

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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SCHWARZENEGGER JOB RATINGS IMPROVE A BIT. VOTERS LIKE MOST, BUT NOT ALL, OF HIS INFRASTRUCTURE BONDS PROPOSALS.

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

The latest *Field Poll* finds 40% of voters approving of Schwarzenegger's performance in office, while 49% disapprove. While still more negative than positive, this represents a slight improvement in voter assessments of the Governor since October, when 37% approved and 56% disapproved of his performance.

Voters favor by a two to one margin the Governor's proposal to place a series of state bonds for infrastructure projects before voters over the next ten years. However, there is significant variation in the degree of voter support for specific bonds depending on the purposes they would be used for. Large majorities are inclined to support bonds that would underwrite road construction and repair, educational facilities, water systems and flood control, the seismic retrofitting of hospitals, public transportation, affordable housing, and parks. By contrast, voters oppose issuing state bonds for prison construction and renovating the courts, and are divided with regard to issuing bonds to expand the state's port facilities.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll*, completed February 12-26 among a representative sample of 680 registered voters statewide.

Governor's job performance ratings improve a bit

Throughout most of last year, voters consistently down rated the Governor's performance in office and rejected his attempt to enact a number of his proposals through a special election. Currently, 40% approve of the job Schwarzenegger is doing in office, while 49% disapprove. While this reading remains more negative than positive, it represents a slight improvement from the job assessments he received last October, when 37% approved and 56% disapproved.

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

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
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

Large sub-group differences in ratings of Schwarzenegger

There is a big partisan split in the way voters perceive the job that Schwarzenegger is doing. Currently, 67% of Democrats and 57% of non-partisans disapprove of his performance, while 64% of Republicans approve.

Big differences are also seen along ideological lines, with a large majority of liberals (79%) and about half of moderates (47%) disapproving. On the other hand, conservatives remain supportive by a two to one margin.

Latinos and blacks are considerably more negative in their assessments of the Governor than white non-Hispanics. Older voters are a little more positively disposed toward the Governor than younger voters.

Voters living in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area and in other parts of Northern California are more critical of the Governor than voters in the Central Valley or Southern California.

Table 2
Schwarzenegger's current job performance ratings – by subgroup
(among registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total statewide	40%	49	11
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	22%	67	11
Republicans	64%	22	14
Non-partisans/others	35%	57	8
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	41%	51	8
Other Southern California	46%	40	14
Central Valley	45%	44	11
San Francisco Bay Area	28%	61	11
Other Northern California*	22%	57	11
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	42%	48	10
Female	37%	50	13
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	44%	44	12
Latino	30%	62	8
Black/African-American*	23%	70	7
Asian/other*	36%	49	15
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 29	35%	55	10
30 – 49	37%	51	12
50 – 64	40%	48	12
65 or older	45%	41	14
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	58%	29	13
Moderate	42%	47	11
Liberal	12%	79	9

* Small sample size

Voters favor the Governor’s call for a series of infrastructure bonds

In his State of the State address earlier this year, Schwarzenegger proposed a series of infrastructure improvement projects to be financed by bond issues over the next ten years. By a 56% to 27% margin, voters give an initially favorable reaction to the Governor’s ambitious proposal.

This positive reaction spans all major subgroups of the voting population, with majorities or pluralities in each party, ideological background and region of the state saying they support his proposal in concept.

Table 3
Voters overall reaction to Governor Schwarzenegger’s proposed infrastructure bonds proposal (among registered voters)

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total statewide	56%	27	17
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	55%	26	19
Republicans	63%	22	15
Non-partisan/other	48%	34	18
<u>Area</u>			
Coastal counties	54%	28	18
Inland counties	62%	23	15
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	56%	29	15
Other Southern California	58%	25	17
Central Valley	65%	24	11
San Francisco Bay Area	51%	29	20
Other Northern California*	46%	27	27
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	57%	25	18
Moderate	59%	27	14
Liberal	54%	27	19

* Small sample base.

Support for specific projects varies depending on its purpose

However, there is a high degree of variation in voter support for issuing state bonds depending on the purposes they would be used for. Most popular, with about three out of four voters supportive, are bonds for road and highway construction and repair (76%), educational facilities (74%) and water systems and flood control (73%).

About seven in ten voters are also inclined to favor multi-billion dollar bonds for the seismic retrofitting of hospitals (71%) and public transportation (68%). Slightly less than two in three say they'd also support bonds for affordable housing (64%) and parks (63%).

On the other hand, there is considerably less voter support for issuing multi-billion dollar state bonds for the renovation of the courts (35%) and prison construction (36%). Voters are also divided with regard to issuing bonds to expand the state's port facilities, with 44% in favor and 40% opposed.

Table 4
Voter preferences regarding various multi-billion-dollar state bond issues
if the election were held today
(among registered voters)

	<u>Inclined to vote...</u>		
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Road and highway construction and repair	76%	17	7
Educational facilities	74%	19	7
Water systems and flood control	73%	18	9
Seismic retrofitting of hospitals	71%	18	11
Public transportation	68%	23	9
Affordable housing	64%	28	8
Parks	63%	28	9
Expanding the state's port facilities	44%	40	16
Prison construction	36%	52	12
Renovation of the courts	35%	49	16

State legislature job ratings up slightly

Currently, three in ten California voters (31%) approve of the job the state legislature is doing, while 48% disapprove. Similar to the Governor, this represents a modest improvement in voter appraisals of the legislature compared to last year. While Republicans and non-partisans are most critical, Democratic voters have a mixed view, with 36% approving and 38% disapproving.

Table 5
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing
(among registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2006	31%	48	21
October 2005	26%	58	16
Late August 2005	27%	54	19
June 2005	24%	57	19
February 2005	34%	52	14
September 2004	33%	46	21
August 2004	33%	49	18
May 2004	27%	52	21
February 2004	26%	58	16
January 2004	23%	62	15
July 2003	19%	67	14
April 2003	31%	51	18
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
<u>Party (February 2006)</u>			
Democrats	36%	38	26
Republicans	26%	56	18
Non-partisan/other	28%	53	19

* Surveys conducted among all California adults, not just registered voters.

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.

State still on the wrong track

Only about three in ten voters (31%) believe the state is heading in the right direction, while a majority (55%) feels the state is seriously off on the wrong track. These assessments are a little less negative than they were in October of last year.

Table 6			
Overall direction that California is heading (among registered voters)			
	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2006	31%	55	14
October 2005	30%	63	7
August 2005	30%	57	13
June 2005	28%	60	12
February 2005	35%	53	12
September 2004	46%	38	16
May 2004	37%	51	12
February 2004	35%	54	11
August 2003	16%	76	8
July 2003	18%	75	7
April 2003	26%	65	9
September 2002	33%	54	13
January 2002	41%	50	9
2001 (average)	43%	50	7
2000 (average)	58%	35	7
1999 (average)	52%	34	14
1998 (average)	48%	42	10
1997 (average)	36%	54	10
1996 (average)	39%	49	12
1995 (average)*	32%	57	11
1994 (average)*	21%	70	9
1993 (average)	11%	83	6
1992 (average)	7%	90	3
1989 (average)*	50%	42	8
1988 (average)*	52%	43	5

* Surveys conducted among all California adults, not just registered adults.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 680 Californians registered to vote conducted by telephone February 12-26, 2006 in English and Spanish.

Households were sampled using a random digit dial methodology, which randomly selects operating landline telephone exchanges within all areas codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange, telephone numbers are created by adding random digits to the selected telephone exchange. This method gives each phone listing an equal chance of being selected and permits access to all landline telephone numbers statewide, both listed and unlisted.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall sample have a sampling error of +/- 3.8 percentage points.

Questions Asked

Thinking about the 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?

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

Governor Schwarzenegger has proposed placing a series of state bonds for infrastructure projects before California voters over the next ten years to fund improvements to roads, ports, water systems, schools, prisons and the courts. Generally speaking, do you favor or oppose the Governor's plan to issue bonds to fund infrastructure projects like these?

I am going to read different kinds of projects that could be included in the infrastructure bond package. For each, please tell me whether you would be inclined to vote YES or NO if a multi-billion dollar bond were proposed for this purpose. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Would you be inclined to vote YES or NO on a multi-billion dollar bond for this? (SEE RELEASE FOR CATEGORIES READ)