

# 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 VIEWED MORE FAVORABLY. VOTERS APPROVE OF THE EARLY PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY. WHILE TWO IN THREE STILL FAVOR TERM LIMITS, EARLY SUPPORT FOR AN INITIATIVE TO MODIFY THEM.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

There has been a significant increase in both Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's job performance and image ratings among registered voters over the past six months.

By a two to one majority (60% to 28%) state voters also view favorably the actions taken by the governor and the state legislature to move up the 2008 presidential primary from June to February. And, for the first time in six years, more voters now rate the job the state legislature is doing in a positive than negative light.

Voters also take a more optimistic view of the direction of the state, compared to what it was last year. Now, 52% say California is headed in the right direction and 38% think it is on the wrong track, a reversal from a 57% to 32% negative appraisal last May.

While two-thirds of state voters continue to believe there should be laws limiting the terms of California elected officials, by a 53% to 39% margin, likely voters in the February primary are disposed to approve an initiative to modify the state's term limits law.

These are the highlights from the latest statewide *Field Poll* about matters relating to the governor, state legislature, the February primary and the proposed term limits initiative.

### **Trend of voter assessments of Schwarzenegger**

During Schwarzenegger's first year in office, large majorities approved of the job that he was doing. However, beginning in the spring and summer of his second year, voter assessments of the governor turned completely around, with more disapproving than approving of his performance.

Starting last July, the governor's job performance ratings returned to positive territory. The current poll shows continuing improvement in his ratings since his re-election last November, as 60% currently approve and 29% disapprove.

There has been a similar turn-around in the governor's favorability ratings, with 63% of voters now saying they have a generally favorable opinion of Schwarzenegger, while just 29% hold an unfavorable view.

Underlying Schwarzenegger's improved standing is the fact that majorities of Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans all rate the governor's job performance positively and have a favorable impression of him.

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

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	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>11</b>
September 2006	48%	37	15
July 2006	49%	40	11
May 2006	41%	46	13
April 2006	39%	47	14
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
<u>Party (March 2007)</u>			
Democrats	58%	33	9
Republicans	66%	23	11
Non-partisans/others	55%	31	14

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**Table 2**  
**Trend of voter image ratings of Arnold Schwarzenegger**  
**(among registered voters)**

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	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>8</b>
September 2006	49%	41	10
July 2006	51%	44	5
May 2006	46%	46	8
February 2006	44%	49	7
October 2005	38%	54	8
February 2005	62%	33	5
May 2004	64%	25	11
Early October 2003	48%	41	11
Late September 2003	46%	48	6
Early September 2003	42%	41	17
August 2003	44%	37	19
<u>Party (March 2007)</u>			
Democrats	52%	38	10
Republicans	77%	17	6
Non-partisans/others	60%	28	12

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### **Job appraisal of the state legislature**

The highly negative view that California voters have displayed toward the state legislature during recent years now appears to be lessening. In *Field Poll* measures conducted between 2003 and the spring of last year, about twice as many voters disapproved as approved of the legislature's performance overall. Last September that dim view started to ease somewhat. Now, a slightly larger proportion of voters (42%) approves of the job the legislature is doing as disapproves (40%).

Slim pluralities of Democrats and non-partisans approve of the state legislature's performance, while a plurality of Republicans disapproves.

**Table 3**  
**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>
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>
September 2006	34%	46	20
May 2006	26%	51	23
April 2006	28%	56	16
February 2006	31%	48	21
October 2005	26%	58	16
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 (March 2007)</u>			
Democrats	43%	34	23
Republicans	38%	49	13
Non-partisan/other	48%	37	15

*Note: Measures prior to 1996 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.*

**Support for moving up the state’s presidential primary**

By a greater than two to one margin (60% to 27%), voters have a favorable view of the recent action by the legislature and the Governor to move up next year’s presidential primary from June to February. Democrats and Republicans each approve by similar margins.

<b>Table 5</b>			
<b>Voter opinions of moving up next year’s California presidential primary from June 5<sup>th</sup> to February 5th (among California registered voters)</b>			
	<b><u>Favorable</u></b>	<b><u>Unfavorable</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
Statewide	60%	27	13
<b><u>Party</u></b>			
Democrats	60%	27	13
Republicans	63%	27	10
Non-partisans/others	54%	29	17

**Trend of voter opinion of term limits**

As they have for the past ten years, about two-thirds of the state’s voters (66%) believe that the terms of elected officials in California should be limited. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans all feel this way.

<b>Table 6</b>			
<b>Trend of voter attitudes about limiting the terms of elected officials in California (among California registered voters)</b>			
	<b><u>Terms should be limited</u></b>	<b><u>Allow to run for as many terms as wanted</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
March 2007	66%	28	6
February 2002	67%	29	4
January 2002	64%	31	5
September 2001	62%	33	5
May 1997	65%	30	5
<b><u>Party (March 2007)</u></b>			
Democrats	58%	34	8
Republicans	75%	21	4
Non-partisans/others	68%	29	3

### **Early support for term limits modification**

While voters continue to support the idea of limiting the terms of elected officials, these same voters indicate initial support for the proposed initiative to modify the present term limits law. An initiative proposed for the February 2008 ballot will ask voters to reduce the total years a legislator can serve in both legislative houses from 14 to 12 years, but allow legislators to serve their entire 12 years in either the Assembly or the Senate. By a 53% to 39% margin likely voters indicate their initial approval of this idea.

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**Table 7**  
**Voter preferences regarding an initiative to reduce the total years a legislator can serve in both houses from 14 to 12, but allow legislators to serve their entire 12 years in either the Assembly or the Senate**

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<u>Inclined to vote...</u>	<u>Total registered voters</u>	<u>Likely voters in primary</u>
Yes	54%	53%
No	37	39
Not sure	9	8

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### **Impact that the initiative's provision allowing legislative leaders to avoid being termed out has on voter support**

One consequence of the new term limits initiative is that many current legislators, including the present leaders in the Senate and Assembly, would avoid being termed out of office next year because of a provision in the new law allowing legislators to serve up to 12 years in the legislative body in which they are currently serving. After voters were informed of this, they were asked what effect this would have on their support or opposition to the initiative.

More than one half of all voters (55%) say this information has no effect on how they would vote on the term limits initiative. This compares to about one in five (22%) who say this makes them less inclined to support the initiative, while almost as many (19%) say it makes them more inclined to support it.

	<b>Total likely voters</b>	<b>Yes voters</b>	<b>No voters</b>
<u>This information makes voters...</u>			
More inclined to support	19%	22%	16%
Has no effect	55	54	57
Less inclined to support	22	21	25
No opinion	4	3	2

**Trend of attitudes toward the direction of the state**

Up until the spring of last year, more California voters felt that the state was seriously off on the wrong track rather than heading in the right direction. That view began to change last summer. Now, 52% of voters believe that California is headed in the right direction, while 38% feel it is on the wrong track.

Pluralities of voters across all parties now feel the state is heading in the right direction.

**Table 9**  
**Overall direction that California is heading**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b><u>Right direction</u></b>	<b><u>Wrong track</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>10</b>
September 2006	49%	36	15
July 2006	47%	41	12
May 2006	32%	57	11
April 2006	28%	56	16
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
<b><u>Party (March 2007)</u></b>			
Democrats	53%	35	12
Republicans	54%	38	8
Non-partisan/other	47%	43	10

*Note: Surveys prior to 1996 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 1,093 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish March 20-31, 2007. Up to eight attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize voter fatigue, some of the questions in this report were asked of random subsamples of voters. For example, job ratings of the state legislature were asked of 570 registered voters, while views about term limits were asked of 738 registered voters, including 536 likely voters in the February primary.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. When drawing samples from registration-based lists, *The Field Poll* stratifies the sample by region and age to insure that the poll includes adequate representations of voters across each major region of the state and across different age categories. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depend on sample size. According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from findings based on the overall sample of registered voters are subject to a sampling error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, those asked of 738 voters have a sampling error of +/- 3.8 percentage points, while findings from the random subsample of 536 or 570 voters have a sampling error of +/- 4.4 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, the sequencing of questions, the rigor with which sampling procedures are implemented, as well as other factors.

### Questions Asked

Thinking about things here in this 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?

To give California more influence in selecting the presidential candidates of each party, Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature recently approved moving up next year's California presidential primary election from June 5<sup>th</sup> to February 5<sup>th</sup>. Generally speaking, do you favor or oppose this idea?

(ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLES)

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

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor?

Do you feel that state legislators and elected officials in California should be limited in the number of terms they are allowed to serve in office, or should they be allowed to run for as many terms as they choose?

Under California's current term limits law, state legislators are allowed to serve for a maximum of 6 years in the State Assembly and 8 years in the State Senate, for a total of 14 years if they serve in both houses. A proposed initiative calls for changing this law so that the total number of years anyone can serve in both houses of the legislature is reduced from 14 years to 12. It would also allow legislators to serve their entire 12 years in either the Assembly or the State Senate. If you were voting today on this proposed initiative, would you vote Yes or No?

The proposed term limits initiative will enable many current legislators, including the leaders in the State Senate and Assembly, to avoid being termed out of office next year. This is because the new law would allow legislators to serve up to 12 years in the legislative body in which they are currently serving. Does knowing this make you more inclined to support the proposed initiative, less inclined to support it, or does it have no effect on you?