

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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CALIFORNIANS' VIEW OF CONGRESS IS VERY NEGATIVE. PELOSI ALSO RATED NEGATIVELY, ALTHOUGH LESS SO. PLURALITIES APPROVE OF THE JOB THAT FEINSTEIN AND BOXER ARE DOING.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

The perception that California voters have of the job that the U.S. Congress is doing now matches its lowest approval levels of the past two decades.

Voters in this state also now view Democrat Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi more negatively than positively, but not to the same extent as the overall Congress.

Democrat U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer continue to obtain more positive than negative job performance marks.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* measuring California voter views about the Congress and its leading California representatives.

Californians hold dim view of the job performance of Congress

During the 1990s California voters had a largely dim view of the job that Congress was doing. For the most part sizeable pluralities or majorities disapproved of the performance by the nation's lawmakers.

This long standing negative perception of the Congress became more favorable during the early part of this decade, with more voters offering a positive than negative assessment on the order of five to four or five to three.

However, more recently voter perceptions of the Congress have turned downward to a point where those holding an unfavorable view of the Congress has included sizeable majorities in most *Field Poll* surveys conducted over the past three years.

The latest *Field Poll* completed earlier this month produced a measurement on par with its lowest rating in thirty separate measurements conducted over the past two decades. At present, just 23% approve while 66% disapprove of the job the Congress is doing.

Democrats and non-partisans hold the Congress in disfavor by roughly two to one margins, while a huge 83% of Republicans disapprove and just 9% approve.

Table 1
Overall job performance of the U.S. Congress
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
October 2009	23%	66	11
March 2009	34%	53	13
December 2007	20%	66	14
October 2007	22%	64	14
August 2007	20%	66	14
March 2007	35%	50	15
May 2006	23%	64	13
April 2006	24%	66	10
August 2004	33%	52	15
April 2003	50%	39	11
April 2002	48%	39	13
January 2002	54%	33	13
December 2001	57%	32	11
May 2001	51%	38	11
January 2001	53%	35	12
August 2000	54%	34	12
June 2000	40%	48	12
February 2000	42%	42	16
October 1999	30%	60	10
March 1999	37%	54	9
August 1998	57%	33	10
August 1997	38%	51	11
February 1997	36%	46	18
June 1996	38%	59	3
February 1996	25%	68	7
September 1995	36%	58	6
May 1995	44%	51	5
September 1994	33%	62	5
July 1992	24%	71	5
January 1992	32%	67	1
Party (October 2009)			
Democrats	30%	58	12
Republicans	9%	83	8
Non-partisans/others	29%	59	12

Note: For measures conducted prior to 1997, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which has been converted to a two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes. In addition, surveys conducted prior to 1997 were completed among a cross-section of all California adults, not just registered voters.

Appraisal of House Speaker Pelosi turns negative

Democrat Nancy Pelosi, who has represented San Francisco's 8th Congressional District for eleven terms, became the nation's first female Speaker of the House of Representatives in January 2007.

Voter assessments of her were initially much more positive than negative when she became Speaker, but became more divided in subsequent surveys conducted in mid-2007 and 2008. Earlier this year, following the election of Barack Obama as President, 48% viewed her favorably and 35% unfavorably.

The current poll finds that more Californians are now rating Pelosi more negatively than positively, with 34% approving and 44% disapproving of the job she is doing. The Speaker is still viewed positively by Democrats, 51% to 23%. However, California Republicans overwhelmingly see her in a negative light – 79% disapprove and 7% approve. Non-partisans are about evenly split.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
October 2009	34%	44	22
March 2009	48%	35	17
May 2008	30%	39	31
December 2007	35%	38	27
October 2007	35%	40	25
August 2007	39%	37	24
March 2007	48%	27	25
August 2004*	37%	29	34
April 2003*	34%	25	41
<u>Party (October 2009)</u>			
Democrats	51%	23	26
Republicans	7%	79	14
Non-partisans/others	39%	37	24

* Asked with regard to Pelosi's role as House Minority Leader.

Senators Feinstein and Boxer job ratings remain positive

Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer have both represented California in the U.S. Senate since 1993. Over the years voters in this state have consistently given each a more positive than negative job performance rating. That continues today. At present 46% approve and 35% disapprove of the job Feinstein is doing. Regarding Boxer 44% approve and 37% disapprove.

Throughout this seventeen-year period, Feinstein's job ratings have typically been slightly higher than those given Boxer. Most of this is due to the more negative view that Republicans have of Boxer's performance than Feinstein's.

Table 3
Trend of Dianne Feinstein's job performance ratings as U.S. Senator
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
October 2009	46%	35	19
May 2008	48%	32	20
December 2007	50%	32	18
October 2007	51%	31	18
August 2007	56%	28	16
March 2007	61%	27	12
July 2006	51%	32	17
February 2005	51%	29	20
June 2005	54%	26	20
February 2005	50%	29	21
August 2004	55%	29	16
May 2004	53%	23	24
July 2003	55%	31	14
April 2003	49%	34	17
2002 (Average)	49%	26	25
2001 (Average)	57%	27	16
2000 (Average)	57%	27	16
1999 (Average)	51%	28	21
1998 (Average)	56%	27	17
1997 (Average)	47%	35	18
1996 (Average)	46%	36	18
1995 (Average)	50%	40	10
1994 (Average)	47%	39	14
1993 (Average)	47%	32	21
<u>Party (October 2009)</u>			
Democrats	60%	21	19
Republicans	23%	59	18
Non-partisans/others	50%	31	19

Note: For measures conducted prior to 1997, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which has been converted to a two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes. In addition, surveys prior to 1997 also were conducted among all California adults.

Table 4
Trend of Barbara Boxer's job performance ratings as U.S. Senator
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
October 2009	44%	37	19
May 2008	48%	31	21
December 2007	45%	35	19
October 2007	44%	35	21
August 2007	48%	33	19
March 2007	54%	31	15
July 2006	45%	34	21
February 2005	41%	34	25
June 2005	47%	30	23
February 2005	49%	36	15
August 2004	49%	36	15
May 2004	44%	33	23
July 2003	49%	35	16
April 2003	43%	35	22
2002 (Average)	45%	29	26
2001 (Average)	49%	31	20
2000 (Average)	50%	30	20
1999 (Average)	45%	35	20
1998 (Average)	45%	29	26
1997 (Average)	41%	35	24
1996 (Average)	42%	36	22
1995 (Average)	45%	39	16
1994 (Average)	43%	37	20
1993 (Average)	41%	35	24
<u>Party (October 2009)</u>			
Democrats	66%	18	16
Republicans	12%	70	18
Non-partisans/others	43%	30	27

Note: For measures conducted prior to 1997, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which has been converted to a two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes. In addition, surveys prior to 1997 also were conducted among all California adults.

About This Report

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 1,005 registered voters in California. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between September 18 and October 5, 2009. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize potential respondent fatigue, some of the questions in this report were asked of a random sub-sample of 509 registered voters.

The 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 had been selected, interviews were attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews were conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file and the preference of the voter. 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. After the completion of interviewing, the results were weighted to known distributions of registered voters by party and by other demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depend on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of registered voters is +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from the random subsample have a 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

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is doing its job?

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Nancy Pelosi is handling her job as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Dianne Feinstein is handling her job as U.S. Senator?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barbara Boxer is handling her job as U.S. Senator?