

# 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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**WHILE SCHWARZENEGGER  
STILL VIEWED FAVORABLY,  
BIG DROP IN HIS JOB  
APPRAISAL FROM LAST YEAR.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

While Californians still view Arnold Schwarzenegger's job performance in a favorable light, his standing with the public has declined from the lofty levels he achieved during his first year as governor.

Throughout most of 2004, about two-thirds of the public said they approved of the job Schwarzenegger was doing, and only about one-fifth disapproved. Now, in a statewide survey just completed, the governor's former three to one positive assessment has narrowed to 19 percentage points (54% approve vs. 35% disapprove) among all adults and 20 percentage points (55% approve vs. 35% disapprove) among registered voters.

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**Table 1**

**Voter appraisals of the job Arnold Schwarzenegger is doing as Governor**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2005 (adults)	54%	35	11
February 2005 (registered voters)	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

*(Prior measures conducted among California registered voters only.)*

### **Partisan approval trend**

During Schwarzenegger's first fourteen months in office, one of the more remarkable aspects of the public's assessment of him was that partisans of all persuasions held a favorable view. Along with large majorities of Republicans, pluralities of Democrats and non-partisans approved of Schwarzenegger's performance in office.

Now, Democrats view the governor's performance more negatively than positively by a 54% to 35% margin. In addition, the views of non-partisans are now more divided, with 48% approving of his job performance and 38% disapproving, down from a 64% to 25% margin in September.

Republicans, on the other hand, are maintaining their overwhelming approval of the governor.

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**Table 2**  
**Trend of Schwarzenegger's approval ratings among the state's partisans**  
**(among registered voters)**

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	<b><u>Approve</u></b>	<b><u>Disapprove</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
<b><u>Democrats</u></b>			
February 2005	34%	54	12
September 2004	46%	34	20
August 2004	45%	36	19
May 2004	48%	38	14
<b><u>Republicans</u></b>			
February 2005	84%	11	5
September 2004	88%	6	6
August 2004	90%	5	5
May 2004	89%	5	6
<b><u>Non-partisans/others</u></b>			
February 2005	48%	38	14
September 2004	64%	25	11
August 2004	61%	23	16
May 2004	58%	23	19

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**Schwarzenegger vs. his predecessors**

Last September after he had been in office about ten months, Schwarzenegger’s job ratings compared to *The Field Poll’s* record high gubernatorial job performance ratings received by Republican Earl Warren (1947-1953) and Democrat Jerry Brown (1975-1983) early in their tenures.

Now, Schwarzenegger’s job rating (54% approve and 35% disapprove) has declined to where his profile is more on a par with the early appraisals given Democrat Gray Davis (1999-2003), Republican George Deukmejian (1983-1991), Republican Ronald Reagan (1967-1975) and Democrat Pat Brown (1959-1967).

**Table 3**  
**Schwarzenegger’s approval ratings compared to other**  
**previous Governors early in the tenure**  
**(among California adults)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b><u>Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) (2003- )</u></b>			
After 15 months (adults)	54%	35	11
After 15 months (registered voters)	55%	35	10
After 10 months (registered voters)	65%	22	13
<b><u>Gray Davis (D) (1999-2003)</u></b>			
After 10 months	56%	24	20
<b><u>Pete Wilson (R) (1991-1999)</u></b>			
After 9 months	45%	49	6
<b><u>George Deukmejian (R) (1983-1991)</u></b>			
After 10 months	59%	35	6
<b><u>Jerry Brown (D) (1975-1983)</u></b>			
After 11 months	67%	24	9
<b><u>Ronald Reagan (R) (1967-1975)</u></b>			
After 6 months	58%	33	9
<b><u>Pat Brown (D) (1959-1967)</u></b>			
After 6 months	51%	22	27
<b><u>Earl Warren (R) (1947-1953)</u></b>			
After 8 months	75%	16	9

*Note: Surveys prior to Gray Davis used a three or five point response scale, which was converted to the current two point approval/disapproval scale for comparative purposes.*

### **Guided by special interests?**

Last fall twice as many voters (56% to 27%) believed that Schwarzenegger was motivated more by his consideration of the broad public interest than catering to special interests. Now, the public is somewhat more divided about this, with 46% saying that Schwarzenegger is guided primarily by what he considers the broad public interest and 38% thinking he caters more to what a few special interests want.

There is a big divide in how partisans view the governor on this question. A large majority of Democrats thinks he primarily caters to special interests, while an even larger majority of Republicans thinks he is guided more by the public interest. Non-partisans hold more mixed opinions on this matter.

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**Table 4**

**When making his decisions, does Governor Schwarzenegger cater to a few special interests or consider the broad public interest?**

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	<b><u>Caters to special interests</u></b>	<b><u>Considers broad public interest</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
February 2005 (adults)	38%	46	16
February 2005 (registered voters)	40%	49	11
August 2004 (registered voters)	27%	56	17
<b><u>Party registration</u></b>			
Democrats	59%	29	12
Republicans	14%	75	11
Non-partisans/others	43%	48	9

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### **Governor trustworthy?**

About half of the public (48%) believes Schwarzenegger is about as trustworthy as his predecessors. Among adults who feel otherwise, a larger proportion believes he is more trustworthy by a margin of 29% to 17%. Among registered voters, 34% believe he is more trustworthy and 14% think less trustworthy.

Six in ten Republicans (62%) maintain that Schwarzenegger is more trustworthy than previous governors, while about one-third (31%) rate him about the same and just 5% see him being less trustworthy. On the other hand, almost six in ten Democrats (59%) rank Schwarzenegger's trustworthiness only on a par with his predecessors, while among the remainder a small plurality (22% to 15%) thinks he is less rather than more trustworthy.

Among non-partisans/others, 59% put Schwarzenegger on the same level of trustworthiness as previous governors, and a slightly larger proportion of the rest rate him more rather than less trustworthy.

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**Table 5**  
**Compared to previous governors, is Schwarzenegger  
more or less trustworthy?**

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	<u>More</u>	<u>About the same</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2005 (adults)	29%	48	17	6
February 2005 (registered voters)	34%	49	14	3
<b><u>Party registration</u></b>				
Democrats	15%	59	22	4
Republicans	62%	31	5	2
Non-partisans	23%	59	13	5

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### **State legislature ratings**

Throughout the last two and a half years, Californians' appraisal of the job performance of the state legislature has been more negative than positive, and at times strongly so.

In today's survey 49% disapprove and 36% approve of the legislature's overall job performance, similar to assessments seen last fall. The last time a plurality of Californians approved of the job performance of the state legislature was the summer of 2002.

**Table 6**  
**Trend of appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2005 (adults)	36%	49	15
February 2005 (registered voters)	34%	52	14
September 2004*	33%	46	21
August 2004*	33%	49	18
May 2004	30%	47	23
February 2004*	26%	58	16
January 2004*	23%	62	15
July 2003*	19%	67	14
April 2003*	31%	51	18
September 2002*	35%	46	19
July 2002*	45%	36	9
April 2002	42%	36	22
January 2002*	40%	36	24
December 2001	46%	29	25
September 2001	43%	36	21
May 2001	39%	42	19
January 2001	52%	25	23
June 2000	45%	25	30
February 2000*	49%	22	29
October 1999	45%	26	29
August 1999	47%	28	25
March 1999	49%	23	28
August 1998	44%	30	26
August 1997	50%	40	10
May 1997	41%	46	13
February 1997	40%	53	7
September 1996	43%	45	12
June 1996	38%	53	9
February 1995	34%	59	7
May 1993	28%	64	8
September 1992	28%	67	5
July 1992	26%	68	6
January 1992	41%	57	3
August 1990	45%	48	7
February 1988	57%	36	7
June 1983	43%	49	8

*Note: Measures prior to 1997 conducted among all adults using a three- or five-point response scale, which was converted to the current two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes*

*\* Indicates survey conducted among registered voters only.*

**Lack of special session accomplishments**

The state legislature has been in special session for some weeks to deal with the state’s budget deficit. So far, a majority of the public doesn’t think much has been accomplished. Just 4% think a lot has been done, while 26% feel they’ve accomplished some. However, a combined 58% believe that only a little (24%) or not much at all (34%) has been done.

When asked to assess who’s to blame for the slow pace of the budget negotiations, partisans of all persuasions are more likely to put the blame on the legislature rather than Governor Schwarzenegger.

**Table 7**  
**Who is to blame for the slow pace of budget negotiations?**

	<b><u>Statewide</u></b>	<b><u>Democrats</u></b>	<b><u>Republicans</u></b>	<b><u>Others</u></b>
State legislature	52%	43%	83%	52%
Governor Schwarzenegger	21	34	2	17
Both	15	17	9	18
No opinion	13	6	6	13

**Negotiating in good faith?**

By a two to one margin (53% to 27%), residents think the deliberations of the state legislature are characterized more by confrontation and posturing than good faith negotiations. This is a much more negative view than their appraisals of the governor, about whom 46% think is negotiating in good faith compared to 38% who say his actions are characterized more by confrontation and posturing.

**Table 8**  
**Is Governor Schwarzenegger / the state legislature negotiating in good faith to reach a compromise or characterized more by confrontation and posturing?**

	<b><u>Governor</u></b>	<b><u>State legislature</u></b>
Negotiating in good faith	46%	27%
Confrontation and posturing	38	53
No opinion	16	20

**California heading in the wrong direction**

Californians’ assessment of the direction the state is heading has taken a negative turn over the past five months. Among adults, 51% believe California is seriously off on the wrong track, compared to 40% who feel the state is moving in the right direction. Among registered voters, sentiments are even more pessimistic – 53% wrong track vs. 35% right direction. This represents a significant

decline from the public's more positive than negative assessment of the state's overall direction last fall.

Republicans are generally upbeat, with 53% believing the state is moving in the right direction and 37% saying it is on the wrong track. On the other hand, more than three times as many Democrats feel the state is heading in the wrong direction (68%) as feel it is on the right track (22%). Non-partisans are also more pessimistic than optimistic by a 51% to 32% margin.

**Table 9**  
**Trend of the overall direction California is heading**  
**(among all adults)**

	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2005 (adults)	40%	51	9
February 2005 (registered voters)	35%	53	12
2004 (September)*	46%	38	18
2004 (May)	36%	52	12
2004 (February)*	35%	54	11
2003 (August)*	16%	76	8
2003 (July)	19%	71	10
2003 (April)*	26%	65	9
2002 (September)*	33%	54	13
2002 (January)*	41%	50	9
2001 (December)	49%	40	11
2001 (September – pre attack)	41%	52	7
2001 (May)	27%	66	7
2001 (January)	43%	49	8
2000*	58%	35	7
1999	59%	27	14
1998	53%	33	14
1997	34%	54	12
1996	39%	49	12
1995	32%	57	11
1994	21%	70	9
1993	18%	75	7
1992	7%	90	3
1989	50%	42	8
1988	52%	43	5
<b><u>Party registration</u> (February 2005)</b>			
Democrats	22%	68	10
Republicans	53%	37	10
Others	32%	51	17

\* Indicates survey conducted among registered voters only.

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a telephone survey of Californians conducted in English and Spanish by The Field Poll. Interviews were completed during the period February 8 – 17, 2005 among a representative sample of 1,009 adults, of whom 800 reported being registered to vote. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize possible respondent fatigue, the overall sample was divided into two approximately equal sized random sub-samples of 503 and 506 adults each, including 396 and 404 registered voters, respectively.

Households were sampled using a random digit dial methodology, which includes all operating telephone exchanges within all area codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange a random sample of telephone numbers are created by adding random digits to the selected telephone exchange. This permits access to all landline telephone numbers both listed and unlisted.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall adult sample have a sampling error of +/- 3.2 percentage points, while results from the overall registered voter sample have a sampling error of +/- 3.5 percentage points. Results from the adult portion of each random sub-sample have a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points, while results from the registered voter portion of each random sub-sample have a sampling error of +/- 5.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

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

### **Questions Asked**

Thinking about 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?

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

Do you think Governor Schwarzenegger generally caters to a few special interest groups when making his decisions or considers the broad public interest more in making his decisions?

Compared to previous California governors, would you say Arnold Schwarzenegger is more trustworthy, less trustworthy or about as trustworthy as other governors when it comes to following through on the promises he makes as governor?

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

The Governor called the legislature into special session earlier this year to consider proposals to deal with the state's budget deficit. Up to this point, how much do you think has been accomplished during this special session – a lot, some, a little or not much at all?

Who do you think is more to blame for the slow pace of the budget negotiations thus far – the Governor or the state legislature?

(NEXT TWO QUESTIONS READ IN RANDOM ORDER)

Do you think Governor Schwarzenegger is negotiating with the state legislature in good faith to reach compromises to pass a budget agreement this year or are his dealings with the legislature characterized more by confrontation and posturing with little room for compromise?

Do you think the state legislature is negotiating with the governor in good faith to reach compromises to pass a budget agreement this year or are their dealings with him characterized more by confrontation and posturing with little room for compromise?