

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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**BIG DECLINE IN GOVERNOR'S AND
LEGISLATURE'S JOB RATINGS.
CORRESPONDING DROP IN VOTERS'
BELIEF THAT STATE IS HEADING IN
RIGHT DIRECTION.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

During the past six months Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's job approval rating has taken a steep drop, from 60% to 41%, while the proportion of voters disapproving has gone up from 31% to 48%. Voter appraisals of the job performance of the state legislature have also declined, with 57% now viewing it negatively and 30% positively. In addition, about three times as many voters (68%) believes the state is seriously off on the wrong track as feel it is moving in the right direction (23%).

These are the findings of the latest statewide *Field Poll* completed during late May among 1,052 registered voters.

Trend of Governor's job ratings

Since first taking office almost five years ago, voter appraisal of Schwarzenegger's job performance has fluctuated a great deal.

During the first two years of his administration sizeable majorities of voters gave him favorable marks. However, between mid-2005 and early 2006 views of the Governor turned sour, with more voters disapproving than approving.

Things began to turn around for the Governor in mid-2006 as more voters again viewed his performance in a more positive than negative light. This more favorable view extended through the end of last year. However, the current survey finds the Governor's job ratings have once again turned negative.

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

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
May 2008	41%	48	11
December 2007	60%	31	9
October 2007	56%	32	12
August 2007	57%	31	12
March 2007	60%	29	11
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

Differences across demographic subgroups

By a 56% to 32% margin Democrats now disapprove of Schwarzenegger's performance. By contrast, more Republicans still give him a favorable rating (51% to 40%). Non-partisans/others are about evenly divided, with 44% approving and 46% disapproving.

Voters at each end of the political spectrum (i.e., strong conservatives and strong liberals) hold a more negative view of the Governor than those in between.

Women are more critical of the Governor (52% disapproving and 36% approving) than men who hold a slightly more positive than negative view (47% approve and 44% disapprove).

White non-Hispanics are about evenly divided in their assessments of Schwarzenegger. On the other hand, Latinos, blacks, Asians and others disapprove of the Governor by about two to one margins.

Table 2
Schwarzenegger's current job performance ratings – by subgroup
(among registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total statewide	41%	48	11
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	32%	56	12
Republicans	51%	40	9
Non-partisans/others	44%	46	10
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	42%	49	9
Moderately conservative	51%	43	6
Middle-of-the-road	42%	44	14
Moderately liberal	44%	45	11
Strongly liberal	28%	66	6
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	41%	53	6
Other Southern California	38%	51	11
Central Valley	40%	47	13
San Francisco Bay Area	42%	43	15
Other Northern California*	55%	37	8
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	47%	44	9
Female	36%	52	12
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	46%	44	10
Latino	31%	60	9
Black/African-American*	28%	58	14
Asian/other*	35%	51	14
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 29	47%	44	9
30 – 49	37%	54	9
50 – 64	42%	50	8
65 or older	42%	42	6

* Small sample size

Appraisal of the state legislature

Last fall voters appeared to be taking a less negative view of the job that the legislature was doing than they had previously. That view has now changed, with an increasing proportion holding a critical view of the job state law makers are doing (57% disapproving and 30% approving).

Among Democratic voters 52% disapprove and 30% approve of the legislature's performance. Republicans are even more negative in their assessments (75% disapprove and just 19% approve). Non-partisans/others are more evenly divided in their appraisal of the legislature.

Table 3
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing overall
(among registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
May 2008	30%	57	13
December 2007	39%	42	19
October 2007	38%	40	22
August 2007	33%	51	16
March 2007	42%	40	18
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 (May 2008)</u>			
Democrats	30%	52	18
Republicans	19%	75	6
Non-partisan/other*	43%	40	17

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.

** Small sample base.*

Views about the direction of the state turn highly negative

Along with the increasingly negative view that voters have of the Governor and the legislature, there has been a big increase in the belief that the state is heading in the wrong direction.

Last December, voters were about evenly divided about the overall direction of the state. Then, 43% thought California was heading in the right direction and 47% were of the mind that it was seriously on the wrong track.

Now, just 23% believe the state is heading in the right direction and almost seven in ten (68%) see California as being seriously off on the wrong track.

By nearly the same three to one margin, both Democrats and Republicans now are in agreement that the state is on the wrong track.

Table 4
Overall direction that California is heading
(among registered voters)

	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
May 2008	23%	68	9
December 2007	43%	47	10
October 2007	42%	42	16
August 2007	42%	45	13
March 2007	52%	38	10
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
December 2001	45%	45	10
September 2001 (pre-9/11)	39%	54	7
January 2001	44%	50	6
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
Party (May 2008)			
Democrats	19%	74	7
Republicans	20%	74	6
Non-partisan/other*	33%	56	11

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 conducted among all California adults, not just registered adults.

* Small sample base.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 1,052 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish May 17-26, 2008. Up to six 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, the overall voter sample was divided into two random subsamples on some of the questions. Because of this, some of the questions in this report are based on a random subsample of either 502 or 550 registered voters statewide.

The overall sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. 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 depends on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of 1,052 registered voters is +/- 3.2 percentage points, while findings from the random subsample of 634 voters has a maximum sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages +/- in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (percentages around 10% or around 90%) have a smaller margin of error. While there are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error, the overall design and execution of the survey minimized the potential for these other sources of error. The maximum sampling error will be larger for analyses based on subgroups of the overall sample.

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? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

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

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the California state legislature is doing its job? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)