

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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**CALIFORNIA VOTERS VIEW
DEMOCRATIC PARTY MORE
FAVORABLY THAN THE GOP.
DEMOCRATS ALSO HOLD BIG
LEAD IN GENERIC
CONGRESSIONAL VOTE TEST.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

One index of where California voters stand in respect to their partisanship is to simply examine the most current voter registration rolls issued by the Secretary of State. That database shows that 76.2% of the state's 16,123,787 registered voters are affiliated with either of the two major parties, with 43.7% or 7,053,860 registered as Democrats and 32.5% or 5,244,394 registered as Republicans. The Democratic party advantage, which represents 1,809,466 voters, is the largest it has been since 1992.

The latest *Field Poll* measured the relative strength of the major parties in two other ways. First, likely voters were asked whether they had a favorable or unfavorable view of each party. The results show 54% of voters hold a positive image of the Democratic party, while just 31% have a favorable view of the Republican party – a twenty-three point edge for the Democrats.

In addition, likely voters were asked their pre-election party preferences for Congress in the fall election. That measure finds Democrats with a twenty-point advantage over the GOP, 48% to 28%, the largest margin found since *The Field Poll* began these measures in 2002.

Voter images of the Democratic Party more favorable than the GOP

Likely voters statewide view the Democratic party favorably by a five to four margin (54% to 42%). By contrast, voters view the Republican party unfavorably two to one (63% to 31%). Democrats have a much more favorable view of their party than Republicans have of their party. Seventy-nine percent of Democrats view their party in a positive way, while just 59% of Republicans have a favorable view of their party.

Among the approximate one in four who are registered with neither major party, the Democratic party is viewed more favorably than is the Republican party. Fifty percent of these voters have a favorable image of the Democratic party, compared to the proportion (24%) who view the Republican party in positive terms.

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
<u>Democratic party</u>			
Total voters	<u>54%</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>4</u>
Democrats	79%	16	5
Republicans	26%	69	5
Non-partisans/others*	50%	48	2
<u>Republican party</u>			
Total voters	<u>31%</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>6</u>
Democrats	12%	81	6
Republicans	59%	34	7
Non-partisans/others*	24%	74	2

* Small sample base.

Big Democratic lead in generic Congressional vote preference

Likely voters were also asked their pre-election party preferences for Congress in the fall election.

Statewide 48% of voters say they are currently inclined to vote for the Democratic candidate in their district, while 28% support the Republican candidate – a twenty-point advantage for the Democrats, the largest margin found by *The Field Poll* in pre-election tests for Congress since these measurements began in 2002.

Generic vote preferences like these cannot determine with any real precision how the elections in each of California's fifty-three Congressional districts will turn out. However, the generic vote results frequently provide clues as to the relative strength statewide of the two major parties in the upcoming election.

The reliability of generic vote tests increase when they are conducted close to the election after all the considerable campaigning has occurred by the parties and the candidates.

Pre-election surveys taken close to the election have often foreshadowed the overall November cumulative vote for each party.

For example, in the November 2002 election the total statewide votes cast for Democratic and Republican candidates resulted in Democrats winning 53.6% of the vote and Republicans taking 46.4% - a spread of about seven percentage points. In a *Field Poll* taken in September, six weeks before the election, a generic vote measure showed Democratic candidates preferred ahead by 4 percentage points.

In the November 2004 election the cumulative statewide vote for the Democratic candidate was 10.7 percentage points greater than what was achieved by Republicans. A poll taken in September of that year showed an eleven-point margin for the Democrats.

Table 2
If the election for U.S. House of Representatives were held today
in your district, which party's candidate would you prefer?
(among likely voters)

	<u>Democratic candidate</u>	<u>Republican candidate</u>	<u>Other/ no opinion</u>	<u>Democratic candidate vote plurality statewide</u>
July 2008	48%	28	24	+20
<i>November 2006 vote*</i>	58.7%	41.3		+17.4
July 2006	44%	36	20	+8
<i>November 2004 vote*</i>	55.3%	44.6		+10.7
September 2004	46%	35	19	+11
August 2004	42%	35	23	+7
<i>November 2002 vote*</i>	53.6%	46.4		+7.2
September 2002	43%	39	18	+4
January 2002	43%	40	17	+3

* Aggregate percentages of the actual major party vote across all of California's congressional districts.

Source: Hotline.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 672 likely voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish July 8-14, 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, voter images of the two major parties was asked of a random subsample of 358 likely 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 672 likely voters is +/- 3.9 percentage points, while findings from the random subsample has a maximum sampling error of +/- 5.6 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

Generally speaking, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of (the Democratic party) (the Republican party)? (PARTIES READ IN RANDOM ORDER) (ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLE)

In the November election for House of Representatives in your district, do you plan to vote for the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate? (IF UNCERTAIN, PROBE:) Well, which party's candidate do you lean towards at this time?