

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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GREATER THAN TWO TO ONE MAJORITY CONTINUES TO BACK PROP. 13. OPPOSE PROPOSALS TO CHANGE IT TO ALLOW HIGHER RATES FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS OR TO REDUCE THE TWO-THIRDS LEGISLATIVE VOTE REQUIREMENT TO APPROVE TAX INCREASES.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Californians continue to strongly back Proposition 13, the Jarvis-Gann property tax reduction amendment approved by voters in 1978, and resist proposals aimed at amending some of its provisions.

By a greater than two to one margin (63% to 29%) voters say that if Prop. 13 were up for a vote again today they would endorse it. By a five to four margin (50% to 41%) voters also oppose the idea of amending Prop. 13 to permit business and commercial property owners to be taxed at a higher rate than residential owners. In addition, two to one majorities oppose changing Prop. 13 to enable the state legislature to increase taxes by either a simple majority vote or a 55% majority vote of the Assembly and State Senate.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* conducted statewide September 1–12 in English and Spanish among a representative sample of 1,001 registered voters.

Californians would back Prop. 13 by about the same margin as they did in 1978

Californians approved Proposition 13 by a wide 65% to 35% margin in the June 1978 election. When voters are reminded of the initiative and asked how they would vote if it were included on a statewide election ballot today, they back it by about the same margin as they did more than thirty-three years ago.

The current survey finds voters supporting Prop. 13 63% to 29%, with 8% undecided. In each of four previous *Field Poll* surveys conducted since its passage, Prop. 13 has been backed by Californians by double-digit margins.

Table 1			
Trend of how Californians would vote if Proposition 13, the 1978 Jarvis-Gann property tax reduction amendment, were up for a vote again (among registered voters)			
	For	Against	Undecided
September 2011	63%	29	8
2008	57%	23	20
1998	53%	30	17
1991	50%	34	16
1980	63%	33	4
June 1978 election result	65%	35	--

Support for Prop. 13 is broad-based. Majorities of voters within each political party back the measure, as do renters and homeowners, including both recent homebuyers as well as long-term homeowners.

Table 2			
Current voter preferences regarding Proposition 13 by voter subgroup (among registered voters)			
	For	Against	Undecided
Total registered voters	63%	29	8
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	53%	40	7
Republicans	78%	16	6
Non-partisans/others	63%	27	10
<u>Home ownership status</u>			
Renter	58%	32	10
Homeowner	67%	26	7
<u>Bought home...</u>			
2001 – 2011	62%	27	11
1979 – 2000	68%	27	5
1978 or earlier	76%	21	3

Voters oppose proposal to amend Prop. 13 by creating a split roll property tax

Voters are resistant to proposals aimed at amending some of Prop. 13's provisions. For example, when asked whether they would support or oppose the idea of permitting business and commercial property owners to be taxed at a higher rate than owners of residential property, voters oppose the change 50% to 41%. This represents stronger opposition to a split roll property tax than in any previous *Field Poll* conducted since Prop. 13 was approved.

Table 3
**Trend of voter opinions about changing Proposition 13 to permit
business and commercial property owners to be taxed at
a higher rate than owners of residential property
(among registered voters)**

	Approve	Disapprove	Undecided
September 2011	41%	50	9
2008	47%	44	9
1998	46%	39	15
1981	66%	29	5
1980	68%	26	6
1978 (post-election)	54%	38	8

There are partisan differences in voter views about establishing a split roll property tax in California. Democrats endorse the idea 53% to 37%. However, Republicans oppose it three to one (70% to 23%). Non-partisans also disapprove of taxing business and commercial property owners at a higher rate than residential owners 50% to 42%.

Opinions also relate to voting preferences about Prop. 13. Proponents of the measure oppose creating a split roll 57% to 38%, while opponents of Prop. 13 support it 53% to 38%.

	Approve	Disapprove	Undecided
Total registered voters	41%	50	9
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	53%	37	10
Republicans	23%	70	7
Non-partisans/others	42%	50	8
<u>Voting preference regarding Prop. 13</u>			
Would vote FOR	38%	57	5
Would vote AGAINST	53%	38	9

Voters reject changing Prop. 13’s two-thirds legislative vote requirement to increase taxes

Voters in this survey were divided into two roughly equal-sized subsamples when asked their opinions about changing Prop. 13’s two-thirds vote requirement in the state legislature to approve tax increases. Half of the voter sample was asked whether they would approve or disapprove of changing the two-thirds vote requirement to a simple fifty percent plus one majority vote of each legislative house. The other half were asked whether they would favor or oppose reducing the legislative vote requirement to 55%.

The survey finds little difference in voter reactions to these two alternatives, with greater than two to one majorities opposed to each. Allowing the legislature to approve taxes with a simple majority vote is opposed 65% to 30%, while permitting it to approve taxes with a 55% majority is rejected 64% to 30%.

	Simple majority vote	55% majority vote
Approve	30%	30%
Disapprove	65	64
No opinion	5	6

Information About The Survey

Methodological Details

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed September 1-12, 2011 among a random sample of 1,001 registered voters in California. In order to cover a broad range of issues and minimize respondent fatigue, some of the questions in this report were asked of random subsamples of 481 or 520 voters.

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 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 +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings based on voters included in each random subsample have a maximum sampling error of +/- 4.6 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.

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 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 the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

Questions Asked

Thirty years ago in 1978 California voters approved Proposition 13, which reduced local property taxes and limited the amount they could be increased each year. If Proposition 13 were up for a vote again today, do you think you would vote in favor of it or vote against it?

Proposition 13 reduced property taxes on both residential and commercial property. Would you approve or disapprove of changing Proposition 13 to permit business and commercial property owners to be taxed at a higher rate than owners of residential property as a way for local governments to raise additional revenues?

Proposition 13 generally requires a two-thirds vote of the state legislature to increase taxes. Would you approve or disapprove of changing Proposition 13 to enable the legislature to increase taxes by a simple majority vote of legislators in the Assembly and State Senate?*

Proposition 13 generally requires a two-thirds vote of the state legislature to increase taxes. Would you approve or disapprove of changing Proposition 13 to enable the legislature to increase taxes by a 55% majority of legislators in the Assembly and State Senate?*

* Asked of a random subsample of voters.