

# 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

601 California Street, Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94108-2814  
(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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**VOTERS NOT PAYING A LOT OF  
ATTENTION TO STATE BUDGET  
IMPASSE, YET STILL THINK  
DELAY IS A SERIOUS MATTER.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

California's legislature is in the midst of another one of its frequent annual partisan deadlocks, delaying the passage of a state budget way beyond the scheduled legal date (July 1) for adoption.

While the delay has stirred the Sacramento political community, the state's voters are not paying a lot of attention to the fact that no budget has been in place for the first seven weeks of the current fiscal year.

*The Field Poll*, in a just completed statewide survey conducted among a cross-section of this state's registered voters, found just one in eight (12%) paying "a lot of attention" to the lawmakers' efforts to pass a state budget. Another one-third (37%) say they are giving some attention to the matter. However, a majority (51%) allow how they are paying "only a little" (34%) or "no attention" (17%) to the governor's and state legislature's attempts to pass a budget.

The degree of attention being paid to the efforts to pass a state budget does not vary among the state's rank-and-file Democrats and Republicans, with about half of the voters affiliated with each party admitting to be paying little or no attention. Non-partisan voters are paying even less attention than partisan voters.

<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>Attention that voters have been giving to efforts to pass the state budget (among registered voters)</b>				
	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>None</u>
Total voters	12%	37	34	17
<u>Party</u>				
Democrats	12%	38	35	15
Republicans	12%	40	33	15
Non-partisans/others	10%	30	35	25

**Still a serious matter**

Despite voters' relative inattention to what's going on with the budget in Sacramento, they still see the inability of the state legislature to reach a budget agreement as either "very serious" (43%) or "somewhat serious" (38%). Just about one in six (17%) maintain that the budget delay is not a serious matter.

While there is not much difference in opinion among partisans on this question, opinions about the seriousness of the delay are tied to the amount of attention being paid to the issue by voters. Those paying greater attention to the delay in passing the budget are more likely to view the situation as very serious.

<b>Table 2</b>				
<b>How serious a problem is it for the state legislature to be taking so long to reach agreement on the state budget (among registered voters)</b>				
	<u>Very serious</u>	<u>Somewhat serious</u>	<u>Not serious</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total registered voters	43%	38	17	2
<u>Party</u>				
Democrats	46%	38	15	1
Republicans	43%	37	20	**
Non-partisans/others	40%	40	14	6
<u>Attention paid</u>				
A lot*	74%	17	9	**
Some	45%	38	16	1
Little/none	36%	42	19	3

\* Relatively small sample base

\*\* Less than 1/2 of 1%.

### **Comparison with 2002 budget delay**

Five years ago the legislature was locked in a similar lengthy political struggle over the budget that was finally broken two months after the mandated July 1 deadline.

At that time, a greater proportion of the state's voters than exists today (57%) believed the budget delay was "very serious" and another 30% viewed it as "somewhat serious." (*It should be noted that the 2002 survey was conducted in late August 2002, while the current survey was completed in early August.*)

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**Table 3**  
**Comparing voter perceptions of the seriousness of the current**  
**state budget delay with the perceived seriousness**  
**of the 2002 budget delay**  
**(among registered voters)**

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	<b><u>Early</u></b> <b><u>August 2007</u></b>	<b><u>Late</u></b> <b><u>August 2002</u></b>
Very serious	43%	57%
Somewhat serious	38	30
Not serious	17	10
No opinion	2	3

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### **How governor's and legislature's budget performances are being viewed**

Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's role in trying to resolve the state's budget situation is viewed somewhat more favorably than either the Democrats and Republicans in the state legislature.

One third of voters (33%) think the governor is doing a "very good" or "good" job in the budget deliberations, compared to 24% who believe he is doing a "poor" or "very poor" job in this respect. The remaining proportions feel the governor is doing a "fair" job (32%) or have no opinion (11%).

On the other hand, voters' job appraisals of Democratic and Republican lawmakers in resolving the budget stand-off are less favorable than those of the governor, with Republican legislators viewed a little less favorably than their Democratic counterparts.

**Table 4**  
**Job performance the Governor and state legislature are doing**  
**in trying to resolve the state's budget situation**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b><u>Very good/ good</u></b>	<b><u>Fair</u></b>	<b><u>Poor/ very poor</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
<u>Governor Schwarzenegger</u> (total)	33%	32	24	11
Democrats	32%	33	26	9
Republicans	36%	32	22	10
Non-partisans/others	30%	33	22	15
<u>Democrats in state legislature</u> (total)	22%	34	29	15
Democrats	35%	37	16	12
Republicans	10%	27	49	14
Non-partisans/others	17%	37	24	22
<u>Republicans in state legislature</u> (total)	18%	35	32	15
Democrats	15%	33	39	13
Republicans	28%	38	21	13
Non-partisans/others	9%	32	37	22

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 493 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish August 3-12, 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 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 a sample of 493 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**

Over the past few months, how much attention have you been giving to reports from Sacramento about the Governor and state legislature's efforts to pass a state budget for next year – a lot of attention, some attention, a little attention or no attention at all?

By law, a state budget is supposed to be approved by the legislature and signed by the Governor no later than July 1 each year. However, this year the state budget is more than one month late. How serious a problem do you think it is for the state legislature and the governor to take so long coming to an agreement on the state budget? Is it a very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious problem?

I'd like your impressions of how well you feel different persons and groups are doing in trying to resolve the state budget situation. What kind of job do you think (Governor Schwarzenegger) (Democrats in the state legislature) (Republicans in the state legislature) (is)(are) doing in trying to resolve the budget situation – very good, good, fair, poor or very poor? (QUESTIONS ASKED IN RANDOM ORDER)