

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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RECORD LOW ASSESSMENT OF THE LEGISLATURE. HUGE MAJORITY THINKS STATE IS SERIOUSLY OFF ON WRONG TRACK.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

The regard that California voters have of Sacramento's lawmakers continues to be in a deep trough.

Approval of the job performances of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, both Democratic and Republican legislative members, and especially the legislature overall, are near or at all-time lows.

Voters believe that all participants, regardless of position or partisan stripe, share the blame for the failure to pass a state budget on time.

Just about one in ten (12%) think that California is moving in the right direction, while 81% think it is seriously off on the wrong track.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* conducted by telephone September 14 – 21 in English and Spanish among 857 registered voters statewide.

Schwarzenegger's job performance

Fewer than one in four voters (23%) approves of the job that Schwarzenegger is doing as Governor. About three times as many (68%) disapprove.

This very negative assessment of the Governor's performance has been registered for most of the past year. One needs to go back to December 2007 to find a *Field Poll* report where a majority of voters approved of Schwarzenegger's performance.

Table 1			
Trend of Arnold Schwarzenegger's overall job performance as governor (among registered voters)			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
September 2010	23%	68	9
July 2010	22%	70	8
March 2010	23%	71	6
January 2010	27%	64	9
October 2009	27%	65	8
Late-April 2009	33%	55	12
March 2009	38%	54	8
September 2008	38%	52	10
July 2008	40%	46	14
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
Party registration (Sept. 2010)			
Democrats	21%	71	8
Republicans	23%	65	12
Non-partisans/others	26%	67	7

All-time low in the state legislature’s job ratings

There has been a long-standing downward trend in voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing. At present, eight times as many voters disapprove as approve (80% to 10%) of how that body is performing in its duties. This is the lowest assessment of the legislature’s job performance by *The Field Poll* during the past twenty-seven years.

Table 2
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing
(among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
September 2010	10%	80	10
July 2010	16%	74	10
March 2010	13%	78	9
January 2010	16%	72	12
October 2009	13%	78	9
April 2009	14%	74	12
March 2009	18%	72	10
September 2008	15%	73	12
July 2008	27%	57	16
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
2006 (average)	30%	50	20
2005 (average)	28%	55	17
2004 (average)	28%	53	19
2003 (average)	25%	59	16
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 registration (Sept. 2010)</u>			
Democrats	16%	73	11
Republicans	4%	85	11
Non-partisans/others	7%	85	8

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 were conducted among all adults. In addition, response scales from these surveys were converted from their original five-point scale to the current two-point approve/disapprove scales for comparative purposes.

Democrats and Republicans in the legislature are both viewed negatively

Neither Democratic nor Republican legislators escape voter’s censure. Greater than six in ten voters rate both negatively, while only one in four or one in five voters gives them a positive assessment.

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Democrats in the state legislature	25%	62	13
Party registration of voter			
Democrats	40%	45	15
Republican	5%	85	10
Non-partisan/other	21%	66	13
Republicans in the state legislature	20%	64	16
Party registration of voter			
Democrats	11%	72	17
Republican	40%	41	19
Non-partisan/other	12%	78	10

Budget stalemate blame spread broadly

All parties are to blame for the failure to pass a state budget on time. The poll finds 24% saying the Governor deserves most of the blame, 20% say this about the Democrats in the legislature, 16% blame legislative Republicans and 25% volunteer that all three should be blamed equally.

	Governor Schwarzenegger	Democrats in legislature	Republicans in legislature	All three (vol.)	No opin
Total statewide	24%	20	16	25	15
Party					
Democrats	30%	11	25	21	13
Republicans	12%	39	6	28	15
Non-partisans/others	28%	13	12	27	20

State very much on wrong track

Eight out of ten voters (81%) think that the state is seriously off on the wrong track, close to an all-time record and the poorest assessment given by voters in about two decades of frequent opinion measurements on the subject.

Table 5
Are things in California generally going in the right direction or
do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?
(among registered voters)

	Right direction	Wrong track	No opinion
September 2010	12%	81	7
July 2010	13%	79	8
January 2010	14%	79	7
October 2009	15%	78	7
March 2009	18%	73	9
September 2008	22%	70	8
July 2008	21%	68	11
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
2002 (average)	37%	52	11
2001 (average)	43%	50	7
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

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

Information About The Survey

Methodological Details

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed September 14-21, 2010 among a random sample of 857 registered voters in California. In order to cover a broad range of issues and minimize respondent fatigue, some of the questions in this survey were asked of random subsamples of either 443 or 414 voters each.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish using live interviewers working from Field Research Corporation's central location telephone interviewing facilities. Up to eight attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

Interviewing was completed on either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the registered voter population in California by region, age, gender, race/ethnicity and party registration.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the overall registered voters sample is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings based on the random subsample of voters have a sampling error of +/-4.9 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error. Findings from subgroups of the overall sample have somewhat larger sampling error levels. There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other possible sources of error.

The Field Poll was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The Poll has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The poll receives annual funding from media subscribers of *The Field Poll*, from several California foundations, and from the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the raw data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

Questions Asked

(ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLE:) Thinking about 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?

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

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

What about the Democrats in the state legislature? Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Democrats in the legislature are doing their job?

What about the Republicans in the state legislature? Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in the legislature are doing their job?

As you may know, the Governor and the legislature are about three months late in passing a state budget. Who do you think deserves the most blame for this – the Democrats in the legislature, the Republicans in the legislature, or the Governor?