

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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LITTLE CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNOR OR LEGISLATURE TO SATISFACTORILY RESOLVE BUDGET DEFICIT. MOST EXPECT A TAX INCREASE. FEELINGS SIMILAR TO THOSE IN 1993 WHEN GOVERNOR WILSON AND LEGISLATURE WERE DEALING WITH A BIG BUDGET DEFICIT.

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

As they view California's current historic budget deficit, state residents are reacting with a decided lack of confidence in their elected leaders' ability to satisfactorily resolve the situation. Only 9% of voters have a great deal of confidence in the Governor, and just 7% have a great deal of confidence in the state legislature to do what is right to resolve the budget deficit.

Yet, these attitudes mirror the situation that existed in 1993 when Governor Pete Wilson and the state legislature were dealing with a big budget deficit. At that time Californians also displayed little confidence in the Governor or the legislature to do what was right to resolve the deficit.

Low levels of confidence in the Governor

In the latest *Field Poll*, only 9% of Californians say they have a great deal of confidence in Democratic Governor Gray Davis doing what's right to resolve this year's state budget deficit, 30% express some confidence, while a majority (58%) doesn't have much confidence in him at all.

These findings are almost identical to those found ten years ago when the state was facing another large budget deficit and when Davis' predecessor, Wilson, a Republican, was Governor.

Table 1
**Confidence in the Governor to do what is right
to resolve the state's budget deficit –
April 2003 vs. February 1993**

	April 2003 Governor Davis (D)	February 1993 Governor Wilson (R)
Great deal of confidence	9%	9%
Some confidence	30	31
Not much confidence	58	59
No opinion	3	1

*(D) denotes Democrat
(R) denotes Republican*

Little confidence in the state legislature

The public also displays little confidence in the state legislature to do what is right to resolve this year's budget deficit. Just 7% say they have a great deal of confidence in the state legislature to do what is right, 49% acknowledge some confidence, while 42% have not much confidence.

As negative as it is, this pattern of opinion is slightly better than the views expressed by the public about the state legislature in 1993. In that year, 4% had great deal of confidence, 40% had some confidence in the lawmakers, and 54% expressed not much confidence.

Table 2
**Confidence in the state legislature to do what is right
to resolve this year's state budget deficit –
April 2003 vs. February 1993**

	April 2003	February 1993
Great deal of confidence	7%	4%
Some confidence	49	40
Not much confidence	42	54
No opinion	2	2

Whose position favored

Coinciding with the public's lack of confidence in the state's elected leaders is a lack of consensus regarding whose position they'd most likely support if the Governor and legislative leaders were in conflict over matters relating to the budget.

For some time Governor Davis has been at odds, not only with the state's Republican legislative leadership, but also with leaders of his own party over how to resolve the current budget situation.

The public is similarly fractionated, with one-third (34%) saying they would be inclined to support the position taken by Republican legislative leaders, 33% opting to support the position of the Democratic leadership, while 16% would support Davis' position. Another 17% can't choose among the three.

Table 3
If the Governor and the state legislature were at odds as to how to reduce the budget deficit, whose position would you be more inclined to support?

	Republican legislative leaders	Democratic legislative leaders	Governor Davis	None/ no opinion
Statewide	34%	33	16	17
<u>Party</u>				
Democrats	4%	62	22	12
Republicans	76%	3	9	12
Non-partisans/others*	14%	18	14	54

* Relatively small sample base.

Tax increase?

There is unusual consensus, however, among the state's Democrats, Republicans, and other partisans as to whether more revenue will be needed to resolve the state's budget deficit. Majorities in each group believe that taxes will ultimately have to be raised as part of a deficit solution.

Overall, by a two to one margin (61% to 31%) Californians think that in dealing with the state's current budget deficit, taxes will have to be raised. The proportions who anticipate that revenue increases will be needed include 68% of Democrats, 54% of Republicans, and 55% of non-partisans.

Ten years ago *The Field Poll* found that the public held a similar belief that taxes would have to be raised to help cure the existing deficit. That expectation was realized in the form of a temporary surtax asserted on the personal income taxes of the state's highest earning taxpayers.

Table 4
**Can the state's budget deficit be resolved this year without a tax increase
 or will taxes have to be raised?**

	<u>Taxes will have to be raised</u>	<u>Can be resolved without raising taxes</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide – April 2003	61%	31	8
February 1993	56%	39	5
<u>Party (April 2003)</u>			
Democrats	68%	23	9
Republicans	54%	41	5
Non-partisans/others*	55%	28	17

* Relatively small sample base.

Take out loans?

One of the steps being considered to ease this year's huge budget problem is for the state to defer a portion of the deficit into next year by taking out loans now to be paid back in next year's budget.

By a 60% to 26% margin Californians reject this approach. Large majorities of Democrats (56%), Republicans (66%) and non-partisans (55%) say they are opposed to getting loans as a means of deferring part of this year's deficit into next year's budget.

Table 5
**Opinion of the state deferring a portion of the budget deficit into next year by taking
 out loans paid back out of next year's budget**

	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	60%	26	14
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	56%	34	10
Republicans	66%	21	13
Non-partisans/others*	55%	11	34

* Relatively small sample base

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The results in this report are based on a statewide survey of 502 California adults. 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 (243), Republicans (191) and non-partisans/others (62).

According to statistical theory 95% of the time results from the overall sample would have a sampling error of +/- 4.2 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

As you know, Governor Davis and the state legislature are trying to deal with a very large state budget deficit...

Overall, how much confidence do you have in Governor Gray Davis to do what is right to resolve this year's state's budget deficit – a great deal of confidence, some confidence, or not much confidence?

Overall, how much confidence do you have in the state legislature to do what is right to resolve this year's state's budget deficit – a great deal of confidence, some confidence, or not much confidence?

Suppose that during budget negotiations in Sacramento, Governor Davis and the state legislature are at odds as to how to best reduce the budget deficit. If you did not know anything about the specifics of the matter, whose position would you be more inclined to support – Governor Davis's, Democratic leaders in the state legislature, or Republican leaders in the state legislature?

Do you think that the state's projected budget deficit can be resolved without having to raise taxes or do you think that taxes will have to be raised for the state budget to be balanced this year?

Would you favor or oppose the idea of the state deferring a portion of this year's budget deficit into next year's budget by taking out loans that would be paid back out of next year's budget?