

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

222 Sutter Street, Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94108-4411
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541
EMAIL: fieldpoll@field.com
www.field.com/fieldpollonline

COPYRIGHT 2006 BY FIELD RESEARCH CORPORATION. FOR ADVANCE PUBLICATION BY SUBSCRIBERS ONLY.

Release #2205

Release Date: **Thursday, July 27, 2006**

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION A SERIOUS PROBLEM. STRONG SUPPORT FOR ALLOWING ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS ALREADY HERE TO STAY. TIGHTER BORDER SECURITY ALSO FAVORED. LARGE MAJORITY FAVORS CONGRESS PASSING A COMPREHENSIVE BILL COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF THE ISSUE.

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

Illegal immigration is seen as a serious national and state problem by most California voters, regardless of partisan or ideological preference. The latest *Field Poll* examined voter preferences with regard to what should be done about the problem. The results include the following:

- Four in five voters (80%) favor a program to allow illegal immigrants who have been living in the U.S. for a number of years an opportunity to stay in this country and apply for citizenship if they have a job, learned English and paid back taxes. By contrast, a proposal to have illegal immigrants currently living in the U.S. leave the country and re-apply for admission is opposed by 60%, with just 34% in favor.
- There is also strong support (71%) to increase the number of federal border agents patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border. A smaller majority, 56%, supports the recent policy of using National Guard troops to temporarily assist federal border patrol agents along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Six in ten (60%) support the idea of imposing stiff penalties on employers and individuals who hire illegal immigrants.
- There is strong support (70%) for Congress to pass a comprehensive bill this year covering all aspects of the issue, rather than limiting this year's bill to mainly border security issues. Support spans all partisan and ideological subgroups of the voting population.
- A large majority of Californians (63%) disapprove of President George W. Bush's handling of the illegal immigration problem.

Seriousness of illegal immigration

Majorities of voters in this state consider illegal immigration a very serious problem, both in California and nationally.

As a national problem 83% consider illegal immigration serious, of whom 53% say it is very serious and 30% somewhat serious. When asked about the seriousness of the problem to California, an even larger majority (86%) describe the problem in California as serious, 58% of whom feel it is very serious.

Table 1
Seriousness of the problem of illegal immigration
in (the U.S.) (California)
(among California registered voters)

	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>California</u>
Very serious	53%	58%
Somewhat serious	30	28
Not too serious	14	10
Not at all serious	2	3
No opinion	1	1

Sub-group differences

While about half of Democratic voters consider illegal immigration to be a very serious problem, Republicans take a stronger view, with 69% describing the problem as very serious in relation to the country and 76% saying this as relates to this state. The views of non-partisans are closer to those of Democrats than Republicans.

Sizeable majorities of political moderates and overwhelming majorities of conservatives view illegal immigration as very serious, both for the country as a whole and for California. By contrast, only about one in four liberals view the problem as very serious.

Table 2
Proportions considering illegal immigration in
(the U.S.) (California) "very serious" by subgroup
(among California registered voters)

	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>California</u>
Total	<u>53%</u>	<u>58%</u>
<u>Party</u>		
Democrats	46	48
Republicans	69	76
Non-partisans/others	43	49
<u>Political ideology</u>		
Conservative	73	82
Middle-of-the-road	56	60
Liberal	24	26

Reactions to specific proposals aimed at dealing with the problem

During the ongoing national and statewide debate about illegal immigration, a number of legislative proposals to deal with the issue have emerged. Five of these proposals were posed to the representative sample of voters in this survey.

There is overwhelming support (80%) for the proposal to “create a program that would allow illegal immigrants who have been living in the U.S. for a number of years an opportunity to stay in this country and apply for citizenship if they have a job, learned English and paid back taxes.” By contrast, another proposal, which calls for all illegal immigrants currently in the U.S. to leave the country and re-apply for admission, is opposed by 60%, while just 34% are in favor.

Greater than seven in ten (71%) support the step of increasing the number of federal border agents patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border. A smaller majority, 56%, supports the recent step of using National Guard troops to temporarily assist federal border patrol agents along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The proposal to impose stiff penalties on employers and individuals who hire illegal immigrants is backed by 60%.

Table 3
**Opinions of California voters about specific proposals aimed
at dealing with the problem of illegal immigration**

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Create a program that would allow illegal immigrants who have been living in the U.S. for a number of years an opportunity to stay in this country and apply for citizenship if they have a job, learned English and paid back taxes	80%	16	4
Increase the number of federal border agents patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border	71%	26	3
Impose stiff penalties on employers and individuals who hire illegal immigrants	60%	35	5
Use National Guard troops to temporarily assist federal border patrol agents along the U.S.-Mexico border	56%	41	3
Require all illegal immigrants currently living in the U.S. to leave the country and reapply for admission	34%	60	6

Comprehensive vs limited legislation

For some time now both houses of Congress have been debating the issue of illegal immigration. The House and the Senate have passed separate bills differing in many respects, but have thus far been deadlocked in reaching a compromise settlement.

At the root of the impasse is whether this year Congress should attempt to pass an illegal immigration law that is limited to mainly border security issues or one that is more comprehensive, dealing with not only border security but also guest worker programs and paths to citizenship for illegal immigrants who are already here.

Seven in ten California voters favor the comprehensive approach, compared to 22% who favor a more limited bill. Support for the comprehensive approach spans all partisan and ideological subgroups.

Table 4
Should the immigration bill in Congress be limited and primarily address border security issues or should it be more comprehensive addressing border security, guest worker programs and paths to citizenship (among California registered voters)

	<u>Comprehensive bill</u>	<u>Limited bill</u>	<u>Neither/ no opinion</u>
Statewide	70%	22	8
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	76%	14	10
Republicans	63%	31	6
Non-partisan/other	70%	21	9
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	64%	29	7
Middle-of-the-road	71%	22	7
Liberal	78%	12	10

Bush's handling of the illegal immigration issue

By a 63% to 25% margin, California voters disapprove of President Bush's handling of the illegal immigration issue.

This not only includes about two thirds of Democrats (68%) and non-partisans (69%), but also a majority of Republicans (52%).

Disapproval of Bush on the illegal immigration issue also spans all political ideology subgroups, with 54% of conservatives, 63% of middle-of-the-roaders, and 74% of liberals giving the President low marks on this issue.

Table 5
Ratings of President Bush's handling of the illegal immigration issue (among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total	25%	63	12
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	18%	68	14
Republicans	37%	52	11
Non-partisan/other	22%	69	9
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	36%	54	11
Middle-of-the-road	23%	62	15
Liberal	17%	74	9

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 494 Californians registered to vote. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period July 10-23, 2006.

Sampling for this survey was divided into two approximately equal sized matching subsamples. About half of the interviews were conducted using a random digit dial methodology, which randomly selects operating landline telephone exchanges within all area codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange, random samples of telephone numbers were created by adding random digits to each selected telephone exchange, giving each phone listing an equal chance of being selected and permitting access to all landline telephone numbers both listed and unlisted.

The other half of the sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected randomly from a statewide list of all registered voters in California. In this sample every *n*th voter was selected from the list at random for inclusion into the sample and interviews were attempted only with the specific voter selected.

In an effort to include “hard to reach” voters into each sample, up to 8 attempts were made to reach a voter at each telephone number dialed in each sample. Results from both samples were combined and weighted to conform to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state’s registered voter population.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the registered sample have a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points. 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, the sequencing of questions or through undetected omissions or errors in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the problem of illegal immigration?
How serious a problem do you think illegal immigration is in the United States today – very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious?

How serious a problem do you think illegal immigration is in California today – very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious?

I am going to read some proposals that have been made relating to the illegal immigration situation, and for each please tell me whether you favor or oppose this policy. Do you favor or oppose this policy? (SEE RELEASE FOR ITEMS READ) (STATEMENTS READ IN RANDOM ORDER)

Lawmakers in Congress are trying to pass an immigration bill this year. Some believe that the bill should be limited and primarily address border security issues. Others support a more comprehensive bill that would address not only border security, but also guest worker programs and ways for some illegal immigrants to earn their citizenship. Which version of the immigration bill do you favor – a more limited bill primarily addressing border security or a more comprehensive bill addressing border security, guest worker programs and paths to citizenship?