

## Californians and the November 2020 Election

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### Body

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Oct 07, 2020( Fox Hounds: <http://www.foxandhoundsdaily.com/>Delivered by Newstex) This post is based on Mark Baldassare's introductory remarks for the PPIC Speaker Series event[1] on October 6, 2020. We would like to offer context from some key findings in the latest PPIC Statewide Survey[2] as we reflect on the state and national election landscape. California's likely voters are anxious about the troubling state of affairs in the nation and state, while partisans are worlds apart about the path to a brighter future. These are the powerful forces at work today, with profound consequences for the 2020 election and beyond.

First, the coronavirus outbreak continues to be a top-tier issue in California. Six in ten likely voters are either very (26%) or somewhat concerned (33%) that they will get the coronavirus and require hospitalization. Also, we find racial/ethnic disparities and large differences between lower-income and higher income groups. When asked about current restrictions on public activities the coronavirus, just 7 percent of Democrats say there should be fewer restrictions in their area, in contrast to 62 percent of Republicans. Partisans strongly disagree on where the US stands as to the coronavirus outbreak today, with 66 percent of Democratic voters and 20 percent of Republican voters saying the worst is yet to come. The recent news about the president and first lady testing positive for COVID-19, along with the president's subsequent hospitalization, is likely to raise the stature of this issue. Second, California voters are in a gloomy mood about the economy. Seven in ten (77%) say that California is currently in a recession. Sixty percent say the US will have bad times economically during the next 12 months. We find stark income and racial/ethnic differences when people are asked if their personal finances are in excellent or good shape today. And Californians have strong disagreements along party lines when asked if government should do more about income inequality (80% Democrats, 20% Republicans). Third, this year's wildfire season is breaking records. Eight in ten likely voters say that the threat of wildfires is a problem in their part of California (52% big, 32% somewhat) in the latest PPIC environment survey[3]. Seven in ten Californians believe that global warming has contributed to California's recent wildfires (69%), including solid majorities across racial/ethnic groups. However, the link between climate change and recent wildfires is considered believable by nine in ten Democrats (91%) but three in ten Republicans (29%). In this challenging time, Californians vary significantly in their assessments of their federal and state leaders. While three in ten (32%) approve of the way that Donald Trump is handling his job as president, six in ten Californians (60%) approve of the way that Gavin Newsom is handling his job as governor. The hyperpartisanship that defines our current political era is evident in support for the governor (88% Democratic voters, 17% Republican voters) and the president (81% Republican voters, 5% Democratic voters). As voters ponder their choices in November, the trend in hyperpartisanship is predictably found in the presidential race and local House races. Moreover, Democratic voters and Republican voters have very different levels of support for high-profile ballot measures such as Proposition 15 (split-roll property tax) and Proposition 16 (affirmative action). And in the midst of the national political controversy over mail-in ballots, six in ten Californians express either a great deal (40%) or quite a lot (20%) of confidence in the voting system in California. However, Democratic voters

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(51% a great deal, 24% quite a lot) and Republican voters (23% a great deal, 13% quite a lot) vary sharply in their confidence, and this extends to whether voting is too easy or too hard. As we enter the final stretch of the 2020 election, 57 percent are pessimistic and 41 percent are optimistic that Americans of different political views can still come together and work out their differences. In a rare instance of partisan agreement today, majorities of Democrats (55%), Republicans (58%) and independents (61%) are all pessimistic. This skepticism is a reflection of the tumultuous times that we live in. California seems poised to maintain its blue status this fall. But the geopolitical and racial/ethnic segregation of voters means that federal and state legislators will be elected and propositions will pass that fall short of representing the views of Californians who are worlds apart. The current hyperpartisanship and distrust may result in greater difficulties in finding common ground. But it may also lead voters to move away from the major parties or toward candidates who are willing to build coalitions to solve the challenges to the nation's and state's future. The PPIC Survey team will be looking closely at polling and election results for signs of emerging trends. [ 1]: <https://www.ppic.org/event/a-2020-election-preview/> [ 2]: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-their-government-september-2020/> [ 3]: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-the-environment-july-2020/>

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