducted September 25-October 1, 2003 in English and Spanish among a random sample of likely voters in California's October 7 recall election. A representative sample of 1,535 adults age 18 or older was initially screened, yielding interviews with 1,026 registered voters, of whom 894 reported having already voted or said they were absolutely certain to vote in the recall election.

Sampling was conducted by means of random digit dialing, which selects telephone exchanges within all area codes serving California in proportion to population. From each exchange a random sample of telephone numbers was created by adding random digits to the telephone exchange selected, permitting access to both listed and unlisted telephones. Up to five interview attempts were made to reach voters. After the completion of data collection, the sample was weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the state's total registered voter population.

According to statistical theory, results from the overall sample of 894 likely voters have a sampling error of +/-3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Results from subgroups have somewhat larger sampling error ranges.

There are other possible sources of error in any survey in addition to sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sequencing, or through omissions or errors in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Have you seen, read or heard anything about an initiative, Proposition 54, also known as the "Racial Privacy Initiative," that will appear on the October 7 recall election ballot having to do with the classification of people by race or ethnicity?

(As you know) Prop. 54 is the "Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color or National Origin" initiative. It prohibits state and local governments from classifying any person by race, ethnicity, color or national origin. Various exemptions apply. If the election were being held today, and you were voting on Proposition 54, would you vote **YES** or **NO**?

(IF YES VOTER) Why do you support Proposition 54? Any other reasons?

(IF NO VOTER) Why do you oppose Proposition 54? Any other reasons?

As far as you know, is (NAME) supporting or opposing Proposition 54? (GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES NAMES READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Is (NAME) supporting or opposing Proposition 54?

The official ballot description of Proposition 54 states that "various exemptions apply" to the law. As far as you know, to what groups or types of organizations do these exemptions apply? Any others?

Proposition 54 contains an exemption which allows the collection of race and ethnicity data on "medical research subjects and patients." Does this exemption make you more inclined or less inclined to support Proposition 54, or does it have no effect on how you would vote on the initiative?