

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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VOTER OPINIONS OF DAVIS HIT A RECORD LOW. MOST TERM RECALL EFFORT A BAD IDEA. BUT, IF A RECALL ELECTION WERE HELD, ITS OUTCOME WOULD BE A TOSS-UP.

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

The unusual extent of dissatisfaction that California voters have for Governor Gray Davis has reached record proportions. Currently two and one-half times as many voters say they have an unfavorable opinion of the Governor as hold a positive opinion of him. In addition, nearly three times as many voters disapprove of Davis' overall performance in office as Governor.

Nevertheless, a majority of voters thinks a special election to recall the Governor would be a bad thing for California. Up to this point only a tiny proportion of voters say they've been approached to sign a recall petition, although one in three say they would consider signing such a petition if it were presented to them.

If a statewide recall election were to take place, voters are about evenly divided between those who would vote for Davis' recall and those who would vote against it. Democratic Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante is narrowly preferred over Republican actor Arnold Schwarzenegger and four other possible candidates to replace Davis should such a recall election qualify for the ballot and the Governor were recalled.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* about Davis and the effort to recall him from office now underway. The poll was completed among a random sample of 695 California voters April 1-6.

Davis' image at a record low

Two in three California voters (67%) say they hold an unfavorable opinion of Governor Davis, while just 27% have a favorable impression. This is a much more negative assessment than the last time *The Field Poll* asked voters to assess Davis' image last September, and is by far voters' worst assessment of Davis ever.

Majorities of voters of all political partisanship now hold an unfavorable opinion of the Governor. This includes 86% of Republicans, 61% of non-partisans and 54% of Democrats.

Table 1
Trend of personal image ratings of Gray Davis
(among registered voters)

	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
April 2003	67%	27	6
September 2002	46%	45	9
July 2002	47%	38	15
February 2002	49%	40	11
January 2002	50%	44	6
December 2001	47%	42	11
September 2001	51%	42	7
May 2001	49%	44	7
August 1999	28%	60	12
August 1998	23%	65	12
April 1998	21%	42	37
March 1998	19%	40	41
<u>Party (April 2003)</u>			
Democrats	54%	41	5
Republicans	86%	9	5
Non-partisans/others	61%	26	13

Low job performance appraisals

The current survey also finds nearly three times as many voters saying they disapprove (65%) of Davis' overall performance as Governor as approve (24%). This also represents Davis' worst job appraisal since taking office and the poorest job performance ratings of a sitting Governor ever recorded by *The Field Poll* in its 55-year history.

Majorities of Democrats (51%), Republicans (85%) and non-partisans (61%) now give Davis a negative job appraisal.

Table 2
Trend of job appraisals of Davis as Governor
(among registered voters)

	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
April 2003	65%	24	11
September 2002	49%	39	12
July 2002	49%	41	10
April 2002	54%	39	7
January 2002	53%	39	8
December 2001	51%	38	11
September 2001	52%	38	10
May 2001	55%	36	9
January 2001	34%	57	9
August 2000	28%	56	16
June 2000	24%	61	15
February 2000	20%	62	18
October 1999	27%	54	19
August 1999	26%	59	15
March 1999	15%	54	31
<u>Party (April 2003)</u>			
Democrats	51%	36	13
Republicans	85%	8	7
Non-partisans/others	61%	23	16

Voters who would sign a Davis recall petition

Last month an organized drive was cleared to officially begin collecting signatures to place a recall vote before voters in a statewide election. In order for the recall petition to qualify for the ballot, sponsors will have to collect at least 897,158 valid signatures among the state's registered voters over the next five months.

At the time the survey was completed in early April, 5% of the registered voters interviewed reported that they had been approached to sign the petition to recall the Governor, whose petitions are being distributed from a Web site. If this 5% figure were projected to the state's 15 million voters, this would mean that about 750,000 voters say they have already been approached about signing such a petition.

When all voters are asked whether they'd be inclined to sign a Davis recall petition if they were approached, 62% said they would not. However, the 33% who said they would sign represent a large pool of potential signees, much more than the number needed for the recall to get on the ballot. A majority of the state's Republicans (53%) and 18% of Democrats says they would sign the recall petition.

Table 3			
If you were approached to sign a petition to recall Governor Davis, would you sign it or not? (among registered voters)			
	No, would <u>not sign</u>	Yes, would sign	<u>Not sure</u>
Statewide	62%	33	5
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	77%	18	5
Republicans	43%	53	4
Non-partisans/others	61%	30	9
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	64%	29	7
Other Southern California	51%	44	5
San Francisco Bay Area	72%	21	7
Other Northern California	64%	31	5

Voters think a Davis recall election would be bad for California

Reflecting the majority of the voters who say they would not sign the petition is the fact that, by a 59% to 33% margin, voters think that the recall idea is a bad idea.

Democrats think holding a Davis recall election would be a bad thing by four to one margin (76% to 19%). Republicans, on the other hand, believe a recall election would be a good thing for California by a five to four margin (50% to 41%).

A majority of voters in all regions of the state feels the idea of holding a recall election of the Governor is a bad thing, with residents of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area most apt to feel this way.

Table 4
**Overall opinion of the effort to gather signatures to hold a special
statewide election to ask voters to recall Governor Davis from office
(among registered voters)**

	<u>Bad thing</u>	<u>Good thing</u>	<u>Depends/ No opinion</u>
<u>Statewide</u>	59%	33	8
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	76%	19	5
Republicans	41%	50	9
Non-partisans/others	53%	36	11
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	58%	32	10
Other Southern California	51%	41	8
San Francisco Bay Area	69%	23	8
Other Northern California	61%	34	5

Voters divided when asked how they'd vote on a Davis recall

All voters in the survey were then asked how they would vote if a statewide recall election for Governor were actually held. The survey finds that if such an election were held now, 46% of voters would vote yes to remove the Governor from office, 43% would vote no, and 11% are undecided.

Vote preferences are highly partisan. Democrats are opposed to Davis' recall by a 61% to 28% margin. Republicans favor removing Davis by a 69% to 22% margin. Non-partisans are closely divided, with 45% favoring Davis' recall and 39% opposed.

Preferences in a possible gubernatorial recall election vary considerably by region of the state. For example, pluralities of voters in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area and those living in Los Angeles County line up against a Davis recall. However, voters in other parts of Southern and Northern California tend to favor Davis' ouster.

Table 5
If a recall election were held, would you vote YES to remove Governor Davis from office or NO to keep Davis as Governor?
(among registered voters)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Statewide	46%	43	11
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	28%	61	11
Republicans	69%	22	9
Non-partisans/others	45%	39	16
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	39%	48	13
Other Southern California	57%	33	10
San Francisco Bay Area	34%	55	11
Other Northern California	49%	41	10

Preferences for a Davis successor

If a recall election was held and a majority of voters voted to remove Davis from office, voters would be asked to choose a new Governor from a list of candidates on the same statewide election ballot. There has been considerable political speculation about who might choose to file as candidates to replace Davis if such a recall election were to qualify.

In its latest survey, *The Field Poll* listed six possible candidates – three Republicans and three Democrats – and asked voters who they would prefer to be Governor in the event that Davis were recalled.

The results show no single candidate dominating the field. Currently receiving the most preference votes is Democratic Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante (22%). Closely behind are two Republicans, movie actor Arnold Schwarzenegger (17%) and businessman Bill Simon (15%), whom Davis narrowly defeated in the November 2002 gubernatorial election. Others receiving a significant share of the preference votes are Democratic Attorney General Bill Lockyer (11%) and Republican former Secretary of State Bill Jones (10%). Democratic Controller Phil Angelides is preferred by 4%, while 21% of voters are undecided.

Among Democratic voters Bustamante is preferred over Lockyer (36% to 18%), although a significant proportion say they'd be inclined to support a Schwarzenegger candidacy (10%). Among Republicans, Simon is preferred by 31%, Schwarzenegger by 24% and Jones by 22%. Non-partisan voters have no clear preference, with 19% favoring Bustamante, 19% supporting Schwarzenegger, 14% preferring Simon, and a huge 33% undecided.

Table 6
Voter preferences for Governor if Davis were recalled
when presented with six possible candidates
(among registered voters)

	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Non-partisans/ others</u>
Cruz Bustamante (D)	22%	36%	4%	19%
Arnold Schwarzenegger (R)	17	10	24	19
Bill Simon (R)	15	4	31	14
Bill Lockyer (D)	11	18	3	8
Bill Jones (R)	10	3	22	5
Phil Angelides (D)	4	7	1	2
Undecided	21	22	15	33

(D) denotes Democrat

(R) denotes Republican

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Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The results in this report are based on a statewide survey of 695 Californians who are registered to vote. The survey was completed during the period April 1-6, 2003 by telephone in English and Spanish. Subgroups reported in this release have the following sample sizes: Democrats (292), Republicans (232), non-partisans/others (171), Los Angeles County (178), other Southern California (218), San Francisco Bay Area (150), other Northern California (149).

According to statistical theory 95% of the time results from the overall sample would have a sampling error of +/- 3.8 percentage points. Findings from subgroups of the overall sample would have larger sampling error estimates. There are many 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 errors or omissions in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

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

Is your opinion of Governor Gray Davis favorable or unfavorable?

Some groups are trying to organize an effort to gather signatures to hold a special statewide election to ask voters whether or not they want to remove Governor Gray Davis from office. Generally speaking, do you think holding a recall election of Governor Davis would be a good thing or bad thing for California?

Have you been approached by any group or individual in the past week or two asking you to sign a petition to recall Governor Davis?

If you were approached, is this something you would likely do or not?

Suppose the Davis recall effort does qualify for the ballot and there is a special statewide election. If you were voting today, would you vote YES to remove Davis from office or NO to keep Davis as Governor?

If an election were held to recall Governor Davis, on the same ballot voters would be asked who they'd support to replace Davis as Governor. Suppose that the choices to replace Davis were... (NAMES AND TITLES OF CANDIDATES READ IN RANDOM ORDER) If these were the candidates to replace Davis as Governor, and the election were being held today, who would be your first choice? (SEE RELEASE FOR NAMES READ)