

# 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](mailto:fieldpoll@field.com)  
[www.field.com/fieldpollonline](http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline)

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Release #2230

Release Date: **Thursday, April 12, 2007**

**VOTERS SAY GLOBAL WARMING A  
SERIOUS PROBLEM. APPROVE OF  
CALIFORNIA LAW TO REDUCE  
EMISSIONS. SPLIT ON BEST WAY TO  
IMPLEMENT LAW.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

California voters see global warming as a serious problem. Voters here give very negative ratings to the job the federal government is doing in handling the issue, but are not as critical of the way the state government is dealing with the problem.

There is strong support for a new state law, passed last year by the state legislature and signed with considerable fanfare by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, requiring California to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by 25% by the year 2020.

However, there is a sharp division of opinion as to the best way to achieve the goal of a twenty-five percent reduction in emissions. Almost half of the public (45%) support establishing a trading system to enable companies that can't reduce their emissions by the required amount to pay other companies to exceed their cutback totals. On the other hand, an almost equal proportion (41%) favors requiring all major companies to make a uniform, across-the-board twenty-five percent cutback in emissions.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* completed late last month.

### **Seriousness of the problem**

Eight out of ten California voters (81%) describe global warming as a very serious (56%) or somewhat serious (25%) problem. Just one in six (17%) maintain that it is not a serious problem.

Democrats, non-partisans, liberals, middle-of-the-road voters, women, younger Californians under age 40, and voters in Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area are more likely than others to say the global warming issue is very serious.

**Table 1**  
**How serious a problem do Californians feel global warming is today**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b><u>Very serious</u></b>	<b><u>Somewhat serious</u></b>	<b><u>Not serious</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
Statewide	56%	25	17	2
<b><u>Party</u></b>				
Democrats	68%	22	8	2
Republicans	35%	28	33	4
Non-partisans/others	63%	27	9	1
<b><u>Political ideology</u></b>				
Conservative	39%	22	27	2
Middle-of-the-road	54%	32	12	2
Liberal	80%	15	3	2
<b><u>Gender</u></b>				
Male	50%	27	20	3
Female	61%	23	14	2
<b><u>Age</u></b>				
18 – 39	61%	24	14	1
40 – 64	54%	25	18	3
65 or older	50%	27	19	4
<b><u>Region</u></b>				
Los Angeles County	67%	20	11	2
Other Southern California	53%	26	19	2
San Francisco Bay Area	65%	24	9	2
Other Northern California	39%	32	25	4

**Job approval ratings of the federal and state governments**

Just one in five California voters (21%) approve of the job that the federal government is doing in dealing with the global warming problem, while more than three times as many (66%) disapprove.

Voters are not as critical of the performance of the state government in this area. At present, forty-three percent approve of the state government's efforts in dealing with this problem, while a like percentage (43%) disapprove.

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**Table 2**  
**Job approval ratings of the federal and state governments**  
**in handling the global warming problem**  
**(among registered voters)**

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	<b><u>Federal government</u></b>	<b><u>State government</u></b>
Approve	21%	43%
Disapprove	66	43
No opinion	3	14

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**Views about the new state law reducing emissions**

Last year Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature passed a law requiring that California reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by 25% by the year 2020.

When voters are asked about this action, a large majority (79%) approves (55% strongly approving and 24% favoring somewhat). This compared to just 17% who disapprove.

Democrats, non-partisans, liberals, middle-of-the-roaders and voters in the San Francisco Bay Area are more likely than other voters to back the new law strongly.

**Table 3**  
**Opinions of a new state law requiring California to reduce its emissions**  
**of greenhouse gases by 25% by the year 2020**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<u>Favor strongly</u>	<u>Favor somewhat</u>	<u>Oppose somewhat</u>	<u>Oppose strongly</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	55%	24	9	8	4
<u>Party</u>					
Democrats	65%	22	5	5	3
Republicans	42%	26	15	11	6
Non-partisans/others	55%	26	6	9	4
<u>Political ideology</u>					
Conservative	35%	31	17	13	4
Middle-of-the-road	61%	20	7	6	6
Liberal	65%	24	2	5	4
<u>Gender</u>					
Male	58%	24	8	9	1
Female	52%	25	9	7	7
<u>Age</u>					
18-39	49%	29	7	11	4
40-64	61%	20	10	6	3
65 or older	50%	28	8	6	8
<u>Region</u>					
Los Angeles County	57%	24	7	8	4
Other Southern California	49%	23	9	11	8
San Francisco Bay Area	69%	19	6	5	1
Other Northern California	47%	31	12	5	5

**Trading system vs. uniform cuts?**

One way to implement the state’s requirement for greenhouse gas reductions would be to set up a trading system allowing firms that can’t reduce their emissions by the required amount to pay other companies to exceed their cutback totals, thereby achieving a net 25% reduction across all companies. Another alternative would be to impose a uniform 25% cutback across-the-board for all companies. When asked which alternative they preferred, voters are about evenly divided, with 45% favoring the trading system and 41% opting for the uniform, across-the-board cut.

Unlike other elements of the global warming issue, there is not much difference in opinions by partisanship, ideology, gender or age, although more voters in the San Francisco Bay Area are supportive of the trading system than voters elsewhere in the state.

**Table 4**  
**Preferences regarding how California should achieve a 25% reduction in greenhouse gases – by requiring major companies to cut emissions by a uniform 25% or by setting up a trading system (among registered voters)**

	<u>Trading system</u>	<u>Uniform across-the-board cut</u>	<u>Neither/no opinion</u>
Statewide	45%	41	14
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	49%	40	11
Republicans	45%	37	18
Non-partisans/others	36%	51	13
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	43%	34	23
Middle-of-the-road	46%	41	13
Liberal	44%	50	6
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	46%	41	13
Female	43%	41	16
<u>Age</u>			
18-39	46%	46	8
40-64	48%	39	13
65 or older	41%	37	22
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	44%	45	11
Other Southern California	37%	42	21
San Francisco Bay Area	53%	39	8
Other Northern California	48%	38	14

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 523 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.

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 +/- 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, the sequencing of questions, the rigor with which sampling procedures are implemented, as well as other factors.

### **Questions Asked**

In your view, how serious a problem do you feel global warming is -- a very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious problem?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job the federal government is doing in dealing with the problem of global warming?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job the state government is doing in dealing with the problem of global warming?

Last year Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature passed a law requiring that California reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by 25% by the year 2020. Do you favor strongly, favor somewhat, oppose somewhat or opposed strongly this new state law?

I am going to describe two ways the state could enforce the new greenhouse gases law. The first is to require a uniform 25 percent across-the-board cutback in the emissions of all major California businesses. The second is to set up a more flexible trading system in which companies that can't reduce their emissions by the required amount pay other companies to exceed their required cutback totals, still resulting in an overall net 25 percent reduction in emissions across all companies. Which system do you support -- a uniform across-the-board cut or a trading system?