

What New Polling Tells Us About Propositions 15 16

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Body

Oct 22, 2020(Fox Hounds: <http://www.foxandhoundsdaily.com/>Delivered by Newstex) The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) tested two ballot propositions in its October poll[1] and while things can certainly change as the election campaigns head into the home stretch the poll results have something to say about the campaigns and the issues they represent. In a couple of words, on Prop 15: a difficult choice; on Prop 16: no mandates and too fast to achieve change. Proposition 15, the split roll campaign to raise property taxes on commercial property dedicating revenue to schools and local governments, the poll says it's as close as it can get.

The battle is going down to the wire and beyond as the late ballots may decide the issue. Presently, Yes on Proposition 15 is at 49%, No is 45%, with 6% undecided. Since the margin of error on the poll is 3.5%, the race can be considered a dead heat. The no side saw good things in the new poll since it was closing the distance from when the September PPIC poll asked the same question. Last month, yes on 15 enjoyed a 51% to 40% edge with 9% undecided. The yes side went down, the no side jumped up as the campaign heads into the final two weeks. The crux of the campaign has split sentiment of the voters as demonstrated by the poll numbers. On one hand, local governments and schools need more money with budgets crunched by the pandemic economy; on the other hand, business has also been crushed by lockdowns and layoffs and raising taxes would damage the economy, keeping some businesses closed permanently. It's a difficult choice offered voters and their divided feelings are represented in the poll. It is interesting to note, however, that when poll respondents were asked an open question about the most important issues facing the people of California, jobs and the economy ranked second only behind COVID-19, while schools, one of the big beneficiaries of Prop 15 revenue should the measure pass, did not make the list of top 10 responses. Reading meaning into the Proposition 16 polling result on repealing the ban against affirmative action is more difficult and certainly more puzzling. After a summer of social justice protests, most politicians lining up behind Proposition 16 (remember the measure was put on the ballot by the state legislature), and with campaign money heavily one-sided supporting the yes vote, Proposition 16 is still stumbling in the PPIC poll at 37% yes and 50% no. The numbers have closed somewhat since the Proposition 16 question was asked by PPIC in September. At that time, the yes side scored 31% in the poll, the no side 47%. The uphill fight for Proposition 16 was reflected in the breakdown of the poll. Prop 16 was losing in all five sections of the state classified by PPIC including Los Angeles (41% yes, 46% no) and the Bay Area (40% yes, 46% no.) It was behind in both Democratic and Republican congressional districts and trailed with men, (36% to 54%) women (39% to 47%), Latinos (37% to 48%) and Whites (34% to 53%). Only in the Race/Ethnicity category described as 'other' by the pollsters was it leading, 51% to 40%. How to explain Proposition 16's troubles given the focus on the racial justice issue, intense media attention and both political and financial support? While Californians acknowledge the racism and social justice issues do exist and they want to see progress, the poll indicates that voters are saying we can make progress without government mandates. The calls for more extreme action to achieve social justice goals such as defunding police proposals are a step too far, too fast. The poll numbers indicate a slow-down sign for the

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rush to reform. We'll see if a late push can change the course for Proposition 16 before the final poll occurs at the ballot box. [1]: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-their-government-october-2020/>

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