

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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VOTERS SEE STATE BUDGET DEFICIT AS A SERIOUS MATTER. SMALL PLURALITY THINKS TAXES WILL HAVE TO BE RAISED. MORE CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNOR THAN THE LEGISLATURE IN RESOLVING THE PROBLEM.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Nearly all voters believe the state's looming budget deficit reported to be in the \$15 billion range is a serious matter. Nine in ten consider the large dollar shortfall to be either a very serious (58%) or somewhat serious (32%) problem for the state.

By a narrow 48% to 43% margin, more voters believe that taxes will have to be raised to deal with the problem than think it can be resolved without a tax increase.

Voters express somewhat more confidence in Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger than the state legislature to do what is right to resolve the deficit situation.

Schwarzenegger continues to be highly regarded by voters, with about twice as many approving (60%) as disapproving (31%) of his performance in office. Views about the state legislature are much less positive and are more divided, with 42% viewing it in a positive light and 39% in a negative light.

These are the findings of a *Field Poll* statewide survey of 1,283 registered voters completed earlier this month dealing with the state budget deficit.

State budget deficit serious

Nine in ten voters statewide believe the state budget deficit is serious, with 58% describing it as very serious and 32% as somewhat serious. Just one voter in twenty (5%) thinks it is not serious.

The belief that the state budget deficit is serious includes large majorities of Democrats, Republicans and nonpartisans.

Table 1
Perceived seriousness of the state's budget deficit
(among registered voters)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Non-partisans/ others</u>
Very serious	58%	62%	54%	57%
Somewhat serious	32	30	35	31
Not serious	5	3	6	7
No opinion	5	5	5	5

Will taxes have to be raised?

When asked whether the current budget situation can be resolved without a tax increase or whether taxes will have to be raised, a narrow 48% to 43% plurality takes the latter view and feels that taxes will ultimately have to be increased.

By identical 54% to 37% margins, Democrats and non-partisans hold to the view that the budget deficit cannot be resolved without raising taxes. Republicans take an opposite stance, with 55% maintaining that taxes will not have to be raised and just 36% believing that there will have to be a tax hike.

There are also wide differences by political ideology, with twice as many conservatives holding to the view that taxes will not have to be raised as think they will. Liberals take the contrary position, with more than twice as many believing a tax hike will be required as feel it won't. Middle-of-the road voters by a 51% to 39% margin also foresee a tax increase will be in the offering.

Homeowners are about evenly split as to whether taxes will have to be raised to resolve the current budget deficit situation, with 47% thinking a tax hike will be necessary and 46% feeling otherwise. Renters, on the other hand, are more inclined to think taxes will have to be raised by a 53% to 36% margin.

Women believe a tax hike will be required by a five to four margin, while men are about evenly divided.

While a majority of college graduates believes that taxes will have to be raised to resolve the current budget deficit, voters with a high school education or less are less convinced, with 53% believing that the budget can be balanced without having to raise taxes.

Table 2
Can the state's budget deficit be resolved without having to raise taxes
(among registered voters)

	<u>Yes, without raising taxes</u>	<u>No, taxes will have to be raised</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	43%	48	9
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	37%	54	9
Republicans	55%	36	9
Non-partisans/others	37%	54	9
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	46%	44	10
Female	41%	51	8
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	63%	30	7
Middle-of-the-road	39%	51	10
Liberal	29%	62	9
<u>Tenure</u>			
Homeowner	46%	47	7
Renter	36%	53	11
<u>Education</u>			
High school grad or less	53%	40	7
Some college/trade school	42%	49	9
College graduate	40%	51	9
Post-graduate work	38%	54	8

Perceptions of existing tax levels

A thirty-year *Field Poll* time series was updated in this survey regarding public perceptions of the level of state and local taxes that Californians are paying. The current findings show that 29% believe that, in general, state and local taxes are much too high, 28% describe them as somewhat high, 33% think they are about right and just 6% saying they are too low.

The current findings are similar to those observed the last time the poll included these measures in 2001 and 2002.

Table 3
Trend of Californians' perceptions of the level of state and local taxes
(among registered voters)

	Much too <u>high</u>	Somewhat <u>high</u>	About <u>right</u>	<u>Low</u>	No <u>opinion</u>
2007 (December)	29%	28	33	6	4
2002	32%	30	34	2	2
2001	30%	32	32	4	2
1995	20%	36	42	NA	2
1993	31%	33	34	NA	2
1991	38%	38	22	NA	2
1990	31%	30	36	NA	3
1986	20%	35	42	NA	3
1983	28%	31	38	NA	3
1982	42%	36	20	NA	2
1977	39%	31	27	NA	3

Note: Measures prior to 2002 made among all California adults.

N/A: Not asked.

Subgroup differences

Greater than one in three Republicans (37%) believe that, in general, state and local taxes are much too high, while somewhat smaller proportions of Democrats (27%) and non-partisans (23%) feel this way.

Political conservatives are much more likely than liberals to believe the current level of state and local taxes is much too high. Among conservatives, 41% describe the taxes as being much too high, while just 24% believe they are about right or low. Among liberals just 15% feel state and local taxes are much too high, while nearly six in ten (59%) feels they are about right or low.

A slightly larger proportion of homeowners (31%) than renters (24%) describes state and local taxes as much too high.

Middle-income earners, whose household income is between \$40,000 and \$79,999 are somewhat more likely than voters with lower or higher income levels to feel state and local taxes are much too high and are less likely to say they are about right or low.

Table 4
Perceptions of the level of state and local taxes – by subgroup
(among registered voters)

	Much too <u>high</u>	Somewhat <u>high</u>	About <u>right</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide – December 2007	29%	28	33	6	4
<u>Party</u>					
Democrats	27%	29	31	9	4
Republicans	37%	30	30	1	2
Non-partisans/others	23%	23	41	7	6
<u>Political ideology</u>					
Conservative	41%	32	23	1	3
Middle-of-the-road	30%	29	33	4	4
Liberal	15%	21	43	16	5
<u>Tenure</u>					
Homeowner	31%	26	34	6	3
Renter	24%	30	34	7	5
<u>Household income</u>					
Less than \$40,000	29%	25	39	3	4
\$40,000 - \$79,999	36%	26	29	6	3
\$80,000 or more	25%	27	38	8	2

Confidence in elected leaders to do what is right to resolve the deficit

Voters have more confidence in Governor Schwarzenegger than they do in the state legislature to do what is right to resolve the state’s budget deficit.

About one in four voters (23%) say they have a great deal of confidence and 46% some confidence in the governor doing what is right with regard to the deficit. Another 29% have not much confidence. This compares to just 7% who have a great deal of confidence in the state legislature and 48% having some confidence in their ability to act properly with regard to the deficit. Four in ten voters (40%) have little confidence in the state legislature in this regard.

Table 5
Confidence in Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature
to do what is right to resolve the state's budget deficit
(among registered voters))

	<u>Governor</u> <u>Schwarzenegger</u>	<u>State</u> <u>legislature</u>
Great deal of confidence	23%	7%
Some confidence	46	48
Not much confidence	29	40
No opinion	2	5

Schwarzenegger's job performance

The resurgence in voter approval of the governor's job performance following his re-election to a second term in November 2006 is continuing. In three measures taken this year, between 56% and 60% of voters have approved of the job Schwarzenegger was doing, while about half as many disapprove. The current survey finds 60% approving of the governor's performance overall, and 31% disapproving.

Approval of the governor crosses party lines, with 68% of Republicans and 55% of Democrats and non-partisans giving Schwarzenegger a positive rating.

Table 6			
Trend of Arnold Schwarzenegger's overall job performance as Governor (among registered voters)			
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
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
<u>Party (December 2007)</u>			
Democrats	55%	34	11
Republicans	68%	25	7
Non-partisans/others	55%	33	12

Legislature's job performance

Voter opinions are much less positive and more divided with regard to how the state legislature is doing its job. At present, 39% of voters approve and 42% disapprove, similar to assessments observed by *The Field Poll* in October.

By a small plurality – 44% to 35% – Democrats rate the legislature favorably. The situation is reversed among non-partisans, with 44% disapproving and 36% approving of the legislators' performance. Republicans are even more critical, with 50% viewing the legislature's performance negatively and 33% positively.

Table 7
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>
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 (December 2007)</u>			
Democrats	44%	35	21
Republicans	33%	50	17
Non-partisan/other	36%	44	20

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.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 1,283 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish December 10-17, 2007. 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 634 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 1,283 registered voters is +/- 2.9 percentage points, while findings from the random subsample of 634 voters has a maximum sampling error of +/- 4.0 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

(ASKED OF ALL REGISTERED 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)

On the whole, do you feel that the level of state and local taxes that the average citizen like yourself pays is much too high, somewhat high, about right or low?

Next year, Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature will be dealing with a large state budget deficit. How serious do you think the state's budget situation is – very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

How much confidence do you have in Governor Schwarzenegger to do what is right to resolve the expected state budget deficit – a great deal of confidence, some confidence or not much confidence?

Overall, how much confidence do you have in the state legislature to do what is right to resolve the expected state budget deficit – a great deal of confidence, some confidence or not much confidence?

Do you think the state's budget deficit can be resolved without having to raise taxes or do you think taxes will have to be raised?