

THE CALIFORNIA POLL

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BROWN TRAILS CHRISTOPHER,
TIES REAGAN IN STATEWIDE
VOTER POPULARITY TODAY

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by Mervin D. Field

While Governor Edmund G. Brown is heavily favored to win the Democratic party primary, the odds on his being re-elected in November are not highly promising right now if present voter preferences hold up.

The Governor's chances of re-election seem today to depend heavily on who the Republicans put up. If it is George Christopher, then Governor Brown will start the race as the underdog. Today's California Poll survey shows that Christopher leads Brown in statewide voter preference by at least 15 percentage points.

If the Republicans nominate Ronald Reagan, then Brown would start the race about dead even with the movie actor turned politician. The Poll's cross section survey of the state's electorate shows that Brown and Reagan are only one percentage point apart in preference ratings.

The California Poll conducted this survey during the first week in April. The Poll's experienced opinion reporters in all sections of the state talked to a cross section of potential voters including a proportionate number of Republicans, Democrats, and other party or unaffiliated voters. The results of trial heats between Governor Brown and the two leading Republican contenders for the nomination were as follows:

Trial heats among all voters statewide

Christopher	. . . . .	52%
Brown	. . . . .	37
Undecided	. . . . .	11
Brown	. . . . .	45%
Reagan	. . . . .	44
Undecided	. . . . .	11

Brown Historical Underdog

Governor Brown is no stranger to uphill political battles. In 1958 and again in 1962 he started as the underdog but managed to win when the chips were down. He trailed Senator William Knowland by a substantial margin at the beginning of the 1958 campaign but came on strong at the end and won by a 3-2 margin.

(MORE)

The California Poll was founded in 1946 as a medium for promoting public opinion research. The California Poll is completely independent of all political parties and candidates. Its sole purpose is to report public opinion accurately and objectively. Most of the financial support for the Poll comes from newspapers and television stations that have exclusive rights within the city of publication. The Poll utilizes accepted scientific sampling and questioning procedures in obtaining the data reported in its releases. Representative samples of adults are interviewed at periodic intervals on election issues and other socially important questions of the day. Proportionate numbers of people of both sexes, from all parts of the state, from different sized communities, and of all age, economic, political, and occupation groups are included in the samples. Major surveys are made with samples of 1,200 or more respondents. Interim surveys sometimes are made with smaller samples but not less than 600 interviews.

In 1962, Brown started with a 20 point deficit to ex-Vice President Richard Nixon, but fought his way back up to the top and won by a six percentage point margin.

History could repeat itself in 1966, but this time there is a new factor which could make a big difference: Democratic party unity is visibly cracking under the strain of diverging political pressures. For the first time, Governor Brown faces aggressive opposition in the primary, in the person of Los Angeles Mayor Samuel Yorty. Although Yorty's chances of winning the primary are slight, his campaign could undermine support for Brown.

Secondly, a free-for-all battle for the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor is shaping up, and Brown is caught in the cross-fire. While he is officially backing incumbent Glenn Anderson, he cannot afford to alienate powerful forces rumored to be backing Thomas Braden and Lloyd Hand.

And finally, the persistence of rumors that Brown might resign to take a federal post after he was re-elected have a weakening effect on his popularity, which is also suffering from the erosion caused by almost eight years of controversial leadership of the country's largest state.

Yorty vs. Republicans

Evidence of the magnitude of the problem that Governor Brown faces in rekindling the kind of Democratic support which enabled him to come from behind in 1958 and 1962, is the fact that his opponent in the Democratic primary, Mayor Yorty, currently draws more voter support when matched against the Republicans than Brown does.

Thus, although Yorty is not backed by a majority of Democrats for the nomination, many of them, and many Republicans, seem to find him a more attractive candidate than Brown when they consider the probable Republican choices. In a trial heat against Christopher, Yorty runs only seven points behind, and Yorty actually tops Reagan by about nine percentage points.

Trial heats among all voters statewide

Christopher	. . . . .	45%
Yorty	. . . . .	38
Undecided	. . . . .	17
Yorty	. . . . .	45%
Reagan	. . . . .	36
Undecided	. . . . .	19