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RUMFORD "FAIR HOUSING" ACT AND OPPONENTS' INITIATIVE MEASURE SHARPLY DIVIDE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC TODAY

by Mervin D. Field

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The Rumford "Fair Housing" Act, and the initiative measure to nullify it which is being circulated by the California Real Estate Association, have split the California public virtually down the middle. At this time, there is an almost even division pro and con over the initiative measure, and there is a close division over the Rumford Act as it stands with a slight balance in opposition.

The California Poll sent its interviewers to all parts of the state to interview a cross section of the public on the controversial "fair housing" question. To obtain measurements of both aspects of the issue, the sampling of people was divided into two matched groups: one group was asked about their opinion of the Rumford Act, and the second group was asked about their opinion of the initiative measure.

Rumford Act

One-half of the scientifically selected sampling of adult Californians were first asked this question:

"Have you heard or read anything about a recently passed state law called the Rumford Act, sometimes referred to as the Fair Housing Act?"

About four out of five (80%) of the public has heard about this act, which was passed by the 1963 session of the State Legislature.

Each member of the sample, whether he had previously heard of the act or not, was then asked the following question to determine public attitudes toward the law.

"Well (as you know), the Rumford Act is a law which makes it illegal for apartment house owners, owners of publicly assisted housing, and real estate brokers to discriminate against anyone because of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry in the renting or selling of housing accommodations."

Approximately 50% of the public is in opposition to the act, while a larger number, in opposition to the act than favor of it, although neither 30% believe in favor of the public.

Disapprove of Rumford Act	46%
Approve of Rumford Act	40
Qualified (good in some ways, not good in others)	4
No opinion	10

The California Poll was founded in 1946 as a system for processing public opinion research. The California Poll is completely independent of all political parties and candidates. Its sole purpose is to provide public opinion surveys and reports. Most of the financial support for the Poll comes from newspapers that have publication rights within the city of publication. The Poll utilizes scientific sampling procedures in determining the data reported in its reports. The opinion pollings of states are measured or provided through an election survey and other scientific methods. The size of the sample number of people of both sexes, born of each of the states, from different social backgrounds, and of all ages, economic, political, and religious groups are statistically significant. These surveys are made with samples of 1,200 or more respondents. Further surveys and reports are made with smaller samples for an important 50% increase.

Among those who had not previously heard of the measure, 40% disapproved and 39% approved of the measure. Those who had heard of it before the interview divided 48% disapprove and 40% approve.

By area of the state, residents of Southern California are more often likely to disapprove of the measure, while those in the Northern section of the state more often approve of the law.

Opinion of Rumford Act:	Southern California	Northern California
Disapprove	52%	39%
Approve	33	48
Qualified	4	6
No opinion	11	7

Educational level has some bearing on attitudes toward the Rumford Act, with the most frequent disapproval coming from those in the middle levels of educational achievement, while those within the highest levels of education relatively more often support the Rumford Act.

Initiative Measure

The initiative measure being circulated by the California Real Estate Association and other opponents of the Rumford Act is less widely known, but is still familiar to 51% of the adults of the state. The wording of the questions which were put to the persons interviewed in the second matched sampling of adults was as follows:

"Have you heard or read anything about an initiative petition which is being circulated to repeal a recently passed state law called the Rumford Act?"

All persons were then asked:

"Here is a card which shows the title and summary of a proposed amendment to the State Constitution which may appear on the ballot later this year. If you were voting today, would you approve or disapprove of this addition to the State Constitution?"

(The printed card contained the official title and summary prepared by the Attorney General's office for the petition. See box following)

From the responses of a cross section of Californians to this measure, it appears that there is an almost even split of opinion pro and con about it.

Approve of measure	41%
Disapprove of measure	40
Qualified	2
No opinion	17

Those who had heard of the measure were about evenly divided for and against the initiative (43% for and 40% against).

Between the Northern and Southern parts of the state there is relatively little difference of opinion-- people in both areas are virtually evenly divided pro and con.

Opinion of Initiative measure:	Northern California	Southern California
Approve	43%	40%
Disapprove	43	38
Qualified	1	3
No opinion	13	19

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