

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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OBAMA RETAINS POSITIVE JOB RATING IN CALIFORNIA. VOTERS INCLINED TO RE-ELECT HIM FIVE TO FOUR. YET, VOTERS CONTINUE TO HOLD DISMAL VIEW OF THE U.S. CONGRESS AND BELIEVE THE COUNTRY IS ON THE WRONG TRACK.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

California voters continue to give President Barack Obama favorable job performance marks, with 54% approving and 37% disapproving. In addition, by a five to four margin voters here are inclined to support his re-election next year.

This contrasts with the very negative view that voters have of the U.S. Congress. Greater than seven in ten (71%) currently disapprove of the job it is doing, while just 17% approve.

There has also been no change in the largely negative view that Californians have of the direction that the country is heading. At present, 56% of voters believe the U.S. is seriously off on the wrong track, while 33% believe the country is moving in the right direction.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* conducted among 898 registered voters and completed last week.

Obama's approval rating

President Obama took office a little more than two years ago and since then he and his administration have had to deal with an unusually large array of serious domestic and international problems.

Throughout this problem-plagued period, California voters have remained unwavering in their positive regard for the President. In the current survey, 54% approve and 37% disapprove of his job performance – very similar to the ratings he received throughout most of 2010.

By comparison, most national polls show that the U.S. public tends to hold a more mixed assessment of the President. For example, in the latest *Gallup Poll* completed in mid-March 46% of U.S. residents rate him favorably and 45% unfavorably.

Table 1
Trend of Californians' views about the job Barack Obama
is doing as President
(among registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
March 2011	54%	37	9
September 2010	53%	41	6
July 2010	54%	39	7
March 2010	52%	37	11
January 2010	56%	34	10
October 2009	60%	31	9
March 2009	65%	21	14

Sub-group variations

Democratic voters in this state represent 44% of the electorate and they hold Obama in very high regard -- 75% approving and 16% disapproving. Republicans, who make up 31% of all voters, take a completely opposite view, with just 10% approving and 70% disapproving of the President's performance.

The 25% of state's voters who do not belong to either major political party have views that are closer to those held by Democrats than Republicans. Among this group, 60% give Obama a favorable rating and 32% an unfavorable one.

The areas of the state where Obama is viewed most favorably include Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area, where he receives a 63% approval rating. By contrast, voters in the Southern California region outside Los Angeles County and the Central Valley voters hold more mixed views of the President.

There are only small variations in the way Obama is viewed by gender and across the various age groups, as pluralities or majorities give him positive job marks.

White non-Hispanics approve of the President 50% to 41%. Latinos and African-Americans give the President a very large vote of confidence, while the views of Asian-Americans are similar to those of white non-Hispanics.

Voters who have fewer years of formal education are not as enthusiastic as others in their view of the job that Obama is doing. However, increasing proportions approve of the President as you go up the education ladder.

Table 2
Californians' views of the job Barack Obama
is doing as President overall – by subgroup
(among registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total registered voters	54%	37	9
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	75%	16	9
Republicans	20%	70	10
Non-partisans/others	60%	32	8
<u>Tea Party identification</u>			
A lot	6%	92	2
Some	26%	67	7
Not at all	69%	21	10
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	63%	30	7
Other Southern California	46%	46	8
Central Valley	46%	45	9
San Francisco Bay Area	63%	27	10
Other Northern California*	58%	29	13
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 29	61%	30	9
30 – 39	60%	35	5
40 – 49	48%	43	9
50 – 64	55%	38	7
65 or older	51%	37	12
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	52%	41	7
Female	57%	34	9
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	50%	41	9
Latino	64%	29	7
African-American*	83%	14	3
Asian-American/other	52%	37	11
<u>Education</u>			
High school or less	48%	45	7
Some college / trade school	49%	41	10
College graduate	55%	37	8
Post graduate work	71%	21	8

* Small sample size.

Re-elect Obama as President?

When a President begins the third year of his first term, it is typical for speculation to mount about his re-election chances. It has been reported that an Obama re-election team has been assembled, headquartered in Chicago, and is already doing some preliminary planning for the 2012 election.

In this survey, California voters were asked whether they were inclined or not inclined to re-elect Obama to another term. The results show that 49% of voters currently favor his re-election, while 40% do not.

Sentiment to re-elect Obama varies sharply between voters of the two major parties. Democrats strongly favor his re-election, while Republicans are strongly opposed. Among non-partisans, who are considered swing voters in this state, Obama holds a 48% to 39% edge.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total registered voters	49%	40	11
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	73%	17	10
Republicans	15%	73	12
Non-partisans/others	48%	39	13

Obama's re-election prospects compared to his immediate predecessors

Obama's re-election percentages in California compare favorably to those of his two immediate predecessors in office.

In July 2003, during the third year of Republican President George W. Bush's first term, a *Field Poll* showed that California voters were about evenly split about his re-election — 46% inclined and 44% disinclined.. While Bush narrowly won reelection nationally, he ended up losing California to Democrat Senator John Kerry by ten points.

In 1995, during the third year of Democratic President Bill Clinton's first term, more Californians were disinclined (56%) than inclined (36%) to re-elect him to another term. National polls at the time were showing similar sentiments among U.S. voters. However, the mood of voters here and countrywide swung around and Clinton was re-elected in 1996. In that election he carried California by thirteen points over Republican Senator Bob Dole.

Table 4

**How Obama's re-elect percentages compared to his predecessors
in the year prior to their re-election year
(among California registered voters)**

	Inclined	Not Inclined	No opinion
Barack Obama (D) (March 2011)	49%	40	11
George W. Bush (R) (July 2003)	46%	44	10
Bill Clinton (D) (February 1995)	36%	51	15

Congressional ratings

Even though the partisan composition of the U.S. Congress is now quite different than it was last year, there has been no let-up in the high level of disapproval that California voters have of the performance of Washington lawmakers.

Seven in ten Californians (71%) currently give the Congress a negative job rating, while 17% approve of what it is doing. These ratings are similar to last September before the GOP takeover of the House in the November 2010 elections.

The last time that a *Field Poll* measurement showed a plurality of voters endorsing Congress's overall actions was eight years ago in 2003, when 50% approved and 39% disapproved.

In the current survey huge majorities of voters across all political party groups register disapproval in the job the Congress is doing.

Table 5			
Trend of Californians' views of the job performance of the U.S. Congress (among registered voters)			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
March 2011	17%	71	12
September 2010	19%	72	9
July 2010	19%	71	10
March 2010	12%	79	9
January 2010	24%	66	10
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 (March 2011)			
Democrats	15%	72	13
Republicans	22%	65	13
Non-partisans/others	13%	75	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.

Ratings of Congressional Democrats and Republicans

When voters are asked to evaluate the performance that Congressional Democrats and Republicans, neither is seen in a favorable light. A 54% majority disapprove of the job that the Congressional Democrats are doing and 63% say this about Congressional Republicans. This pattern also applies to the viewpoints of non-partisan voters, who rate members of both parties negatively.

California Democrats hold mixed views of the job Congressional Democrats are doing, but have a very negative opinion of Congressional Republicans. A similar situation exists among Republican voters. They hold divided views of their own party members in Congress, but are decidedly negative in their assessments of Congressional Democrats.

Table 6
Job performance of the Democrats in Congress
(among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
March 2011	32%	55	13
September 2010	35%	54	11
March 2007	47%	40	13
August 2004	32%	50	18
April 2003	40%	46	14
April 2002	46%	39	15
May 2001	51%	37	12
January 2001	57%	31	12
June 2000	46%	39	15
<u>Party (March 2011)</u>			
Democrats	43%	43	14
Republicans	18%	71	11
Others/non-partisans	28%	55	14

Table 7
Job performance of the Republicans in Congress
(among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
March 2011	22%	63	15
September 2010	22%	66	12
March 2007	19%	70	11
August 2004	32%	52	16
April 2003	46%	42	12
April 2002	42%	45	13
May 2001	42%	47	11
January 2001	49%	39	12
June 2000	32%	55	13
<u>Party (March 2011)</u>			
Democrats	10%	76	14
Republicans	42%	42	16
Others/non-partisans	17%	66	17

Overall direction of the country

Just one in three California voters (33%) now think the country is headed in the right direction and 56% believe it is seriously off on the wrong track.

Since 2003, Californians, for the most part have viewed the direction of the country as being on the wrong track. This sentiment reached its lowest in 2008, when 75% were of the mind that the U. S. was seriously off on the wrong track.

There are big partisan differences in views about the country's overall direction. Democrats are about evenly divided in their outlook -- 43% say it is on the right track and 46% believe it is seriously off on the wrong direction. By contrast, Republicans are decidedly more negative, with 76% holding an unfavorable view and 15% positive. Among non-partisans, a majority (52%) feel the U. S. is on the wrong track, while 37% see it going in the right direction.

Table 8
Are things in the U.S. generally going in the right direction or
do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?
(among California registered voters)

	Right direction	Wrong track	No opinion
March 2011	33%	56	11
September 2010	34%	55	11
July 2010	33%	53	14
January 2010	41%	49	10
October 2009	48%	41	11
March 2009	42%	47	11
2008 (average)	16%	75	9
2007 (average)	25%	65	10
2006 (average)	30%	60	10
2005 (average)	33%	59	8
2004 (average)	38%	53	9
2003 (average)	44%	50	6
2002 (average)	51%	37	12
December 2001	68%	27	5
September 2001 (pre-9/11 attack)	43%	49	8
January 2001	55%	34	11
2000 (average)	63%	28	9
1999 (average)	54%	37	9
1998 (average)	57%	32	11
1997 (average)	44%	45	11
1996 (average)	34%	49	17
1995 (average)	33%	54	13
1994 (average)	41%	50	9
1993 (average)	27%	64	9
1992 (average)	14%	81	5
1991 (average)	14%	78	7
1990 (average)	30%	63	7
1989 (average)	49%	43	8
1988 (average)	42%	53	5
<u>Party registration (March 2011)</u>			
Democrats	43%	46	11
Republicans	15%	76	9
Non-partisans/others	37%	52	11

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 conducted among all California adults.

Information About The Survey

Methodological Details

The survey was completed February 28 – March 14, 2011 among a random sample of 898 registered voters in California. In order to cover a broad range of issues and minimize respondent fatigue, some of the questions were asked of random sub-samples of either 454 or 444 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 six 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 +/- 3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings based on the random sub-sample of voters have a sampling error of +/- 4.8 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

Thinking about the country overall, do you think things in the U.S. 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)

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

Barack Obama's term as President ends in 2012. Suppose President Obama runs for re-election next year. If the election were being held today, would you be inclined or not inclined to vote to re-elect President Obama? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

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

What about the Democrats in Congress? Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congressional Democrats are doing their job? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

What about the Republicans in Congress? Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congressional Republicans are doing their job? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)