

THE CALIFORNIA POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN STATEWIDE SURVEY OF
PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 BY MERVIN D. FIELD.

234 Front Street
San Francisco 94111
(415) 392-5763

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PUBLIC OPINION TRENDING
STRONGLY AGAINST PROP. 6,
HOMOSEXUAL TEACHER
INITIATIVE

By Mervin D. Field

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A major shift in public attitude regarding Proposition 6, the anti-gay teacher ballot measure, has occurred within the past few weeks.

Where public opinion was at first strongly aligned in favor of the measure, there has been a heavy shift recently to the "NO" side. Just a month ago the public expressed itself 61% in favor and only 31% against the measure. Today, however, the preference vote is nearly evenly divided at 45% in favor and 43% opposed.

PROPOSITION 6

	<u>Late September</u>	<u>Late August</u>
<u>If voting today, would vote:</u>		
YES	45%	61%
NO	43	31
Undecided	12	8

The public's change of direction on Prop. 6 appears to be due to the increasing number of influential voices now being raised against the measure. Many prominent state office holders, candidates, and editorialists on the State's major newspapers, TV and radio stations have come out with strong cautionary voices or outright opposition to Prop. 6.

Reliable predictions of the outcome next month are impossible from these two California Poll surveys, particularly with so much time for campaign events to have their effect before voters go to the polls. Nevertheless, any continuation of the trend now in evidence would result in a rejection of Prop. 6 by Election Day.

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The California Poll has operated continuously since 1947 as an independent, non-partisan media sponsored public opinion news service. The Poll is owned by Field Research Corporation and since 1976 has been operated by The Field Institute, a non-profit, non-partisan research group engaged in conducting studies of public opinion on issues of social significance. The Field Institute is dedicated to encouraging the widest possible dissemination of social survey findings to the public and for the public benefit. The Institute receives its support from academic, governmental, media, and private sources.

Republican State Senator John Briggs sponsored Pro. 6 and it is getting considerable public support from conservative Christian religious groups who see the issue as a fundamental moral question.

The basic stance taken by the proponents of Prop. 6 is that openly homosexual teachers are a danger to the morals of children. "Those teachers to whom we entrust our children as role models should be held to a higher standard of conduct," Briggs has said.

Some idea of the strength of opposition to homosexual teachers among the fundamentalist-evangelical-conservative segment of American society is revealed in a large-scale nationwide survey conducted last year by Christian Cause, a California organization. Among the conservative Christians polled, 91% said they would not want admitted homosexuals teaching children. However, only 42% objected to gay police, and 13% to homosexual fire fighters.

On the other hand, Harvey Milk, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors who is a leading spokesman for gay rights, argues that "Proposition 6 is misguided, dangerous, deceitful, frightening and un-American. It is based on the same abuse of civil rights that gave us witch hunts and McCarthyism".

Opponents of Proposition 6 assert that it would impinge on constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and assembly, and would cost large sums of money to enforce through cumbersome hearing and appeals procedures. They point out that local school boards already have the power to dismiss any school employee, heterosexual or homosexual, found guilty of misconduct.

In recent elections voters in Dade County, Florida; Eugene, Oregon; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Wichita, Kansas repealed ordinances which expressly forbade discrimination against homosexuals. These elections have been interpreted as signalling a wave of public opposition to homosexuality. The early success of the Briggs amendment in California was seen as confirmation of this.

The growing trend against Proposition 6, however, indicates that a different story may be emerging. It would appear that while the public may not be willing to endorse any special enhancement of homosexual rights, neither is the public willing to specifically deny homosexuals any of their civil rights because they speak out about their sexual preferences.

It is obvious that many Californians are concerned about homosexuality and the effects of more public display of homosexual life styles. Previous California Poll surveys and national surveys by the Gallup and Harris organizations have shown that a majority of the public

have considerable concern about the idea of homosexuals being teachers and counselors to young people. However, Prop. 6 is apparently now being seen by a growing number of Californians as an improper way of mitigating this concern.

Two very prominent conservative spokesmen, former Governor Ronald Reagan and Howard Jarvis, sponsor of the successful Proposition 13 tax relief initiative in the June election, both recently stated their opposition to Prop. 6. Their endorsement of a "NO" vote on Prop. 6 may have an important impact, since, many of Prop. 6's chief supporters are ideologically attuned to these two men.

At the present time the issue is somewhat divided along party lines. Democrats oppose Proposition 6 by a 50% to 36% margin, while Republicans favor it by 57% to 32%.

The greatest opposition to Proposition 6 comes from the two major metropolitan areas of the state, the Los Angeles/Orange County area and the San Francisco Bay Area. Currently sentiment is 50% NO in the San Francisco area and 36% in favor. In Los Angeles and Orange Counties the proportion is 46% against and 40% in favor. In other parts of the state, however, a majority of the public currently favors Proposition 6.

Men and women are closely similar in their reactions to Prop. 6: in both cases a slight plurality currently favors the measure.

Older people are much more inclined to favor Proposition 6 than young people are.

People who have gone beyond high school are much more anti-Prop. 6 than are people with high school or less educational attainment.

In families with children, opinion on Proposition 6 is 51% in favor and 38% opposed. Those families with no children in the household are opposed 40% to 47% in favor.

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PUBLIC OPINION ON PROPOSITION 6

	<u>Late September</u>		<u>Late August</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Statewide	45%	43	61%	31%
Area:				
San Francisco Bay Area	36%	50	57%	38
Other Northern California	52%	36	68%	21
Los Angeles/Orange Counties	40%	46	57%	34
Other Southern California	55%	36	66%	26
Registration:				
Democrats	36%	50	54%	38
Republicans	57%	32	70%	22
Others	50%	43	70%	24
Unregistered	52%	36	60%	30
Political Ideology:				
Liberal	29%	59	51%	45
Middle-of-the-road	46%	37	51%	34
Conservative	49%	35	72%	20
Sex:				
Male	45%	44	61%	34
Female	45%	43	60%	29
Age:				
18-24	40%	50	54%	39
25-29	41%	53	54%	39
30-39	44%	45	53%	38
40-49	47%	42	62%	27
50-59	47%	43	68%	26
60 and older	48%	32	72%	20
Education:				
Less than High School	51%	33	65%	25
Completed High School	52%	33	65%	22
1-2 years college/trade school	46%	44	61%	34
3-4 years college	39%	51	56%	39
5 or more years college	26%	61	49%	46
Religion:				
Protestant	48%	39	69%	25
Roman Catholic	51%	38	62%	26
Jewish	15%	78	26%	68
Other	38%	51	67%	28
No religious preference	36%	54	41%	55
Ethnicity:				
White	45%	43	62%	32
Black	23%	64	41%	44
Latino	52%	40	63%	28
Children in household	51%	38	61%	30
No children in household	40%	47	60%	33

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INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SURVEY

DATES AND TIME OF INTERVIEWING

Release #990

September 20 through September 29, 1978. Late afternoon and evenings, all day Saturday and Sunday.

POPULATION COVERED

Representative cross-section of California adult public.

INTERVIEWING METHOD

Personal, face-to-face

SIZE OF SAMPLE

Statewide, Total Interviews	<u>1075</u>	Age:	
Area:		18-24	167
San Francisco Bay Area	224	25-29	123
Other Northern California	230	30-39	232
L.A./Orange Counties	418	40-49	154
Other Southern California	203	50-59	149
Registration:		60 and older	238
Democrats	420	Education:	
Republicans	294	Less than High School	179
Others	70	Completed High School	265
Unregistered	291	1-2 yrs. college	291
Political Ideology:		3-4 yrs. college	211
Liberal	302	5 yrs. or more college	125
Middle-of-the-road	222	Religion:	
Conservative	433	Protestant	530
Sex:		Roman Catholic	256
Male	470	Jewish	42
Female	605	Other	77
		No Religious Preference	151
		Ethnicity:	
		White	874
		Black	60
		Latino	92
		Children in household	498
		No children in household	576

QUESTION ASKED:

Proposition 6 would specifically prohibit hiring and requires dismissal of teachers and other school employees for soliciting, encouraging or promoting private or public sexual acts between persons of the same sex in a manner likely to come to the attention of other employees or students; or who engage in such acts publicly or indiscreetly.

If you had to make up your mind today, would you be inclined to vote "YES" or "NO" on Proposition 6?

SURVEY METHOD

Interviews in this survey were made with respondents in their homes. Sampled homes are drawn in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all areas of the state and all neighborhoods a properly proportionate chance to be included. Specific cluster locations are determined by random selection of key addresses from current telephone directories. Non-telephone homes are drawn into the sample by a special method of cluster formation and are fully accounted for in the final sample. Up to four calls are made to each number at different times to reach one adult in each household. Adult respondent is selected for interview using an objective, self-weighted procedure to provide a balance of age and sex.

SAMPLING RELIABILITY

The sampling reliability of data from this sample is shown below. These figures represent an estimate of average sampling tolerances at the 95% confidence level; that is, the chances are about 19 out of 20 that if the whole population of the state had been surveyed with the same questionnaire, the results of the complete census would not be found to deviate from the obtained survey findings by more than plus or minus the amount shown below.

<u>Sample Size</u>	<u>Plus/minus sampling tolerance (in percentage points)</u>
1300	3.0
1000	3.5
800	3.9
600	4.5
400	5.5
200	7.7
100	11.0
50	16.0

POLL OPERATION AND SPONSORSHIP

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