

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 #2012

Release Date: **Thursday, September 27, 2001**

CALIFORNIANS VIEW CONDIT VERY UNFAVORABLY BUT SEE HIM AS HAVING DONE A GOOD JOB IN CONGRESS. MAJORITY DOES NOT WANT HIM TO RUN FOR RE-ELECTION, SEE HIM AS A POSSIBLE DRAG ON OTHER STATE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES.

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Majority Believes That Condit Has Not Told All He Knows About Chandra Levy's Disappearance. Many Think He Has Some Responsibility For Levy's Presumed Death.

By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

In a survey involving representative samples of the statewide public and of voters in the newly drawn 18th Congressional District, *The Field Poll* examined how Californians view Democratic Congressman Gary Condit, his knowledge of and possible responsibility for the disappearance of Chandra Levy, and some of the possible political reverberations stemming from Condit's association with Levy, which has been a prime news story for many months.

The surveys conducted September 7-10, 2001 included 1,003 Californians statewide and 406 voters living within the boundaries of the newly drawn 18th Congressional District, the electorate that Condit would have to face should he decide to run for re-election next year.

Overview of the findings

Californians have a decidedly unfavorable view of Condit and believe it would be a good thing if he decided not to seek re-election next year. In addition, greater than three in ten California residents and voters in his own district feel that Condit should resign immediately. Despite the public's low personal regard for the Congressman, there is considerable sentiment, especially among voters living in the 18th Congressional District, that Condit has done a good job in Congress.

By a greater than two to one margin (56% to 26%) rank-and-file Democrats across the state think that the state Democratic Party should not support Condit if he were to run for re-election next year. While a majority (65%) of California voters does not think the news about Condit will affect the chances of the Democratic Congressional candidate running in their own district, by a

one-sided 28% to 1% margin voters who do foresee some effect think Condit will hurt the chances of their district's Democratic nominee next year.

Regarding Condit's connection with Chandra Levy, the Washington intern who disappeared almost six months ago, large majorities of Californians both statewide and in the 18th Congressional District believe the Congressman has not told the public all he knows about her disappearance. Relatively few think Ms. Levy is still alive, and California voters are divided over whether Condit is in any way responsible for Levy's presumed death. Suspicion of Condit's involvement in Levy's possible death is somewhat less among voters in his district, especially those living in areas already a part of the 18th Congressional District in prior elections.

Both the Californian public and voters in the new 18th Congressional District are divided in their views of the job the news media have done in covering the Condit-Levy story, with about as many saying the media has not acted responsibly as feeling it has covered the story responsibly.

Image ratings of Condit

The statewide public has a highly negative impression of Congressman Condit. Six in ten California adults (58%) view him unfavorably, while just 6% have a favorable impression of him. Among voters statewide an even larger proportion (66%) has an unfavorable view. Judgements of Condit are less harsh among voters in the newly drawn 18th Congressional District, the electorate in which he would have to run, should he decide to seek reelection next year. Currently, 41% of district voters hold a negative impression of Condit, while 22% have a positive view. Older voters and those living in areas included in the 18th Congressional District in previous elections are somewhat less negative in their overall opinions of Condit than younger voters or those living in areas new to the district next year.

Table 1

Identification and image ratings of Congressman Gary Condit

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide – Adults	6%	58	36
Statewide – Voters	6%	66	28
Voters in 18th Cong. District (total)	<u>22%</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>37</u>
Newly added to district	6%	46	48
Previously within district	33%	37	30
Condit voter in 2000	40%	33	27
Not a Condit voter in 2000	19%	47	34
Democrats	27%	34	39
Republicans	16%	51	33
Others/non-partisans	24%	40	36
18 – 39	19%	30	51
40 – 59	17%	48	35
60 or older	32%	39	29
Men	24%	37	39
Women	21%	44	35

Condit's overall job performance

The views that Californians and district voters have of the job Condit has been doing in the Congress, are reasonably positive. By a 27% to 19% margin more Californians approve than disapprove of his job performance, although a majority (54%) has no opinion. Voters in the 18th district are more apt to approve than disapprove of Condit's overall performance in office (53% approve vs. 18% disapprove). This is especially true among voters living in those areas of the district already represented by Condit prior to this year's redistricting. These voters approve of Condit's job performance by a nearly three to one (65% to 21%) margin.

Table 2
Overall job performance of Congressman Gary Condit

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide – Adults	27%	19	54
Statewide – Voters	27%	19	54
Voters in 18th Cong. District (total)	<u>53%</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>29</u>
Newly added to district	36%	13	51
Previously within district	65%	21	14
Condit voter in 2000	80%	12	8
Not a Condit voter in 2000	34%	40	26
Democrats	58%	13	29
Republicans	48%	23	29
Others/non-partisans	49%	23	28
18 – 39	49%	15	36
40 – 59	49%	22	29
60 or older	62%	16	22
Men	55%	19	26
Women	52%	17	31

Should Condit seek re-election?

Both the statewide public and district voters were asked whether it would be a good thing or bad thing if Condit decided not to seek re-election next year. The results show that majorities of both publics believe that not running would be Condit's best course of action. Statewide voters would rather that Condit not seek re-election by a five to one margin (68% to 13%). Voters in Condit's own district also feel this way by a greater than two to one margin (57% to 24%). Even a plurality of those who previously supported Condit in his 2000 election run prefer that he not run again next year.

Table 3
Good thing/bad thing if Gary Condit
decided not to seek re-election to Congress next year

	<u>Good thing</u>	<u>Bad thing</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide – Adults	63%	13	24
Statewide – Voters	68%	13	19
Voters in 18 th Cong. District (total)	<u>57%</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>19</u>
Newly added to district	64%	16	20
Previously within district	51%	28	21
Condit voter in 2000	49%	36	15
Not a Condit voter in 2000	55%	13	32
Democrats	55%	24	21
Republicans	61%	22	17
Others/non-partisans	51%	24	25
18 – 39	49%	24	27
40 – 59	68%	21	11
60 or older	48%	26	26
Men	57%	23	20
Women	56%	24	20

Should Condit resign immediately or serve out his term?

While pluralities of California residents and voters in his own district favor Condit serving out his term, fairly large portions of voters statewide (37%) as well as those living in the confines of the new district lines (31%) believe that Condit should resign immediately.

Table 4
Should Congressman Condit
serve out present term or resign immediately?

	<u>Serve out term</u>	<u>Resign immediately</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide – Adults	48%	36	16
Statewide – Voters	52%	37	11
Voters in 18 th Cong. District (total)	<u>56%</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>13</u>
Newly added to district	39%	39	22
Previously within district	67%	25	8
Condit voter in 2000	75%	18	7
Not a Condit voter in 2000	49%	38	13
Democrats	61%	27	12
Republicans	50%	34	16
Others/non-partisans	53%	37	10
18 – 39	59%	29	12
40 – 59	49%	37	14
60 or older	63%	23	14
Men	57%	31	12
Women	55%	30	15

Should the state Democratic Party support Condit if he runs?

California Democrats were asked whether the state Democratic Party should support a Condit candidacy for Congress should he decide to run for re-election next year. By greater than a two to one margin (56% to 26%) rank-and-file Democrats think the state party should not support Condit if he does run.

Table 5	
Should the California Democratic Party support Gary Condit if he runs for re-election next year? (asked of registered Democrats statewide)	
Should not support	56%
Should support	26
No opinion	18

Effect of Condit on the election chances of other Congressional Democrats in the state

While a majority (65%) of voters statewide does not think the recent news about Condit will have any effect on the election chances of their district's Democratic candidate running next year, among those who do foresee some effect, it is virtually all negative. About one in four voters statewide (28%) believe Condit will adversely affect the election chances of the Democratic Congressional candidate in their district next year, while just 1% sees a possible positive impact.

Republicans and non-partisans are somewhat more likely than Democratic voters statewide to believe that Condit will hurt the chances of the Democratic candidate in their district's Congressional elections next year.

Table 6				
Do you think the news about Gary Condit will help or hurt the election chances of the Democratic candidate running for Congress in your district next year? (among registered voters statewide)				
	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Non-partisans/ others</u>
Hurt	28%	20%	36%	36%
Help	1	1	1	1
No difference	65	74	58	59
No opinion	6	5	5	4

Has Condit told all he knows about the Levy disappearance?

Large majorities of both Californians and voters in the 18th Congressional district feel that Condit is not telling all he knows to the public about the disappearance of Chandra Levy. Statewide 71% of adults and 67% of voters feel this way, four to five times the proportions who feel he has told all he knows.

Within the newly drawn 18th district, a majority of voters (53%) feels Condit is holding something back, while just 24% feel he has told all he knows to the public. Voters living in those areas previously a part of the 18th Congressional district are somewhat more likely than voters residing in areas new to the district to feel Condit has told all he knows about the Levy disappearance. Yet, even among these voters more feel he is holding something back as think he has told all he knows.

Table 7

Do you think Congressman Condit has told the public all he knows about Chandra Levy's disappearance?

	<u>Yes, told all he knows</u>	<u>No, is holding back</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide – Adults	13%	71	16
Statewide – Voters	16%	67	17
Voters in 18 th Cong. District (total)	<u>24%</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>23</u>
Newly added to district	14%	63	23
Previously within district	32%	47	21
Condit voter in 2000	41%	40	19
Not a Condit voter in 2000	12%	60	28
Democrats	28%	51	21
Republicans	19%	62	19
Others/non-partisans	24%	40	36
18 – 39	18%	60	22
40 – 59	20%	61	19
60 or older	35%	39	26
Men	25%	52	23
Women	24%	55	21

Is Levy alive and Condit's possible responsibility for her death

Relatively few Californians or voters in the 18th Congressional District believe Chandra Levy is still alive. Just 7% of voters statewide and 12% of district voters hold out the hope that she is alive.

Yet, there is a sharp divergence in opinions of the statewide public and voters in the 18th district with respect to whether Condit is in any way responsible for Levy's presumed death.

Of the 67% of people statewide who don't believe Levy is alive, more (29%) believe Condit is in some way responsible for her death than feel he isn't (21%). Voters in Condit's own district, on the other hand, tend to think otherwise, especially those living in those areas previously a part of the 18th Congressional district prior to redistricting.

Table 8
Is Chandra Levy alive, and if not,
do you think Gary Condit is in any way responsible for Levy's death?

	<u>Don't think Levy is alive</u>	<u>Yes, responsible</u>	<u>No, not responsible</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	<u>Think Levy is alive</u>
Statewide – Adults	67%	29%	21	17	9
Statewide – Voters	69%	25%	25	19	7
Voters in 18 th Cong. District (total)	<u>58%</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>12</u>
Newly added to district	60%	22%	23	15	11
Previously within district	56%	12%	28	16	12
Condit voter in 2000	55%	8%	35	12	13
Not a Condit voter in 2000	60%	22%	20	18	11
Democrats	60%	19%	28	13	14
Republicans	60%	15%	27	18	10
Others/non-partisans	43%	7%	17	19	10
18 – 39	54%	20%	22	12	12
40 – 59	67%	21%	26	20	8
60 or older	48%	8%	28	12	17
Men	55%	18%	24	13	12
Women	61%	15%	28	18	12

Differences between the sum of the proportions who don't feel Levy is alive and those who believe she is represent the proportion who had no opinion on this question.

Has the media acted responsibly?

Californians and voters in the 18th Congressional District are divided in their assessments of the media's handling of the Condit-Levy case. Among all California adults more feel the media have acted responsibly than irresponsibly by a 50% to 40% margin. Opinions among the California voting public are more closely divided (46% to 45%), as are the opinions of voters within the 18th Congressional District. While 42% of district voters believe the media have acted responsibly, 45% think they have been irresponsible. The view that the media have not been responsible in its news coverage is particularly strong among district voters who live in areas previously a part of the 18th district.

Table 9

Do you feel the news media have acted responsibly or not in its coverage of Gary Condit and Chandra Levy?

	<u>Responsibly</u>	<u>Not responsibly</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide – Adults	50%	40	10
Statewide – Voters	46%	45	9
Voters in 18 th Cong. District (total)	<u>42%</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>13</u>
Newly added to district	52%	35	13
Previously within district	36%	52	12
Condit voter in 2000	32%	56	12
Not a Condit voter in 2000	43%	42	15
Democrats	41%	46	13
Republicans	46%	44	10
Others/non-partisans	37%	42	21
18 – 39	45%	37	18
40 – 59	47%	47	6
60 or older	35%	48	17
Men	42%	46	12
Women	42%	43	15

Information About the Survey

Sample Details

The results in this report are based on two separate surveys. The first was a statewide survey conducted September 7-10, 2001 among a representative sample of 1,003 California adults, including 722 registered voters, by telephone using a random digit dial sampling methodology. The second was a telephone survey of 406 registered voters living within the boundaries of the newly drawn 18th Congressional District, drawn from a list of all registered voters in this area.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall statewide adult sample would have a sampling error of +/- 3.2 percentage points, while results from statewide voter sample have a sampling error of +/- 3.8 percentage points. Overall findings from the survey of voters in the newly drawn 18th Congressional District have a sampling error of +/- 5 percentage points. There are many possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sequencing or through undetected errors or omissions in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Generally speaking, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Congressman Gary Condit or don't you know enough about him to have an opinion?

(Apart from your personal opinion of Congressman Condit) do you approve or disapprove of the job he is doing as (your) Congressman?

According to news reports, Gary Condit has decided not to seek re-election to Congress next year. If these reports are true, do you feel this would be a good thing or a bad thing (for the voters in the 18th Congressional District)?

Do you feel Gary Condit should serve out his present term, which ends in about sixteen months, or should he resign immediately?

(ASKED OF REGISTERED DEMOCRATS STATEWIDE ONLY:) Should the California Democratic Party support or not support Gary Condit if he runs for re-election next year?

Chandra Levy, a 24-year old Washington intern, disappeared about five months ago. Congressman Condit admits to being a close personal friend of Chandra Levy and said that he saw her on a number of occasions prior to her disappearance. Do you think Congressman Condit has told the public all he knows about the disappearance of Ms. Levy or do you think he is holding something back?

Do you think Chandra Levy is alive or not? (IF NOT ALIVE:) Do you think Gary Condit is in any way responsible for her death?

Overall, do you feel the news media have acted responsibly or not in covering these stories about Gary Condit and Chandra Levy?

(ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS STATEWIDE ONLY:) Do you think all the news about Gary Condit will help or hurt the election chances of the Democratic candidate running for Congress in your district in the next general election or won't it make any difference?