



## Public Policy Institute of California: Slim Majority Support 'Split Roll' Property Tax

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### Body

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(TNSRes) -- The Public Policy Institute of California issued the following news release on Sept. 17:

A slim majority support a November ballot measure that would change how commercial property is taxed, and well below half support a measure that would repeal the state's ban on affirmative action in the public sector. Most Californians are concerned about contracting COVID-19--similar to May--while on the issue of race relations in the US, six in ten believe they have gotten worse in the last year, a major shift in opinion from early 2019. These are among the key findings of a statewide survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California.

Proposition 15 would change the tax assessment of commercial and industrial property by basing it on current market value instead of purchase price--amending the 1978 landmark citizens' initiative (Prop 13) and creating a "split roll" tax. Among likely voters, 51 percent favor and 40 percent oppose, with Democrats (72%) far more likely to support than independents (46%) and Republicans (17%). Less than half of homeowners (47%) would vote yes, compared with 56 percent of renters. Younger Californians are much more likely than older residents to support Proposition 15 (60% ages 18 to 44, 46% age 45 and older). Support is highest among likely voters in the San Francisco Bay Area (62%) followed by those in Los Angeles (54%), Inland Empire (51%), Central Valley (47%), and Orange/San Diego (41%).

"Californians are divided on Proposition 15, with Republicans and Democrats, younger and older voters, and renters and homeowners showing widely different support for this tax and spending initiative," said Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO.

Proposition 16 would repeal a 1996 constitutional amendment (Prop 209) that banned the use of affirmative action involving race-based or sex-based preferences in public hiring decisions. Among likely voters, 31 percent would vote yes and 47 percent would vote no, with one in five (22%) undecided. Forty-six percent of Democratic likely voters support Proposition 16, compared with 26 percent of independents and 9 percent of Republicans. The San Francisco Bay Area (40% of likely voters) and Los Angeles (37%) are the only regions with more than one-third support (28% Orange/San Diego, 25% Central Valley, 20% Inland Empire).

"Support for Proposition 16 is well below 50 percent, with one in five voters undecided about this effort to add diversity as a factor in public employment, education, and contracting decisions," Baldassare said.

Most Californians Are Concerned about Getting COVID-19, and a Slim Majority Think the Worst Is behind Us

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A solid majority of Californians say they are either very (28%) or somewhat concerned (33%) about getting the coronavirus and needing to be hospitalized. This is similar to May (24% very concerned, 34% somewhat concerned), when California had about half as many new cases daily as now. Asked about restrictions on public activity to prevent COVID-19 spread, 34 percent want more restrictions, 26 percent want fewer, and 39 percent want about the same. A slightly larger share of Californians want more restrictions now than did in May (25% more, 28% fewer, 46% about the same).

A slim majority of Californians say the worst is behind us on where the US currently stands with respect to the pandemic, while 42 percent say the worst is yet to come--essentially unchanged from May (46% worst behind us, 48% worst yet to come). Adults nationwide hold similar views (51% worst behind us, 43% worst yet to come) according to a September CNN survey.

"Californians continue to express concerns about getting sick from the coronavirus, and a slim majority say the worst is behind us," Baldassare said.

### Governor's Approval Remains High Overall and on Handling the Pandemic

Six in ten (59% adults, 60% likely voters) approve of how Governor Gavin Newsom is doing his job. This is close to the record-high 65 percent of adults and 64 percent of likely voters approving in May, and it is above his approval rating (44% adults, 43% likely voters) a year ago. Asked about the governor's handling of the coronavirus outbreak, 62 percent of both adults and likely voters approve. In May, 69 percent of both adults and likely voters said they approved of how he was handling the pandemic.

"Governor Newsom continues to receive high marks for his overall job performance and his handling of the coronavirus outbreak as the state has faced a surge in the virus and a multitude of crises," Baldassare said.

With the 2019-20 legislative session closing earlier this month, about half of Californians (50% adults, 45% likely voters) approve of how the state legislature is handling its job. Democrats (64%) are far more likely than independents (44%) and Republicans (15%) to approve.

### Most Say Race Relations in the US Have Gotten Worse over the Past Year

Asked how race relations in the US compare to a year ago, six in ten Californians (59%) say they have gotten worse, far more than those saying race relations have gotten better (9%) or are about the same (31%). This contrasts sharply with views in January 2019. At that time, 45 percent said race relations had gotten worse--14 percentage points below today--while 20 percent said they had gotten better, and 34 percent said they were about the same.

"In a major shift in public opinion over time, six in ten Californians are now saying that race relations in the United States are worse than they were a year ago," Baldassare said.

At a time of nationwide protests over police brutality and systemic racism, 53 percent of Californians think police in their community treat all racial and ethnic groups fairly almost always (24%) or most of the time (29%). More than a third say police do so only some of the time (28%) or almost never (11%). Nineteen percent of African Americans say police treat all racial and ethnic groups fairly almost always or most of the time, far lower than among Asian Americans (44%), Latinos (56%), and whites (58%).

### Biden Maintains Wide Lead over Trump, with Californians Closely Watching the Presidential Race

In the presidential race, Joe Biden leads Donald Trump by a wide margin in California, with 60 percent of likely voters favoring Biden/Harris and 31 percent favoring Trump/Pence. This margin is similar to May (57% to 33%), before the vice-presidential candidates were included. Biden is the overwhelming choice among Democrats (94% support), Trump is the overwhelming choice among Republicans (82% support), and Biden holds a lead (56% to 31%) among independents. Biden leads by wide margins in the San Francisco Bay Area (71% to 18%), Los

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Angeles (69% to 23%), and Orange/San Diego (55% to 38%), with a closer race in the Inland Empire (47% to 40%) and Central Valley (46% to 45%).

More than eight in ten likely voters are following news about the presidential candidates very (53%) or fairly (34%) closely, similar to four years ago (61% very, 33% fairly). An overwhelming majority are very (57%) or somewhat (28%) interested in the series of presidential debates that begins later this month.

"With Joe Biden leading Donald Trump by a wide margin, nearly all Californians say they are closely following the presidential election and are interested in the upcoming debates," Baldassare said.

Three in ten Californians (31% adults, 32% likely voters) approve of the job President Trump is doing, similar to May (35% adults, 33% likely voters) and last September (30% adults, 35% likely voters). Today, Republicans are far more likely to approve (82%) than independents (36%) or Democrats (5%). Approval of the president's handling of the coronavirus outbreak (29% adults, 32% likely voters) also is similar to May.

Among likely voters, a solid majority have either a great deal (40%) or quite a lot (20%) of confidence in California's system of elections, a notable increase from one year ago (22% great deal, 20% quite a lot).

### Approval of Congress Is Low, but Most Like Their Own Representative

Likely voters' approval of Congress (21%) is lower than for the president (it's the same--31%--among all adults). However, most (55% adults, 56% likely voters) approve of their own House representative. Nearly half (44% adults, 46% likely voters) approve of US Senator Dianne Feinstein, down slightly from February (51% adults, 50% likely voters) and similar to a year ago (40% adults, 44% likely voters). US Senator Kamala Harris has approval from 54 percent of adults and 56 percent of likely voters, similar to February (49% adults, 54% likely voters) and up from a year ago (40% adults, 43% likely voters).

"Kamala Harris is receiving positive reviews for her job performance as California US Senator in the wake of being selected as the Democratic vice-presidential candidate," Baldassare said.

If the 2020 election for the US House of Representatives were held today, 60 percent of likely voters would vote for or lean toward the Democratic candidate, while 33 percent would vote for or lean toward the Republican candidate. In the eight competitive California House districts according to Cook Political Report (districts 4, 10, 21, 22, 25, 39, 48, and 50), a majority (54%) favor the Republican candidate and 42 percent favor the Democrat.

### Overwhelming Majority Believe California Is in a Recession, with Optimism Low for the US Economy

As California and the nation continue to confront the economic impact of the pandemic, many Californians express concern about the state's economy and the national outlook. An overwhelming majority (72% adults, 77% likely voters) say California is currently in a recession. In addition, three in ten (31% adults, 34% likely voters) say the state is in a serious recession rather than a moderate or mild one. This is similar to the shares saying California was in a serious recession in May (34% adults, 38% likely voters), three months into the COVID-19 lockdowns. Today, 35 percent of Republicans, 31 percent of Democrats, and 28 percent of independents say the state is in a serious recession.

Most Californians (58% adults, 60% likely voters) think the US will have bad times economically during the next 12 months, while about three in ten (35% adults, 31% likely voters) expect good times economically. The share expecting bad times is down notably from May, when it was 70 percent of adults and 73 percent of likely voters.

"Californians are in a gloomy economic mood as the fall election draws closer, with majorities believing that the state is in a recession and the nation will be in bad financial times for the next year," Baldassare said.

### About the Survey

The Californians and Their Government survey is supported with funding from the Arjay and Frances F. Miller Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the PPIC Donor Circle.

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The findings presented above are based on responses from 1,704 California adult residents. The sampling error is  $\pm 3.5$  percent for the total unweighted sample. Interviewing took place on weekend days and weekday nights from September 4-13, 2020. For more information on methodology, see page 21.

Mark Baldassare is president and CEO of PPIC, where he holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy. He is founder of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which he has directed since 1998.

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