

THE CALIFORNIA POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL STATEWIDE SURVEY OF PUBLIC OPINION
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SENTIMENT RUNNING IN FAVOR OF DEATH
PENALTY AND AGAINST MARIJUANA MEASURES.
HIGH VOTER INDECISION ON PROPS. 14, 18,
20, 21 AND 22

by Mervin D. Field

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While public opinion was beginning to take more definite shape a week before the election, there are still very large blocs of undecided voters on a number of the major ballot propositions.

The California Poll has been charting attitude trends on seven of the 22 state ballot propositions, and in a survey completed between Monday and Wednesday of this week found this to be the state of opinion on these measures:

1. A relatively large segment of the population seems to have made up its mind on the death penalty measure (Proposition 17), and with a week to go sentiment was running about two to one in favor. (Yes 57%; No 29%; Undecided 14%)
2. There is also considerable crystallization of voter attitude on Proposition 19, the measure which would remove criminal penalties for personal use of marijuana by adults. Sentiment was running against this measure by a three to two margin a week before the election. (Yes 32%; No 51%; Undecided 17%)
3. On five other propositions, numbers 14, 18, 20, 21, and 22, public opinion is much less stable. Public indecision or unawareness of these propositions ranged from 34% to 58%, with just a week to go before ballots are cast. (Included in the "undecided" category are people who said they knew a lot about the measure but were weighing the pros and cons, people who were aware of the measure but said they were waiting for more information, and some who professed to be unaware of the measures.)

On Proposition 14, the Watson Amendment which would limit the property tax rate, division of sentiment was Yes 14%; No 28%; and 58% were undecided. In early October an even larger proportion of the public undecided about or unaware of Proposition 14. However, tracing those who had a committed position during the month of October shows that a significant number who were on the Yes side early in October are now switching to a No position.

While sentiment was running against Proposition 14 among those who had made up their minds, the size of the uncommitted vote was so large that late campaign efforts could tell the story. Both sides of this issue have raised considerable money for the fight, with a large portion of that money to be expended in advertising media in the closing days of the campaign.

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. 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 1,000 or more respondents. Interim surveys sometimes are made with smaller samples of not less than 600 interviews.

(MORE)

On Proposition 18, the obscenity measure, the public's reaction was Yes 21%; No 45% and 34% Undecided. There are indications that there is a shift of some early October Yes votes to a No position today.

Proposition 20, the coastal zone conservation act, shows a current division of Yes 36%; No 25%; and Undecided 39%. There is well-financed opposition to this measure and considerable advertising weight on the No side is expected to be exerted in the days before the election. There are signs that some of those who were on the Yes side of Proposition 20 in early October are now switching to a No position. In recent years two other controversial measures which had initial public support later lost at the ballot box after heavy opposition campaigns had been mounted.

Proposition 21 would prohibit school children from being assigned to particular schools because of race, creed or color and would repeal policy preventing racial and ethnic imbalance in schools. It is considered primarily an anti-school busing measure. The latest division of opinion is Yes 37%; No 27%; Undecided 36%. Previous surveys have indicated that a large majority of the public is against busing of school children for purposes of integration.

On Proposition 22, the Agricultural Labor Relations measure, the division was Yes 21%; No 34%; and 45% undecided. Proposition 22 is a measure directed at Caesar Chavez and his attempts to organize agricultural workers. Public opinion toward Chavez and his programs is somewhat polarized. Analysis of California Poll data indicates, however, that among those who are voting Yes are many who would normally be considered likely opponents of this cause, i.e., Democrats and working class people. Some shifting of position has occurred in October, and on balance, it seems that the Yes side has gained somewhat as a net result of these shifts. However, there is also a large uncommitted group today, and it should not be assumed that initial public opinion trends against this measure will hold up through election day with such a large bloc of undecided voters.

	<u>As of October 30 - November 1</u>		
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided/ unaware</u>
Proposition 14 (Watson Amendment)	14%	28	58
Proposition 17 (Death Penalty)	57%	29	14
Proposition 18 (Obscenity)	21%	45	34
Proposition 19 (Marijuana)	32%	51	17
Proposition 20 (Coastal conservation)	36%	25	39
Proposition 21 (School assignment)	37%	27	36
Proposition 22 (Agricultural workers)	21%	34	45

In summary, it would appear that for Proposition 17 to be defeated, or for Proposition 19 to pass, major shifts in the already committed vote would have to occur during the last week of the campaign. But in the case of the other five propositions, public opinion is highly unstable and the outcomes are very much in doubt as of a week before the election.

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Upwards of nine million California voters will go to the polls next Tuesday. If previous voting patterns hold up, it is expected that the vote on many of the 22 statewide ballot propositions will be considerably less than the total turnout. For example, while as many as nine million may vote for president, as few as seven million may vote on many of the propositions.

Moreover, there is considerable evidence that many voters will have made their choices on various propositions very late in the campaign. This choice in many cases will be predicated on a rather brief exposure to the elements in the proposition, and many choices will be influenced primarily by recommendation from some trusted or convenient source, such as friends, public figures, special interest groups, or media sources. There is, consequently, some doubt that most voters are as informed and thoughtful as the ideal voter is supposed to be, at least when they are confronted with a long list of propositions.

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