

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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Release #2387

POSITIVE VIEW OF BROWN'S
PERFORMANCE. LEGISLATURE STILL
SEEN IN VERY NEGATIVE LIGHT. MIXED
VIEWS OF STATE BUDGET CUTS.
GREATER THAN TWO TO ONE MAJORITY
OPPOSE AUTOMATIC SPENDING CUTS IF
REVENUES FALL SHORT.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Having served about nine months into what is essentially his third term as governor, Jerry Brown's job performance is viewed favorably voters. Statewide 49% approve and 32% disapprove of the job Brown is doing.

The governor's ratings are considerably better than those given the state legislature. That body is viewed favorably by just 20%, while 65% disapprove. In addition, the *Poll* finds that voters hold negative views about both Democratic and Republican members, with majorities disapproving of the job that each party is doing.

Californians offer a mixed assessment of the spending cuts made by Brown and the legislature in this year's state budget. About one in four voters (27%) thinks the budget cuts went too far, while one in three (33%) believe they didn't go far enough. Another 29% think they were about right.

However, by a greater than two to one margin (66% to 24%), voters disapprove of the provision in the state budget agreement that calls for automatic spending cuts to be made in many of the state's major program areas, including the K-12 schools, higher education and health care, if tax revenues do not meet original assumptions.

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

#### Brown's job performance rating remains positive

Brown's approval rating with voters has remained largely unchanged in three *Field Poll* measurements taken this year. In March 48% of voters approved, in June it was 46%, while now 49% of voters say they approve of his performance.

The proportion of voters who disapprove of the job the governor is doing (32%) is also largely unchanged from June, when it stood at 31%.

Democrats are highly supportive of the governor, approving of his performance 64% to 18%. By an almost five to three margin (49% to 32%), non-partisans also approve of the way Brown is handling his duties. Among Republicans, about twice as many disapprove (53%) as approve (27%) of his performance, and 21% are undecided.

Table 1
Job performance rating of Governor Jerry Brown (among registered voters)

(umong 1	egistereu voter		No
	Approve	Disapprove	opinion
September 2011	49%	32	19
June 2011	46%	31	23
March 2011	48%	21	31
Party registration			
Democrats	64%	18	18
Republicans	27%	52	21
Non-partisans/others	49%	32	19
Region			
Los Angeles County	54%	30	16
San Diego/Orange	34%	41	25
Other Southern California	43%	42	15
Central Valley	42%	37	21
San Francisco Bay Area	63%	18	19
Other Northern California*	56%	23	21
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	51%	33	16
Female	47%	31	22
Union affiliation			
Union member in household	58%	23	19
Non-union household	46%	34	20
Education			
High school graduate or less	48%	35	17
Some college/trade school	47%	38	15
College graduate	47%	29	24
Post-graduate work	53%	26	21

<sup>\*</sup> Small sample base.

# State legislature continues to be viewed in highly negative light

In contrast to Brown's generally positive job appraisal, the state legislature is viewed in a very negative light by voters. This continues a trend that has been in evidence in each of ten previous *Field Poll* surveys over the past three years.

At present, just one-fifth (20%) of voters approve of the way Sacramento lawmakers are doing their jobs, while 65% disapprove. Fifteen percent have no opinion.

While all partisan groups – Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans – view the legislature negatively, the extent of disapproval varies. Among Democrats 53% disapprove, among Republicans it is 80%, while 66% of non-partisans also disapprove.

Table 2
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing (among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
September 2011	20%	65	15
June 2011	23%	64	13
March 2011	16%	70	14
September 2010	10%	80	10
July 2010	16%	74	10
March 2010	13%	78	9
January 2010	16%	72	12
October 2009	13%	78	9
April 2009	14%	74	12
March 2009	18%	72	10
September 2008	15%	73	12
July 2008	27%	57	16
May 2008	30%	57	13
2007 (average)	38%	43	19
2006 (average)	30%	50	20
2005 (average)	28%	55	17
2004 (average)	28%	53	19
2003 (average)	25%	59	16
2002 (average)	40%	40	20
2001 (average)	43%	37	20
2000 (average)	48%	25	27
1999 (average)	45%	28	27
1998 (average)	45%	33	22
1997 (average)	38%	40	22
1996 (average)	41%	49	10
1995 (average)	34%	59	7
1993 (average)	28%	64	8
1992 (average)	32%	64	4
1990 (average)	45%	48	7
1988 (average)	57%	36	7
1983 (average)	43%	49	8
Party registration (Sept. 2011)			
Democrats	29%	53	18
Republicans	9%	80	11
Non-partisans/others	19%	66	15

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 were conducted among all adults. In addition, response scales from these surveys were converted from their original five-point scale to the current two-point approve/disapprove scales for comparative purposes.

## Poor ratings of both Democratic and Republican legislators

A majority of voters (55%) disapproves of the job that Democrats in the legislature are doing, while 31% approve. Republicans in the legislature are viewed even more unfavorably than their Democratic counterparts. Statewide about two in three (64%) disapprove of how they are handling their jobs, while 22% approve.

Rank-and-file Democratic voters view their party's legislative members a little more favorably (50%) than unfavorably (38%). On the other hand, Republicans rate Democratic lawmakers harshly (79% disapprove vs. 10% approve). Non-partisans also rate Democratic legislators negatively by greater than a two to one margin -56% to 26%.

Three fourths (75%) of Democratic voters are critical of GOP lawmakers and only 13% approve of them. Non-partisan voters also have a very negative view of Republican legislators, with 65% disapproving and 22% approving. Even among their own rank-and-file, Republican legislators are viewed more unfavorably (46%) than favorably (36%).

Table 3

Job performance of the Democrats and Republicans in the state legislature (among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Democrats in the state legislature	Трргоче	Disapprove	оринон
September 2011	31%	55	14
September 2010	25%	62	13
Party registration of voter			
Democrats	50%	38	12
Republican	10%	79	11
Non-partisan/other	26%	56	18
Republicans in the state legislature			
September 2011	22%	64	14
September 2010	20%	64	16
Party registration of voter			
Democrats	13%	75	12
Republican	36%	46	18
Non-partisan/other	22%	65	13

# Voters offer mixed assessments of the spending cuts made to this year's state budget

Voters offer mixed assessments of the spending cuts made by the legislature and approved by the governor in this year's state budget. About one-quarter (27%) think they went too far, but one in three (33%) believe they didn't go far enough. Another three in ten (29%) believe they were about right.

There are some differences in the views that Democratic and Republican voters have of the budget cuts. While a small plurality of Democrats (35%) believe the cuts went too far, among Republicans about half (49%) believe they didn't go far enough.

Table 4

Voter opinions of the spending cuts approved by Governor Brown and the state legislature as part of this year's budget (among registered voters)

	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Non- partisans/ others
Spending cuts				
Went too far	27%	35%	20%	21%
Were about right	29	34	20	30
Did not go far enough	33	21	49	35
No opinion	11	10	11	14

## Very negative view of the budget agreement's automatic spending cuts provision

One provision of this year's budget agreement states that if tax revenues do not meet original budget assumptions, there would be automatic spending cuts to many of the state's major program areas, including the K-12 schools, higher education and health care.

By a greater than two to one margin (66% to 24%), voters think this automatic spending cuts provision was a bad idea. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans all hold this view.

Table 5
Views of the state budget's automatic spending cuts provision that would reduce the K-12 schools, higher education and health care budgets should tax revenues not meet original budget assumptions (among registered voters)

	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Non- partisans/ others
Good idea	24%	20%	31%	23%
Bad idea	66	74	59	63
No opinion	10	6	10	14

## Two in three continue to believe the state is moving in the wrong direction

The general belief that things in the state are seriously off on the wrong track continues.

Over the last three years between 70% and 81% of voters subscribed to the view that the state was seriously off on the wrong track. While this negative assessment narrowed somewhat earlier this year, it continues to include two in three voters. At present, 65% view the direction of the state negatively, while 24% see it moving in the right direction.

Majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and non-partisans all believe the state is seriously off on the wrong track, although the proportion of Democrats who say this (54%) is somewhat less than Republicans (82%) and non-partisans (65%).

Table 6
Are things in California generally going in the right direction or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?

(among registered voters)

September 2011         24%         65         11           June 2011         23%         67         10           March 2011         26%         64         10           September 2010         12%         81         7           July 2010         13%         79         8           January 2010         14%         79         7           October 2009         15%         78         7           March 2009         18%         73         9           September 2008         22%         70         8           July 2008         21%         68         11           May 2008         21%         68         11           May 2008         21%         68         9           December 2007         43%         47         10           October 2007         42%         42         16           August 2007         42%         42         16           August 2007         42%         45         13           March 2007         52%         38         10           September 2006         49%         36         15           July 2006         32%         57 <t< th=""><th>(*******</th><th>Right</th><th colspan="2">No</th></t<>	(*******	Right	No	
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2004 (average)       39%       48       13         2003 (average)       20%       72       8         2002 (average)       37%       52       11         2001 (average)       43%       50       7         2000 (average)       58%       35       7         1999 (average)       52%       34       14         1998 (average)       48%       42       10         1997 (average)       36%       54       10         1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1988 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       54       13         Democrats Republicans       9%       82       9	_			
2003 (average)       20%       72       8         2002 (average)       37%       52       11         2001 (average)       43%       50       7         2000 (average)       58%       35       7         1999 (average)       52%       34       14         1998 (average)       48%       42       10         1997 (average)       36%       54       10         1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       5       43       5         Democrats       33%       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9	· • · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			
2002 (average)       37%       52       11         2001 (average)       43%       50       7         2000 (average)       58%       35       7         1999 (average)       52%       34       14         1998 (average)       48%       42       10         1997 (average)       36%       54       10         1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       33%       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9	· • · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			
2001 (average)       43%       50       7         2000 (average)       58%       35       7         1999 (average)       52%       34       14         1998 (average)       48%       42       10         1997 (average)       36%       54       10         1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9	· • · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			
2000 (average)       58%       35       7         1999 (average)       52%       34       14         1998 (average)       48%       42       10         1997 (average)       36%       54       10         1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       33%       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9			50	7
1999 (average)       52%       34       14         1998 (average)       48%       42       10         1997 (average)       36%       54       10         1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       54       13         Democrats       33%       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9				
1998 (average)       48%       42       10         1997 (average)       36%       54       10         1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9				14
1997 (average)       36%       54       10         1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       33%       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9			42	10
1996 (average)       39%       49       12         1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       33%       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9	· • · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		54	
1995 (average)       32%       57       11         1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       33%       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9				
1994 (average)       21%       70       9         1993 (average)       11%       83       6         1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9			57	
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1992 (average)       7%       90       3         1989 (average)       50%       42       8         1988 (average)       52%       43       5         Party registration (Sept. 2011)       54       13         Democrats Republicans       9%       82       9				
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Democrats       33%       54       13         Republicans       9%       82       9	· • · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		-	-
Republicans 9% 82 9		33%	54	13
Non-partisans/others 25% 65 10	Non-partisans/others	25%	65	10

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 conducted among all California adults, not just registered adults.

#### **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 release were asked of a random subsample of 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  $\pm$ 0.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings based on voters included in the random subsample have a maximum sampling error of  $\pm$ 0.4 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 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 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**

Thinking about this state overall, do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?\*

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Jerry Brown is handling his job as Governor of California?

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the California state legislature is doing its job?\*

What about the Democrats in the state legislature? Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Democrats in the legislature are doing their job?\*

What about the Republicans in the state legislature? Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in the legislature are doing their job?\*

How much confidence do you have in Governor Brown in dealing with matters relating to the state budget – a great deal of confidence, some confidence or not much confidence?

How much confidence do you have in the state legislature in dealing with matters relating to the state budget – a great deal of confidence, some confidence or not much confidence?

What is your opinion of the spending cuts that the Governor and state legislature made to pass this year's state budget? Do you think the cuts in state spending went too far, not far enough or were about right?

One of the provisions included in this year's state budget is that if state tax revenues in the first half of the year fall short of a certain target, this would trigger automatic spending cuts in program areas like k-12 education, higher education and health care. Do you think that including this provision into the state budget agreement was a good idea or a bad idea?

<sup>\*</sup> Asked of a random subsample of voters.