

PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY

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Californians & their government



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in collaboration with
The James Irvine Foundation



PPIC

PUBLIC POLICY
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The PPIC Statewide Survey series provides policymakers, the media, and the public with objective, advocacy-free information on the perceptions, opinions, and public policy preferences of California residents. Inaugurated in April 1998, this is the 115th PPIC Statewide Survey in a series that has generated a database of responses from more than 244,000 Californians.

This survey is the 46th in the *Californians and Their Government* series, which is conducted periodically to examine the social, economic, and political trends that influence public policy preferences and ballot choices. The series is supported with funding from The James Irvine Foundation. This survey seeks to raise public awareness, inform decisionmakers, and stimulate public discussion and debate about important state issues, with a particular focus on the California state budget.

The context for this survey includes ongoing economic difficulties, a multibillion-dollar state budget deficit, and a governor and legislature struggling to find a way to close this gap. Governor Brown—who said he would not raise taxes without public approval—is seeking bipartisan support for a budget proposal that includes a special election to ask voters to extend expiring income and sales tax increases and a vehicle license fee increase. His plan also seeks to close the state's \$26 billion budget gap through major spending cuts across most state agencies and by changing the ways that state and local funding are distributed for public programs. Public employee pension reform has also been raised by legislative Republicans. Nationally, economic policy and the federal budget deficit continue to be important topics, as are the national debates about public employee pensions and bargaining rights and news of populist revolts in Arab countries.

This survey presents the responses of 2,000 adult residents throughout the state, interviewed in English or Spanish and contacted by landline or cell phone. It includes findings on these topics:

- State issues, including the direction of the state and opinions about the economy, unemployment, and future economic outlook; approval of Governor Brown, the state legislature, and respondents' own state legislators; the severity of the budget deficit and how it should be closed; perceptions of the governor's budget proposal, including attitudes toward a June special election and the proposed tax and fee extension package; perceptions of public employee pensions, including whether they should be decreased; attitudes toward specific components of Proposition 13; and perceptions of legislative term limits and reform.
- National issues, including approval ratings for President Obama, Congress, Senators Boxer and Feinstein, and respondents' own congressional representatives; perceptions of U.S. economic policy; perceptions of the federal budget deficit, including its severity and which political party is doing a better job at closing it; perceptions of immigrants and attitudes toward immigration policy reforms; impressions of federal, state, and local governments; and perceptions of peace and stability in Arab countries and the perceived role of the United States in promoting democracy.
- Time trends, and the extent to which Californians may differ in their perceptions, attitudes, and preferences regarding state issues and the budget, based on their political party affiliation, region of residence, race/ethnicity, and other demographics.

This report may be downloaded free of charge from our website (www.ppic.org). For questions about the survey, please contact survey@ppic.org. Try our PPIC Statewide Survey interactive tools online at <http://www.ppic.org/main/survAdvancedSearch.asp>.

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED: Do not publish or broadcast until 9:00 p.m. PDT on Wednesday, March 23, 2011.

**Para ver este comunicado de prensa en español, por favor visite nuestra página de internet:
<http://www.ppic.org/main/pressreleaseindex.asp>**

PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT

Support Slips for Special Election

HALF OF LIKELY VOTERS BACK JUNE VOTE—LESS THAN HALF FAVOR TAX, FEE PROPOSAL

SAN FRANCISCO, March 23, 2011—Public support for a June special election on Governor Jerry Brown's plan to extend temporary tax and fee increases has declined since he proposed it in January, according to a statewide survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), with support from The James Irvine Foundation. While two-thirds of all adults (67%) and likely voters (66%) said in January that a special election was a good idea, 54 percent of all adults and half of likely voters (51%) say so today.

Californians' support for a special election has dropped across parties since January, when majorities favored the idea (73% Democrats, 64% independents, 55% Republicans). Today, 64 percent of Democrats, 57 percent of independents, and just 34 percent of Republicans say it is a good idea.

Support has also declined since January for the package that voters would be considering—a five-year extension of temporary increases in income and sales taxes and the vehicle license fee to avoid additional budget cuts. Today, less than half (46% all adults and likely voters) favor the governor's proposal, a decline of 7 points among all adults and 8 points among likely voters.

“While many Californians still favor the approach the governor proposed in January, his plan to seek a budget solution through a June ballot has become a more difficult task to achieve,” says Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO. “Even if the budget measure finds its way onto the ballot, state elected officials' low approval ratings could limit their ability to persuade voters to go along with a budget plan.”

Brown's approval rating has dropped 7 points since early January among all Californians (41% to 34%) and 6 points among likely voters (47% to 41%). Californians are more likely to approve (34%) than disapprove (24%) of the way Brown is doing his job, but 42 percent remain unsure of his job performance. Along party lines, 47 percent of Democrats, 42 percent of independents and 25 percent of Republicans approve of the governor's job performance, but many in each group are unsure.

The California Legislature has much a lower approval rating (24% all adults, 16% likely voters), similar to early January (26% all adults, 18% likely voters). Asked how their own individual state legislators are doing, 36 percent of all adults and 34 percent of likely voters approve.

HOW TO FILL THE BUDGET GAP? CALIFORNIANS SPLIT

As California's leaders grapple with a \$26 billion budget deficit, most residents (68% all adults, 83% likely voters) say the state budget situation is a big problem. But they are divided about how they would deal with it: 38 percent of Californians say a mix of spending cuts and tax increases is needed,

37 percent prefer mostly spending cuts, 9 percent prefer mostly tax increases, and 7 percent say it is OK to borrow money and run a budget deficit. Likely voters are also divided (41% a mix of cuts and taxes, 40% mostly spending cuts, 11% mostly tax increases, 3% OK to borrow and run a budget deficit).

When asked specifically about Brown's proposal to close the state's deficit—about half through spending cuts and about half through voter-approved tax extensions—Californians are slightly more likely to favor his idea (48% all adults, 49% likely voters) than oppose it (41% all adults, 42% likely voters).

MOST SUPPORT PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSION REFORMS

As many states deal with budget deficits, public employee pensions have become the focus of intense debate. Californians are increasingly likely to say that the amount of money spent on public employee pensions is a big problem. Nearly half of Californians (47%) and a majority of likely voters (56%) say the amount of money state and local governments spend on public employee pension or retirement systems is a big problem. In January 2005, just 31 percent of all adults and 32 percent of likely voters gave this response. In January 2010, 41 percent of all adults and 44 percent of likely voters did so.

Most Californians (53%) and likely voters (57%) say state government should reduce the pension plans of government employees as it looks for ways to balance the budget. In addition, strong majorities (71% all adults, 74% likely voters) favor changing the pension system for new public employees from defined benefits to a defined contribution system similar to a 401(k) plan. This view is shared by Californians across parties (80% Republicans, 72% independents, 70% Democrats), as well as regions and demographic groups. Even among current public employees, this idea has majority support (56%).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT VIEWED MORE FAVORABLY THAN STATE, FEDERAL

Brown's budget plan proposes giving local governments responsibility for some services now provided by the state. What are Californians' perceptions of different levels of government? At least half have an unfavorable opinion of the federal (52%) and state (55%) governments, but a majority (54%) view their local government favorably. At the same time they want to retain their power over local governments' ability to raise revenues: majorities (57% all adults, 59% likely voters) favor the provision of Proposition 13 that requires a two-thirds vote at the ballot box to pass any local special taxes. Asked about the overall impact of Proposition 13, majorities (56% all adults, 58% likely voters) say the measure has mostly been a good thing for California. Their views are mixed on the effect of the property tax limitations imposed by Proposition 13. A plurality of adults (32%) say these limits have had no effect on local government services, while fewer say the impact has been good (24%) or bad (25%). Likely voters' views are also mixed (30% no effect, 25% good effect, 30% bad effect).

CALIFORNIANS WANT NATIONAL FOCUS ON JOB CREATION

Nationally, economic policy and the federal deficit are the focus of debate. As President Obama and Congress wrestle over the budget, a main point of contention is whether the government should spend to help the economy recover or focus on reducing the deficit. About half of Californians (48%) say that if they were setting priorities, the focus would be on spending to help the economy recover, and 44 percent say it would be on reducing the federal deficit. Likely voters feel differently: 36 percent would spend to help the economy and 58 percent say reducing the deficit is a higher priority.

Californians do agree on one question: 62 percent of all adults and 64 percent of likely voters think Congress and the Obama administration are not doing enough to help create jobs.

Nearly all Californians say the federal deficit is a very serious problem (63%) or somewhat serious one (28%). When asked about three major areas of spending in the national budget, Californians hold differing views on which should be spared from significant cuts as Congress attempts to reduce the deficit:

- **Medicare:** 75 percent want to protect Medicare, the federal health program for the elderly. Across parties, demographic groups, and regions, adults want to spare the program from significant cuts.
- **Medicaid:** 67 percent want to protect Medicaid, the federal health program for the poor. Partisan differences emerge on this question, with 77 percent of Democrats, 62 percent of independents wanting to spare the program and half of Republicans saying it is more important to reduce the deficit (51%) than protect Medicaid from significant cuts (41%).
- **Defense spending:** 51 percent of adults say it is more important to reduce the deficit than prevent cuts in this area, while 40 percent say sparing the program from big cuts is a priority. Independents (57%) and Democrats (54%) prefer to reduce the deficit than protect defense spending. Republicans are more divided (46% reduce deficit, 49% prevent defense cuts).

Who is doing a better job on efforts to agree on a federal budget? About half of Californians (48%) say the president and the Democrats in Congress; far fewer (25%) say the Republicans in Congress.

Two months after Republicans gained control of the House of Representatives and with rancorous budget negotiations under way, a majority of Californians (56%) and likely voters (52%) approve of the president's job performance (38% all adults, 44% likely voters disapprove). A different story emerges for Congress. Most Californians (58%) and likely voters (69%) disapprove of its job performance and there is bipartisan agreement on this view: 61 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of Republicans, and 68 percent of independents disapprove. Californians have more positive views of their own member of the House of Representatives. Half (50% all adults, 50% likely voters) approve; 32 percent of all adults and 37 percent of likely voters disapprove.

Asked about California's senators, 45 percent of adults and likely voters approve of Senator Barbara Boxer's job performance. About half of all adults (48%) and likely voters (51%) approve of Senator Dianne Feinstein's job performance.

MORE KEY FINDINGS

- **Economy, jobs top concern—pages 7, 8**

The economy and jobs is named as the most important issue facing the state—as it has since March 2008—by 53 percent of all adults. Far fewer mention the state budget (14%) or education and schools (10%). Gas prices are now mentioned by 4 percent. While most Californians say the state is headed in the wrong direction (59%), they are more optimistic than they were a year ago, when 76 percent expressed this view.

- **Strong backing for legislative term limits—page 14**

Solid majorities of Californians (61%) and likely voters (70%) say current legislative term limits are a good thing. Still, 68 percent of all adults and likely voters favor the general idea of an initiative proposing to restructure term limits that has qualified for the ballot.

- **Majorities support pathways to legal status for illegal immigrants—page 22**

Most Californians (65%) say illegal immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years should have a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status, while 30 percent say they should be deported. A majority (68%) also favor a law that would allow illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or attend college.

- **Is U.S. responsible for promoting democracy abroad? Most say no—page 23**

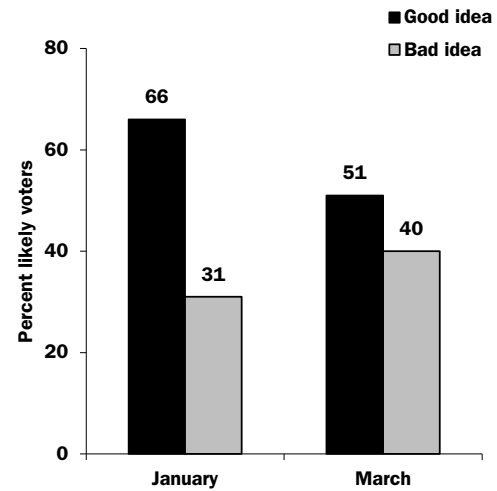
Questioned before the U.S. and its allies launched air strikes on Libya, most Californians (64%) say the U.S. does not have a responsibility to actively promote democracy around the world.

STATE ISSUES

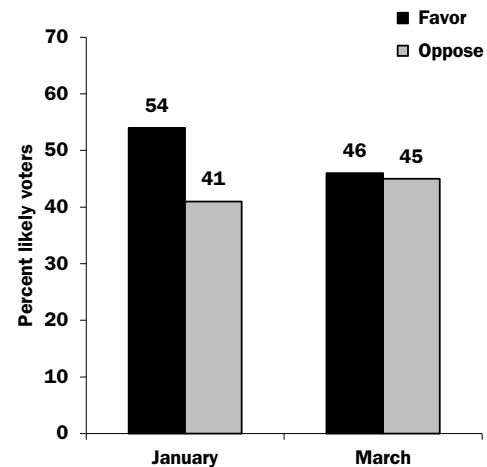
KEY FINDINGS

- Majorities of adults continue to name jobs and the economy as the most important issue facing California, say the state is headed in the wrong direction, and expect bad economic times. Forty-seven percent believe California is in a serious recession and 44 percent express concern over job loss in their household. *(pages 7, 8)*
- More Californians approve than disapprove of Governor Brown’s job performance, while a plurality remain unsure. Fifty-four percent disapprove of the legislature. Californians are more likely to disapprove than approve of their own state legislators. *(page 9)*
- Nearly seven in 10 Californians view the state’s budget situation as a big problem, but residents are divided about how to deal with the budget gap. At least half of adults (54%) and likely voters (51%) think Governor Brown’s proposed special election is a good idea, but fewer than half now favor his tax and fee proposal. *(pages 10, 11)*
- A rising percentage of Californians say the amount spent on public employee pensions is a big problem, and 53 percent think the state government should decrease pension plans as a way to balance the budget. *(page 12)*
- Majorities of adults and likely voters think Proposition 13 turned out to be mostly a good thing and favor its two-thirds vote requirement for new local special taxes. *(page 13)*
- Solid majorities of adults say term limits are a good thing and think it is good idea to reduce the amount of time a person may serve in the state legislature, from 14 years to 12 years, allowing service in either the state senate or assembly or a combination of both. *(page 14)*

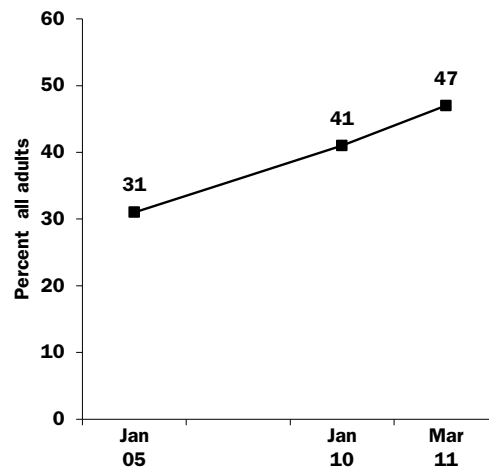
Proposal to Hold Special Election



Proposal to Extend Temporary Tax Increases



Percent Saying Amount Spent on Public Employee Pensions Is a Big Problem



OVERALL MOOD

Majorities of Californians continue to mention jobs and the economy (53%) as the most important issue facing the people of California today. Far fewer mention the state budget (14%) or education and schools (10%). Gas prices are now mentioned by four percent. The economy has topped the list since March 2008. Today's views are similar to those expressed by Californians last March when 57 percent cited jobs and the economy as the most important issue facing the state. Across parties, regions, and demographic groups, jobs and the economy is the top issue mentioned. Republicans (26%) are about twice as likely as Democrats (13%) and independents (14%) to name the state budget as an area of concern for California, while Democrats and independents (11% each) are more likely than Republicans (4%) to mention education. A greater number of likely voters (21%) than all adults (14%) mention the state budget as the most important issue. Latinos (62%) are somewhat more likely than Asians (54%) or whites (47%) to cite the economy as the most important issue facing the state.

“Thinking about the state as a whole, what do you think is the most important issue facing people in California today?”

<i>Top four issues mentioned</i>	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Jobs, economy	53	53	50	54	51
State budget, deficit, taxes	14	13	26	14	21
Education, schools	10	11	4	11	8
Gas prices	4	5	3	2	3

While Californians continue to say that the state is generally heading in the wrong direction (59%), they are more optimistic now than they were last March, when 76 percent expressed this opinion. Today, 49 percent of Democrats say the state is going in the wrong direction; in January, 39 percent said wrong direction. Republicans today are more likely to say the state is going in the wrong direction (77%) than in the right direction (15%), comparable to their views in January. Sixty-four percent of independents now say California is going in the wrong direction; they are slightly more pessimistic today than in January (34% right, 58% wrong). Majorities across regions express pessimistic views. Optimism is higher among Latinos (38%) and Asians (32%) compared to whites (25%). At least half across age and income groups say wrong direction, but those with an annual household income of less than \$80,000 and those age 18 to 34 express slightly more optimistic views than do more affluent and older residents.

“Do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Right direction	31%	38%	15%	27%	27%
Wrong direction	59	49	77	64	63
Don't know	11	13	8	9	10

ECONOMIC SITUATION

Mirroring concerns over jobs and the economy, Californians continue to express negative views regarding the state's economic outlook. Most Californians believe that the state will face bad times financially (61%) in the next 12 months; last March, 65 percent said this.

Today, more than eight in 10 Californians think the state is in a serious (47%), moderate (28%), or mild (8%) economic recession. Only 12 percent say the state is not in a recession, which is comparable to findings in January. The percentage of Californians saying that the state is in a serious recession has decreased from 59 percent last March to 47 percent today. Residents of the Central Valley (57%) are more likely than residents in Los Angeles (46%), the Other Southern California region (45%), and the San Francisco Bay Area (43%) to say that the recession is serious. A greater share of likely voters (58%) than all adults (47%) express this view.

**“Would you say that California is in an economic recession, or not?
(if yes: Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?)”**

	All Adults	Region				Likely Voters
		Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Serious recession	47%	57%	43%	46%	45%	58%
Moderate recession	28	22	29	26	32	24
Mild recession	8	7	10	8	8	6
Not in a recession	12	10	13	13	13	9
Don't know	5	4	5	7	2	4

Job security is also an important issue for Californians: 44 percent express concern that they or someone else in their family might lose their job in the next year. Another 8 percent volunteer that their household has already experienced job loss. Still, Californians are more optimistic today than they were last year: 47 percent are not currently concerned about job loss, up from 39 percent last March. Latinos (54%) are most likely to express concern over job loss compared to whites (38%) and Asians (33%). Across geographic regions, concern is lowest in the San Francisco Bay Area (34% San Francisco, 45% Central Valley, 46% Los Angeles, 49% Other Southern California region). Concern about job loss is higher among those in lower-income households (53% under \$40,000, 43% \$40,000 to \$80,000, 33% \$80,000 or more). Among Californians expecting good economic times, 35 percent express concern about job loss; among those who expect bad times 49 percent are concerned about job loss.

**“Are you concerned that you or someone in your family will lose their job in the next year, or not?
(if yes: Are you very concerned or somewhat concerned?)”**

	All Adults	Household Income			Likely Voters
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	
Yes, very concerned	29%	36%	25%	23%	27%
Yes, somewhat concerned	15	17	18	10	11
No	47	34	48	63	53
Already lost job (volunteered)	8	11	9	3	8
Don't know	1	2	1	–	1

APPROVAL RATINGS OF STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS

More Californians approve (34%) than disapprove (24%) of the work that Jerry Brown is doing as the governor of California, but 42 percent remain unsure about how to rate his performance. Approval is down and disapproval is up since early January (41% approve, 19% disapprove, 39% unsure). Among likely voters, 41 percent approve, 25 percent disapprove, and 34 percent are unsure of Governor Brown’s performance. Democrats (47%) and independents (42%) more than Republicans (25%) approve of his performance, but many in each group are unsure. About four in ten Californians across regions are unsure of Governor Brown’s job performance at this point. College graduates (43%) are more likely than those without a college degree to approve of Governor Brown. Californians across demographic groups are more likely to approve than disapprove of his performance but more than one in three are unsure.

Approval ratings for the California Legislature are considerably lower than the governor’s, with 24 percent saying they approve and 54 percent saying they disapprove. These findings are comparable to results in January (26% approve, 55% disapprove). But approval is higher today than it was last March (14% approve, 72% disapprove), when it dropped to a record low. Disapproval is even higher among likely voters (70%) than among all adults (54%). Republicans (71%) and independents (68%) are more likely than Democrats (55%) to disapprove of the Democratic-controlled legislature. Majorities across regions disapprove, and disapproval of the legislature rises as age and income increase.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...Jerry Brown is handling his job as governor of California?</i>	Approve	34%	47%	25%	42%	41%
	Disapprove	24	13	39	23	25
	Don't know	42	40	36	36	34
<i>...the California Legislature is handling its job?</i>	Approve	24	24	14	17	16
	Disapprove	54	55	71	68	70
	Don't know	21	21	15	15	14

Californians’ approval (36%) of their individual state legislators has improved since March 2010 (27%). Likely voters are somewhat more disapproving (50%) than all adults (43%). Disapproval is higher among Republicans (57%) than among independents (42%) or Democrats (41%). Disapproval is highest among residents of the Other Southern California region (48%), Los Angeles (43%), and the Central Valley (42%). San Francisco Bay Area residents are divided, with 36 percent approving and 35 percent disapproving of their state legislators. Californians age 18 to 34 are more likely to approve (46%) than disapprove (31%) of their individual legislators and are more likely than those 35 to 54 (30%) or 55 and older (33%) to approve.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the job that the state legislators representing your assembly and senate districts are doing at this time?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Approve	36%	41%	28%	37%	34%
Disapprove	43	41	57	42	50
Don't know	22	18	15	20	16

STATE BUDGET DEFICIT

California faces a state budget deficit currently estimated at \$26 billion. Two in three California adults (68%) and even more likely voters (83%) say the state budget situation is a big problem. More than two in three across political parties and regions agree. Since January 2008, at least 64 percent of Californians have said that the state budget situation is a big problem. Across racial/ethnic groups, whites (78%) and Asians (75%) are far more likely than Latinos (53%) to say the budget situation is a big problem. The percentage holding this view rises sharply as age, education, and income increase.

“Do you think the state budget situation in California—that is, the balance between government spending and revenues—is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for the people of California today?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Big problem	68%	73%	88%	75%	83%
Somewhat of a problem	24	20	10	21	14
Not a problem	4	3	1	1	2
Don't know	3	4	1	2	1

To deal with the state's budget gap, 38 percent of Californians say a mix of spending cuts and tax increases is needed, and a similar 37 percent say mostly spending cuts are needed. Likely voters are also divided. In January, Californians were slightly more likely to prefer a mix of cuts and taxes (42%) over mostly spending cuts (36%). Today, Republicans by far prefer cuts (62%) over a mix (28%), while Democrats far prefer a mix (50%) over cuts (24%). Independents slightly prefer a mix (42%) to cuts (36%).

“How would you prefer to deal with the state's budget gap—mostly through spending cuts, mostly through tax increases, through a mix of spending cuts and tax increases, or do you think that it is okay for the state to borrow money and run a budget deficit?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Mix of spending cuts and tax increases	38%	50%	28%	42%	41%
Mostly spending cuts	37	24	62	36	40
Mostly tax increases	9	12	4	9	11
Okay to borrow money and run a deficit	7	5	2	4	3
Other	2	1	2	3	2
Don't know	8	8	3	7	3

Governor Brown has proposed a June special election for voters to decide on a tax and fee package that could prevent further state budget cuts. In January, two in three Californians (67%) and likely voters (66%) said the special election was a good idea. Today, the percentage calling it a good idea has dropped to 54 percent among all adults and 51 percent among likely voters. In January, majorities across parties said it was a good idea (73% Democrats, 64% independents, and 55% Republicans). Since then, support has declined, particularly among Republicans (64% Democrats, 57% independents, and 34% Republicans).

STATE BUDGET DEFICIT (CONTINUED)

“Governor Brown has proposed a special election this June for voters to vote on a tax and fee package to prevent additional state budget cuts. In general, do you think the special election is a good idea or bad idea?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Good idea	54%	64%	34%	57%	51%
Bad idea	35	28	57	32	40
Don't know	11	8	9	11	9

Californians (46% favor, 42% oppose) and likely voters (46% favor, 45% oppose) are divided about the proposed special election package. It would extend, for five years, temporary increases in state personal income taxes, the state sales tax, and the vehicle license fee that took effect in 2009. Since January, support has declined 7 points among all adults (from 53% to 46%) and 8 points among likely voters (from 54% to 46%). Fifty-four percent of Democrats support the plan, while 58 percent of Republicans oppose it. Independents are more likely to favor than oppose it (52% to 36%). Support has declined since January among Democrats (65% January, 54% today) and independents (60% January, 52% today), but has remained similar among Republicans (37% January, 34% today). Of those who think the special election is a good idea, 60 percent favor the tax and fee proposal and 32 percent oppose it. Of those who think the special election is a bad idea, 31 percent favor the tax and fee proposal and 61 percent oppose it.

“In a special election, voters would be asked to extend—for five years—temporary increases in state personal income taxes, the state sales tax, and vehicle license fee that went into effect in 2009. Some revenues would be diverted to local governments for schools, public safety, and other services. If voters reject the proposal, additional cuts to services would be made. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?”

		Favor	Oppose	Don't know
All Adults		46%	42%	11%
Party	Democrats	54	36	10
	Republicans	34	58	9
	Independents	52	36	11
Region	Central Valley	44	46	10
	San Francisco Bay Area	53	26	21
	Los Angeles	47	44	9
	Other Southern California	45	47	9
Household Income	Under \$40,000	40	46	14
	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	49	42	10
	\$80,000 or more	51	41	8
Likely Voters		46	45	10

When asked about Governor Brown’s overall proposal to close the state’s budget deficit—about half through spending cuts and about half through voter-approved tax extensions—Californians are slightly more likely to favor (48%) than oppose (41%) the idea. Findings are similar among likely voters (49% favor, 42% oppose). Six in 10 Democrats (60% favor, 30% oppose) favor Brown’s proposal, while six in 10 Republicans (32% favor, 59% oppose) oppose it. Independents are more likely to favor than oppose (51% to 40%). Among those who say a mix of spending cuts and tax increases is needed to deal with the budget gap, 65 percent favor Brown’s proposal.

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSIONS

As states around the country deal with significant budget deficits, employee pensions have been intensely debated. How do Californians view this issue? Nearly half (47%) say the amount that state and local governments spend on public employee pension and retirement systems is a big problem, while 32 percent say it is somewhat of a problem. In January 2005, only 31 percent said the cost of pensions was a big problem. Last January, 41 percent called it a big problem. Today, most likely voters (56%) hold this view. Republicans (67%) are far more likely than Democrats and independents (48% each) to say pension costs are a big problem. The percentage holding this view rises as age and income increase. Among those who are currently public employees, just 26 percent say pension costs are a big problem.

Most Californians (53% should, 39% should not) and likely voters (57% should, 33 percent should not) think that the state government should decrease the pension plans of government employees as it looks for ways to balance the budget. In a February Pew Research Center poll, adults nationwide were more divided on the issue (47% should, 47% should not). In California, Republicans (69%) support decreasing pension plans, as do 55 percent of independents. Democrats are divided (48% decrease, 42% should not decrease). Whites (61%) are more likely than Asians (52%) or Latinos (47%) and men are more likely than women (58% to 49%) to favor decreasing pension plans. Californians with household incomes of \$80,000 or more (64%) are more likely than those making under \$80,000 (50%) to say the state should reduce pensions. A solid majority of public employees are against this idea (28% yes, 62% no).

“As the state government looks for ways to balance the budget this year, do you think the state government should decrease the pension plans of government employees, or not?”

	All Adults	Party			Public Employees
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes, state should	53%	48%	69%	55%	28%
No, state should not	39	42	23	32	62
Don't know	8	11	7	12	10

A much more popular reform proposal is to change the pension system for new public employees from defined benefits to a defined contribution system similar to a 401(k) plan. Seventy-one percent of all adults and 74 percent of likely voters favor this idea. Support among all adults was similar last January (67%), but lower in January 2005 (61%). Strong majorities across parties favor changing the system for new employees, with Republicans (80%) most likely to express support. While more than six in 10 across regions and demographic groups favor this idea, there is some variation. Whites (77%) are the most likely to express support for changing the system, followed by Asians (73%) and Latinos (64%). Californians with at least some college education are more likely than those with a high school degree or less to favor the idea. Those with household incomes above \$40,000 are more likely than those with incomes below \$40,000 to support this idea. Even among current public employees, 56 percent would favor changing the system for new employees.

“Would you favor or oppose changing the pension systems for new public employees from defined benefits to a defined contribution system similar to a 401(k) plan?”

	All Adults	Party			Public Employees
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	71	70	80	72	56
Oppose	16	16	12	17	31
Don't know	13	14	8	11	13

PROPOSITION 13

Majorities of adults (56%) and likely voters (58%) say that Proposition 13, passed by voters in 1978 to limit property taxes, has mostly been a good thing for California; about one in four adults (26%) and likely voters (27%) say it has mostly been a bad thing. In four of five times since February 2003, majorities have called Proposition 13 a good thing; the exception was in May 2005, when a plurality (47%) held this view. Republicans (69%) are much more likely than independents (54%) or Democrats (50%) to say Proposition 13 has been a good thing. Central Valley (65%) and Other Southern California (62%) residents are more likely than San Francisco Bay Area (52%) and Los Angeles residents (49%) to express this view. College graduates are less likely than those without a college degree to call Proposition 13 a good thing. Among homeowners, 63 percent call it a good thing.

“Proposition 13 is the 1978 ballot measure that limits the property tax rate to 1 percent of assessed value at time of purchase and annual tax increases to no more than 2 percent until the property is sold. Overall, do you feel passing Proposition 13 turned out to be mostly a good thing for California or mostly a bad thing?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Mostly a good thing	56%	50%	69%	54%	58%
Mostly a bad thing	26	31	15	32	27
Mixed (volunteered)	5	7	6	5	6
Don't know	12	12	9	9	8

A plurality of Californians (32%) say the property tax limitations imposed by Proposition 13 have had no effect on local government services. Twenty-four percent of Californians say they've had a good effect and 25 percent say they've had a bad effect. Likely voters express similarly mixed views (25% good, 30% bad, 30% no effect). In 1998, Californians were more likely to say Proposition 13 had a good effect on local government services, but this view was held by fewer than four in 10 adult residents (38% September 1998). Across parties today, Republicans (32%) are most likely to say it has had a good effect. Among those who say Proposition 13 has been a good thing for the state, 37 percent say it has had a good effect on local government services and 39 percent say it has had no effect.

Proposition 13 not only limited property tax rates, but it also mandated a two-thirds vote to pass any new local special taxes, which arguably makes it more difficult for local governments to raise revenues. Majorities of all adults (57%) and likely voters (59%) favor this feature of Proposition 13, and a similar 56 percent of all adults expressed support in May 2005. Across parties, at least half favor this feature, although Republicans (67%) and independents (62%) are more likely than Democrats (51%) to do so. Among those who say the Proposition 13 property tax limitations have had a good effect or no effect on local government services, solid majorities favor the two-thirds vote for local special taxes; among those who say the limitations have had a bad effect, a majority oppose this feature (40% favor, 54% oppose).

“Under Proposition 13, a two-thirds vote at the ballot box is required to pass any new local special taxes, such as a local sales tax to fund transportation projects. Do you favor or oppose this feature of Proposition 13?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	57%	51%	67%	62%	59%
Oppose	35	41	28	30	37
Don't know	8	8	5	8	5

LEGISLATIVE TERM LIMITS

In 1990, California voters passed Proposition 140, which limits members of the state legislature to six years in the assembly and eight years in the senate. Solid majorities of Californians (61%) and likely voters (70%) say that term limits are a good thing for California. In eight of the nine times this question has been asked since October 1998, majorities of Californians have said term limits are a good thing for the state. In December 2001, a plurality (45%) also called them a good thing.

While majorities across parties say that term limits are a good thing, Republicans (81%) are the most likely to hold this view, followed by independents (68%) and Democrats (58%). Across regions, residents of the Other Southern California region (67%) are the most positive and Los Angeles residents the least positive (53%) about term limits. Whites (69%) and Asians (61%) are more likely than Latinos (49%) to say term limits are a good thing. College graduates (65%) and those with some college education (77%) are much more likely than those with a high school education or less (47%) to say they are a good thing. Positive views increase with income. Regardless of how they feel about the state legislature or their own state legislators, majorities like term limits.

“The California Legislature has operated under term limits since 1990, meaning that members of the state senate and state assembly are limited in the number of terms they can hold their elected office. Do you think that term limits are a good thing or a bad thing for California, or do they make no difference?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Good thing	61%	58%	81%	68%	70%
Bad thing	10	17	9	11	14
No difference	25	22	9	19	14
Don't know	4	3	2	2	2

Still, some would like to restructure term limits. In response to a proposal to lower the total amount of time served from 14 to 12 years while allowing service in either house or both, 68 percent of Californians and likely voters say this is a good idea. Majorities across parties think restructuring is a good idea, but Republicans (77%) and independents (70%) are more likely than Democrats (57%) to say so. Support is highest in the Other Southern California region (76%) and lowest in the San Francisco Bay Area (53%). More than six in 10 across demographic groups say this is a good idea. An initiative proposing these changes has qualified for the next statewide ballot; the changes would apply to legislators first elected after its passage, while current legislators would continue to be subject to existing term limits. In the February 2008 presidential primary election, voters defeated a similar initiative, Proposition 93 (46% yes, 54% no); the main difference from the current initiative is that Proposition 93 would have allowed current legislators to serve a total of 12 years in their current house regardless of prior service in another house.

“Some people have proposed reducing the total amount of time a person may serve in the state legislature from 14 years to 12 years and allowing a person to serve a total of 12 years either in the assembly, the senate, or a combination of both. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?”

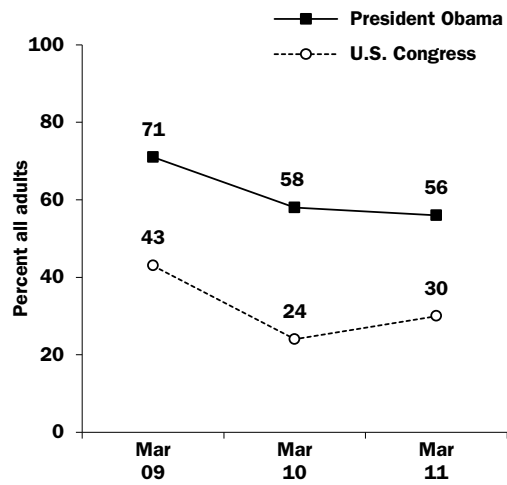
	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Good idea	68%	57%	77%	70%	68%
Bad idea	23	31	15	22	23
Don't know	9	11	8	8	9

NATIONAL ISSUES

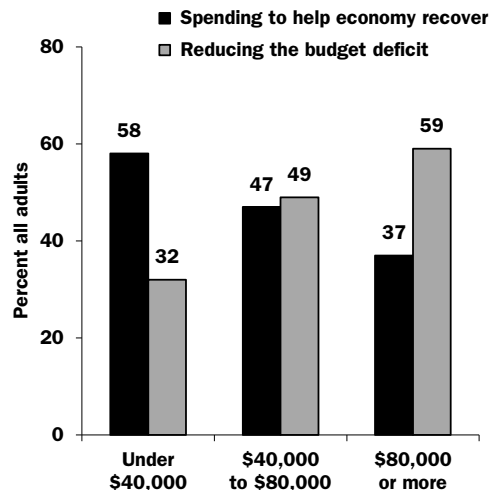
KEY FINDINGS

- Over half of adults and likely voters approve of President Obama's job performance, but majorities disapprove of Congress. Half approve of their own House representative and close to half approve of Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein. *(pages 16, 17)*
- Solid majorities think Congress and the Obama administration are not doing enough to create jobs. Californians are divided on whether reducing the federal deficit is a higher priority than federal spending to help the economy recover. *(page 18)*
- Nearly all Californians and likely voters think the federal budget deficit is a serious problem. Californians say President Obama and the Democrats in Congress are doing a better job than Republicans in efforts to agree on a new federal budget. *(page 19)*
- Most Californians say protecting Medicare and Medicaid from cuts is more important than reducing the federal deficit, while half say deficit reduction is more important than protecting defense spending. *(page 20)*
- Californians have a higher opinion of their local governments than of state or federal government. *(page 21)*
- Two in three Californians support a pathway to citizenship for working illegal immigrants; they favor letting illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children gain legal status if they join the military or go to college. *(page 22)*
- Californians offer mixed views about whether recent protests in Arab countries will lead to peace and stability in the region, but most across party lines say it is not the responsibility of the U.S. to promote democracy around the world. *(page 23)*

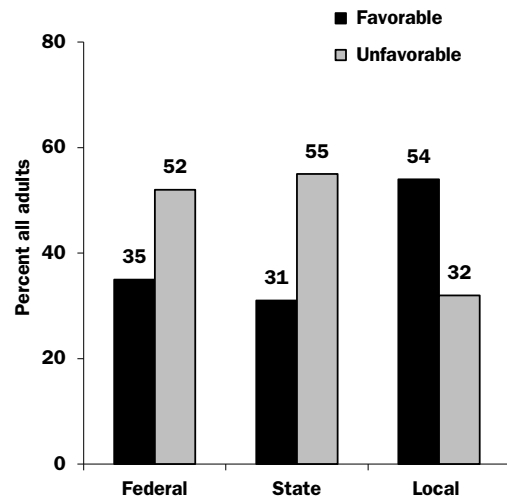
Approval Ratings of Federal Elected Officials



Federal Government Priority, by Income



Impressions of Government



APPROVAL RATINGS OF FEDERAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

With the House of Representatives now controlled by Republicans and rancorous federal budget negotiations underway, what do Californians think of their federal elected officials?

A majority (56%) continue to approve of President Obama's job performance and 38 percent disapprove. Among likely voters, 52 percent approve. Findings among all adults were nearly identical in October 2010 (55%), but have fallen 15 points from early in his term (71% March 2009). In a recent ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, 51 percent of adults nationwide approved of the president and 45 percent disapproved. A large partisan divide exists in the California ratings of the president: 75 percent of Democrats approve, 75 percent of Republicans disapprove. Among independents, 53 percent approve and 44 percent disapprove. Across regions, San Francisco Bay Area (65%) and Los Angeles (62%) residents are more approving than Other Southern California (53%) and Central Valley (44%) residents. Asians (63%) and Latinos (62%) are much more likely than whites (46%) to approve of President Obama.

A different story emerges for Congress: most Californians (58%) and likely voters (69%) disapprove of its job performance and there is bipartisan agreement on that view: at least six in 10 Democrats (61%), Republicans (66%), and independents (68%) disapprove. Among all adults, just 30 percent approve. Last October, 31 percent approved and 64 percent disapproved; majorities have disapproved since September 2009. In the ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, adults nationwide (69% disapprove, 27% approve) were even more disapproving of Congress than Californians. Across regions in California, at least half disapprove and only about three in 10 approve. Latinos (48%) are much more likely to approve of Congress than Asians (29%) and whites (19%). Disapproval of Congress rises with age and income.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...Barack Obama is handling his job as president of the United States?</i>	Approve	56%	75%	20%	53%	52%
	Disapprove	38	19	75	44	44
	Don't know	6	6	4	3	5
<i>...the U.S. Congress is handling its job?</i>	Approve	30	27	23	26	22
	Disapprove	58	61	66	68	69
	Don't know	12	12	11	6	9

Most Californians hold positive views of their local member of the House of Representatives: half (50%) approve and 32 percent disapprove. Among likely voters, 50 percent approve and 37 percent disapprove. Approval is up 7 points among all adults since last September. Since this question was first asked in May 2005, approval of local House representatives has regularly hovered around 50 to 55 percent. Democrats (54%) and independents (52%) are more likely than Republicans (41%) to express approval of their House representative, while about half across regions do so.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way your own representative to the U.S. House of Representatives in Congress is handling his or her job?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Approve	50%	54%	41%	52%	50%
Disapprove	32	28	47	34	37
Don't know	18	18	12	14	13

APPROVAL RATINGS OF CALIFORNIA’S U.S. SENATORS

Forty-five percent of Californians approve of Senator Barbara Boxer, who was elected to her fourth term last November, while 38 percent disapprove and 17 percent are unsure. Among likely voters, an identical 45 percent approve, but 50 percent disapprove and just 5 percent are unsure. Last September, 41 percent of adults and 43 percent of likely voters expressed approval. Historically, Senator Boxer has received approval ratings of under 53 percent among Californians in our surveys, and typically about half say they approve. Last September (41%), March 2008 (41%) and September 2003 (41%) marked her low points.

Across parties, a strong majority of Democrats (67%) approve of Senator Boxer’s job performance, but an even higher percentage of Republicans (78%) disapprove. Independents are divided (41% approve, 46% disapprove). Senator Boxer has higher approval ratings in the San Francisco Bay Area (50%), where she is from, and in Los Angeles (52%) than in the Other Southern California region (42%) or the Central Valley (34%). Latinos (54%) are more likely to approve than Asians (43%) or whites (37%). Women are more likely to approve (47%) than disapprove (32%), while 21 percent are unsure. Men are divided (43% approve, 45% disapprove, 13% unsure).

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Barbara Boxer is handling her job as U.S. senator?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Approve	45%	67%	18%	41%	45%
Disapprove	38	21	78	46	50
Don't know	17	12	4	14	5

Senator Dianne Feinstein receives positive marks for handling her job from about half of all adults (48% approve, 34% disapprove) and likely voters (51% approve, 42% disapprove). Last September, 44 percent of adults approved of Senator Feinstein, matching her record low in March 2008. Typically about half or more say they approve of the way Senator Feinstein is handling her job.

Across parties, seven in 10 Democrats (70%) approve of Senator Feinstein and seven in 10 Republicans (69%) disapprove. More independents approve (50%) than disapprove (33%). While 62 percent of residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (also where Senator Feinstein is from) express approval, fewer approve in Los Angeles (48%), the Other Southern California region (46%), or the Central Valley (35%). Asians (53%) and Latinos (56%) are much more likely than whites (39%) to approve of the senator’s job performance. Women are more likely to approve of Feinstein’s job performance (50%) than disapprove (27%), while men are divided (45% approve, 41% disapprove).

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Dianne Feinstein is handling her job as U.S. senator?”

	All Adults	Party/			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Approve	48%	70%	23%	50%	51%
Disapprove	34	18	69	33	42
Don't know	19	12	8	16	7

U.S. ECONOMIC POLICY

As President Obama and Congress wrestle with the federal budget, a main point of contention has been whether the federal government should spend to help the economy recover or focus on reducing the federal deficit. About half of Californians (48%) say if they were setting priorities, the focus would be on spending to help the economy recover, while a similar 44 percent say reducing the budget deficit should be a higher priority. Likely voters hold contrasting views (36% spending, 58% reducing deficit). Californians hold similarly divided opinions as Americans nationwide, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey (49% reducing deficit, 46% spending).

Partisan differences are clear, with about half of Democrats (53%) preferring spending to help the economy recover, while 73 percent of Republicans and half of independents (53%) place a higher priority on reducing the budget deficit. Residents in Los Angeles (53%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (52%) prefer spending to help the economy recover over deficit reduction, while residents in the Other Southern California region and the Central Valley are more divided. Latinos (64%) prefer a focus on spending, while whites (55%) place a higher priority on reducing the budget deficit; Asians are divided.

“If you were setting priorities for the federal government these days, would you place a higher priority on spending to help the economy recover or a higher priority on reducing the budget deficit?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Spending to help the economy recover	48%	53%	22%	41%	36%
Reducing the budget deficit	44	42	73	53	58
Don't know	7	6	5	7	6

Although Californians might not agree on economic priorities for the federal government, most Californians (62%) and likely voters (64%) think Congress and the Obama administration are not doing enough to help create jobs. One in four say they are doing just enough, while fewer than 10 percent say they are doing more than enough. More than six in 10 Californians said that not enough was being done when we asked this question last year (64% September 2010, 61% March 2010).

More than half across parties, regions, and demographic groups say not enough is being done to help create jobs. Republicans (73%) are more likely than independents (66%) and Democrats (55%) to say not enough is being done. About half of those who approve of President Obama (48%) or of Congress (54%) say not enough is being done to help create jobs; much higher percentages of those who disapprove of President Obama (85%) or Congress (70%) hold this view. A majority of both those who are worried about job loss and those who are not worried say that federal officials are not doing enough. Of those who say deficit reduction is a higher priority than spending to help the economy recover, 65 percent say not enough is being done to create jobs.

“Overall, do you think that Congress and the Obama administration are doing more than enough, just enough, or not enough to help create jobs?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
More than enough	6%	7%	3%	7%	6%
Just enough	26	33	18	23	25
Not enough	62	55	73	66	64
Don't know	5	5	7	4	5

FEDERAL BUDGET DEFICIT

Similar to their perceptions of the state budget (68% big problem, 24% somewhat of a problem), nearly all Californians call the federal budget deficit a very (63%) or somewhat serious (28%) problem for the country. Americans nationwide are even more negative than Californians, according to a January CBS/*New York Times* poll (70% very, 25% somewhat serious).

More than six in 10 across parties think the budget deficit is a very serious problem, but Republicans (82%) are much more likely than independents (66%) or Democrats (64%) to say this. Across regions, negative perceptions are highest among residents in the Central Valley (68%) and the Other Southern California region (67%), followed by residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (60%) and Los Angeles (56%). More than half across demographic groups call the deficit a very serious problem, but some differences do emerge. Whites (72%) are much more likely than Asians (59%) and Latinos (51%) to hold this view. Negative perceptions are higher among adults 55 years or older and among those in households with incomes of \$80,000 or more compared to others. Among those who approve of President Obama, half (53%) call the deficit a very serious problem; 78 percent of those who disapprove of him hold this view.

“How serious a problem do you think the budget deficit is for the country right now?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Very serious	63%	64%	82%	66%	70%
Somewhat serious	28	29	14	26	24
Not too serious	5	4	3	6	4
Not at all serious	2	3	–	1	1
Don't know	2	1	1	1	1

Who do Californians think is doing a better job on current efforts to agree on a new federal budget? Half (48%) say President Obama and the Democrats in Congress; far fewer (25%) say the Republicans in Congress, and 12 percent volunteer that neither is doing a better job. Americans nationally are divided, according to a recent *USA Today*/Gallup poll (39% Obama/Democrats, 42% Republicans).

Partisan differences are evident: two in three Democrats (66%) say Obama and the Democrats are doing the better job and 64 percent of Republicans pick Congressional Republicans. Independents are more likely to choose Obama and the Democrats (43%) over Republicans (28%). More than half of residents in Los Angeles (58%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (55%) say Democrats are doing a better job; four in 10 in the Central Valley (40%) and the Other Southern California region (39%) hold this view. Latinos (56%) and Asians (50%) pick Obama and the Democrats, while whites are divided (38% Obama/Democrats, 33% Republicans).

“Who do you think is doing the better job in the current efforts to agree on a new federal budget: Barack Obama and the Democrats in Congress or the Republicans in Congress?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Barack Obama and the Democrats in Congress	48%	66%	12%	43%	44%
Republicans in Congress	25	7	64	28	31
Both equally (volunteered)	3	4	2	2	3
Neither (volunteered)	12	11	17	14	15
Don't know	12	13	5	12	8

FEDERAL BUDGET DEFICIT (CONTINUED)

As Congress attempts to reduce the budget deficit, spending cuts to major programs are under discussion. When asked about three major areas of spending, Californians hold differing views on which one should be spared from significant budget cuts despite the deficit.

Californians most want to protect Medicare, the federal health program for the elderly, from significant cuts (75%). More than six in 10 across parties—85 percent Democrats, 72 percent independents, and 63 percent Republicans—and more than seven in 10 across regions want to prevent cuts to Medicare. At least seven in 10 across demographic groups hold this view, including about three in four across age groups.

Two in three Californians (67%) also want to protect Medicaid, the federal health program for the poor, but partisan differences emerge: three in four Democrats (77%) and six in 10 independents (62%) want to prevent significant cuts, but half of Republicans (51%) say the deficit problem is more important. Majorities across racial/ethnic groups say it is more important to prevent Medicaid cuts, but Latinos (76%) and Asians (73%) are much more likely than whites (56%) to say cuts should be prevented. Those in households making more than \$80,000 are least likely to say preventing significant Medicaid cuts is the higher priority (72% under \$40,000, 68% \$40,000 to under \$80,000, 59% \$80,000 or more).

Half of Californians think that it is more important to reduce the budget deficit (51%) than to prevent cuts in defense spending, but 40 percent say preventing defense cuts is the higher priority. Independents (57%) and Democrats (54%) prefer to reduce the budget deficit, while Republicans are divided (46% reduce deficit, 49% prevent defense cuts). Residents of the Other Southern California region (56%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (55%) think it is more important to reduce the budget deficit, while those in the Central Valley (48% reduce deficit, 44% prevent cuts) and Los Angeles (45% reduce deficit, 43% prevent defense cuts) are divided. Asians (58%) and whites (55%) think it is more important to reduce the budget deficit, while Latinos are divided (43% reduce deficit, 45% prevent defense cuts). Gender differences also arise, with 57 percent of men saying first reduce the deficit, while women are divided (46% reduce deficit, 43% prevent defense cuts).

Californians are similar to Americans nationwide when it comes to Medicare and Medicaid, according to a January CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll: 81 percent of adults nationwide want to prevent cuts to Medicare and 70 percent want to prevent cuts to Medicaid. Adults nationwide are evenly divided regarding defense spending (50% reduce deficit, 49% prevent program cuts).

“As you may know, Congress may try to cut federal programs in order to reduce the budget deficit. For each of the following programs, please tell me whether you think it is more important to reduce the federal budget deficit, or more important to prevent that program from being significantly cut.”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
How about Medicare—the federal health program for the elderly?	Reduce the budget deficit	21%	13%	32%	25%	21%
	Prevent cuts	75	85	63	72	77
	Don't know	4	2	4	2	3
How about Medicaid—the federal health program for the poor?	Reduce the budget deficit	29	20	51	34	35
	Prevent cuts	67	77	41	62	60
	Don't know	5	3	7	4	5
How about defense spending?	Reduce the budget deficit	51	54	46	57	57
	Prevent cuts	40	36	49	36	38
	Don't know	9	9	4	7	5

PERCEPTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

As part of his budget plan, Governor Brown has proposed devolving certain responsibilities to the local level from the state level. What opinions do Californians have of the federal, state, and local governments? At least half of Californians have unfavorable opinions of the federal and state governments, while a majority have a favorable opinion of their local government.

About one in three Californians (35%) have a favorable impression of the federal government, while 52 percent have an unfavorable view. Majorities of Republicans (78%) and independents (59%) hold unfavorable opinions, while Democrats are divided (42% favorable, 43% unfavorable). Across regions, Californians are more likely to hold an unfavorable than a favorable opinion, but residents of the Other Southern California region (59%) are the most likely to hold negative views followed by residents in the Central Valley (51%), Los Angeles (47%), and the San Francisco Bay Area (46%). Whites (69%) are far more likely than Asians (37%) or Latinos (33%) to hold negative views and U.S.-born residents are twice as likely as immigrants to hold an unfavorable opinion of the federal government (62% to 30%).

Similar to their opinions of the federal government, 31 percent of Californians have a favorable opinion of state government and over half (55%) have an unfavorable opinion. Eight in 10 Republicans (81%), seven in 10 independents (69%), and half of Democrats (49%) have an unfavorable opinion of the state government. Across regions, residents are more likely to hold unfavorable than favorable opinions, with residents in the Other Southern California region (61%) the most likely to hold a negative view, followed by San Francisco Bay Area (55%), Central Valley (51%), and Los Angeles (49%) residents. Once again, whites (68%) are the most likely to hold unfavorable views, followed by Asians (54%) and Latinos (36%). Unfavorable perception levels rise as age, education, and income rise.

By comparison, just over half of Californians (54%) hold favorable opinions of their local government, while 32 percent hold unfavorable views. About half or more across parties, regions, and demographic groups hold a favorable view. Central Valley and Los Angeles residents (57% each) are the most likely to hold favorable views, followed by San Francisco (52%) and Other Southern California (49%) residents. Latinos (61%) and Asians (59%) are more likely than whites (50%) to hold favorable opinions of their local government.

In a February Pew Research Center poll, adults nationwide held similar opinions of the federal government (38% favorable, 57% unfavorable), but held more favorable views of state government (53% favorable, 42% unfavorable) and local government (63% favorable, 32% unfavorable).

“Do you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...the federal government in Washington?</i>	Favorable	35%	42%	18%	34%	31%
	Unfavorable	52	43	78	59	62
	Don't know	13	15	4	7	7
<i>...the state government in Sacramento?</i>	Favorable	31	37	13	22	24
	Unfavorable	55	49	81	69	67
	Don't know	15	14	6	9	9
<i>...your local government?</i>	Favorable	54	56	52	51	56
	Unfavorable	32	31	40	34	35
	Don't know	14	13	8	15	9

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Immigration, although not more important than the economy or the budget deficit in Californians' minds, is an area in which reform ideas are under discussion, some of which gain general approval from Californians. When asked what should happen to most illegal immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years, 65 percent of Californians think that these immigrants should have a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status. Three in 10 (30%) say they should be deported back to their native country. The percentage favoring a pathway to legal status is down 9 points from a high in June 2007 (74%), and is a new low in PPIC Statewide Surveys. Among likely voters, 58 percent say they should have a chance to keep their jobs and 38 percent prefer deportation.

Partisan differences are clear—more than six in 10 Democrats (68%) and independents (62%) think these immigrants should have a chance to keep their jobs, while 55 percent of Republicans think they should be deported back to their native countries. More than half of Californians across demographic groups—and more than six in 10 across regions—say they should have a chance to keep their jobs and apply for legal status but some differences exist. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (86%) are far more likely than Asians and whites (55% each) to hold this view. Eight in 10 of those who have immigrated to the United States think there should be a chance to keep jobs, compared to 58 percent of those born in the United States. Younger and less affluent Californians are more likely than others to say illegal immigrants should have a chance to keep their jobs.

“If you had to choose, what do you think should happen to most illegal immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years? They should be given a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status or they should be deported back to their native country?”

	All Adults	Party			Latinos
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Chance to keep their jobs	65%	68%	41%	62%	86%
Deported back to their native country	30	26	55	32	11
Don't know	5	6	4	6	3

The federal DREAM Act would grant a path to legal status for illegal immigrants who arrived as children, if they join the military or go to college. When asked about the general concept, nearly seven in 10 Californians favor allowing these illegal immigrants to gain legal status; 27 percent oppose this idea. Americans nationwide are less likely to favor this proposal, according to a similar question in a December 2010 Gallup Poll (54% would vote for, 42% would vote against). Among likely voters, 64 percent are in favor and 31 percent are opposed.

Partisan differences are evident here also, with three in four Democrats (77%) and two in three independents (67%) in favor, while Republicans are divided. More than six in 10 across regions and most demographic groups favor the general idea of the DREAM Act. Latinos (87%) are the most likely to be in favor, followed by Asians (64%) and whites (57%). Eight in 10 immigrants express favor; 62 percent of those born in the United States favor the general idea of the DREAM Act.

“Do you favor or oppose a law that would allow illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college?”

	All Adults	Party			Latinos
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	68%	77%	46%	67%	87%
Oppose	27	21	46	30	12
Don't know	4	3	8	3	1

THE MIDDLE EAST

With uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere, how do Californians think the recent protests in Arab countries will impact the chances for peace and stability in that region? A plurality (37%) say they will not make much of a difference, 30 percent say they will increase the chances, and 22 percent say they will decrease the chances of peace and stability in that region. When asked a similar question in a recent NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll, adults nationwide held somewhat similar opinions (31% increase, 28 decrease, 33% not much difference).

Across parties, about one in three say recent protests increase the chances for peace and stability in Arab countries; Democrats (17%) are slightly less likely than independents (23%) or Republicans (26%) to say they decrease the chances. Across regions, pluralities say the protests will make no difference; San Francisco Bay Area (15%) residents are the least likely, and Central Valley (30%) residents the most likely, to say the protests will decrease the chances for peace and stability. A plurality of Latinos (43%) and Asians (42%) say recent protests will make no difference, while whites are divided between the protests making no difference (32%) or increasing the chances (31%) of peace and stability in that region. The perception that the protests will make no difference decreases as education and income rise.

“Will the recent protests in Arab countries increase or decrease the chances for peace and stability in that region, or not make much difference either way?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Increase the chances	30%	33%	30%	33%	33%
Decrease the chances	22	17	26	23	23
Not make much of a difference	37	36	34	34	31
Too early to tell (volunteered)	3	4	4	4	5
Don't know	9	10	6	5	8

Although Californians may be divided on the impact of recent protests on peace and stability in Arab countries, solid majorities (64%) think that the United States does not have a responsibility to actively promote democracy around the world. Views of Californians are almost identical to those of adults nationwide in a recent CBS News poll (28% does, 63% does not).

More than six in 10 across parties agree that the U.S. does not have a responsibility to actively promote democracy around the world. Majorities across regions agree, with Central Valley (73%) residents the most likely, and San Francisco Bay Area (58%) residents the least likely, to hold this view. Whites (69%) are more likely than Latinos (60%) and Asians (53%) to think the U.S. does not have a responsibility to actively promote democracy around the world.

“Do you think the U.S. has a responsibility to actively promote democracy around the world, or is that not the responsibility of the U.S.?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Does	28%	23%	31%	27%	26%
Does not	64	69	61	67	66
Depends (volunteered)	4	6	4	5	6
Don't know	4	2	4	1	2

REGIONAL MAP



METHODOLOGY

The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, president and CEO and survey director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with assistance from Dean Bonner, project manager for this survey, and survey research associates Sonja Petek and Jui Shrestha. The *Californians and Their Government* series is supported with funding from The James Irvine Foundation. We benefit from discussions with PPIC staff, foundation staff, and other policy experts, but the methods, questions, and content of this report were determined solely by Mark Baldassare and the survey staff.

Findings in this report are based on a survey of 2,000 California adult residents, including 1,600 interviewed on landline telephones and 400 interviewed on cell phones. Interviewing took place on weekday nights and weekend days between March 8 and 15, 2011. Interviews took an average of 19 minutes to complete.

Landline interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted numbers were called. All landline telephone exchanges in California were eligible for selection and the sample telephone numbers were called as many as six times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (age 18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender.

Cell phone interviews were included in this survey to account for the growing number of Californians who use them. These interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of cell phone numbers. All cell phone numbers with California area codes were eligible for selection and the sample telephone numbers were called as many as eight times to increase the likelihood of reaching an eligible respondent. Once a cell phone user was reached, it was verified that this person was age 18 or older, a resident of California, and in a safe place to continue the survey (e.g., not driving). Cell phone respondents were offered a small reimbursement to help defray the potential cost of the call. Cell phone interviews were conducted with adults who have cell phone service only and with those who have both cell phone and landline service in the household.

Landline and cell phone interviewing with live interviewers was conducted in English and Spanish according to respondents’ preferences. Accent on Languages, Inc. translated the survey into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever. Abt SRBI Inc. conducted the telephone interviewing.

With assistance from Abt SRBI we used recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2006–2008 American Community Survey (ACS) for California to compare certain demographic characteristics of the survey sample—region, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education—with the characteristics of California’s adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the ACS figures. Abt SRBI used data from the 2008 National Health Interview Survey and data from the 2006–2008 ACS for California both to estimate landline and cell phone service in California and to compare the data against landline and cell phone service reported in this survey. We also used voter registration data from the California Secretary of State to compare the party registration of registered voters in our sample to party registration in the state. The landline and cell phone samples were then integrated using a frame integration weight, while sample balancing adjusted for any differences across regional, age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, telephone service, and party registration groups.

The sampling error, taking design effects from weighting into consideration, is ± 2.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the total sample of 2,000 adults. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2.8 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California

were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger: For the 1,328 registered voters, it is ± 3.7 percent; for the 935 likely voters, it is ± 4.2 percent. Sampling error is only one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

We present results for four geographic regions, accounting for approximately 90 percent of the state population. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “San Francisco Bay Area” includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. “Los Angeles” refers to Los Angeles County, and “Other Southern California” includes Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. Residents from other geographic areas are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes for these less populated areas are not large enough to report separately.

We present specific results for non-Hispanic whites and for Latinos, who account for about a third of the state’s adult population and who constitute one of the fastest growing voter groups. We also present specific results for Asians, who represent about 13 percent of the state’s adult population. Residents of other racial/ethnic groups—such as blacks and Native Americans—are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes for these groups are not large enough for separate analysis. We compare the opinions of registered Democrats, Republicans, and independents (those registered as “decline to state”). We also analyze the responses of likely voters—so designated by their responses to survey questions on voter registration, past voting, and current interest in politics.

The percentages presented in the report tables and in the questionnaire may not add to 100 due to rounding.

We compare current PPIC Statewide Survey results to those in our earlier surveys and to those in national surveys by CBS News, CBS News/*New York Times*, CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, Gallup, NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, the Pew Research Center, and *USA Today*/Gallup. Additional details about our methodology can be found at <http://www.ppic.org/content/other/SurveyMethodology.pdf> and are available upon request through surveys@ppic.org.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

CALIFORNIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT

March 8–15, 2011

2,000 California Adult Residents:
English, Spanish

MARGIN OF ERROR $\pm 2.8\%$ AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE
PERCENTAGES MAY NOT ADD TO 100 DUE TO ROUNDING

1. First, thinking about the state as a whole, what do you think is the most important issue facing people in California today?

[code, don't read]
53% jobs, economy
14 state budget, deficit, taxes
10 education, schools
4 gas prices
3 immigration, illegal immigration
2 health care, health costs
2 crime, gangs, drugs
10 other
2 don't know
2. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Jerry Brown is handling his job as governor of California?
34% approve
24 disapprove
42 don't know
3. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?
24% approve
54 disapprove
21 don't know
4. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the job that the state legislators representing your assembly and senate districts are doing at this time?
36% approve
43 disapprove
22 don't know
5. Do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?
31% right direction
59 wrong direction
11 don't know
6. Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?
30% good times
61 bad times
8 don't know
7. Would you say that California is in an economic recession, or not? (*if yes:* Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?)
47% yes, serious recession
28 yes, moderate recession
8 yes, mild recession
12 no
5 don't know
8. Are you concerned that you or someone in your family will lose their job in the next year, or not? (*if yes:* Are you very concerned or somewhat concerned?)
29% yes, very concerned
15 yes, somewhat
47 no
8 have lost job already (*volunteered*)
1 don't know

9. Next, do you think the state budget situation in California—that is, the balance between government spending and revenues—is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for the people of California today?

- 68% big problem
- 24 somewhat of a problem
- 4 not a problem
- 3 don't know

10. As you may know, the state government currently has an annual budget of around \$85 billion and faces a multibillion-dollar gap between spending and revenues. How would you prefer to deal with the state's budget gap—mostly through spending cuts, mostly through tax increases, through a mix of spending cuts and tax increases, or do you think that it is okay for the state to borrow money and run a budget deficit?

- 37% mostly through spending cuts
- 9 mostly through tax increases
- 38 through a mix of spending cuts and tax increases
- 7 okay to borrow money and run a budget deficit
- 2 other (*specify*)
- 8 don't know

[question 11 not asked]

12. Governor Brown has proposed a special election this June for voters to vote on a tax and fee package to prevent additional state budget cuts. In general, do you think the special election is a good idea or bad idea?

- 54% good idea
- 35 bad idea
- 11 don't know

[rotate questions 13 and 14]

13. In a special election, voters would be asked to extend—for five years—temporary increases in state personal income taxes, the state sales tax, and vehicle license fee that went into effect in 2009. Some revenues would be diverted to local governments for schools, public safety, and other services. If voters reject the proposal, additional cuts to services would be made. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?

- 46% favor
- 42 oppose
- 11 don't know

14. Governor Brown proposes to close the \$25 billion state budget deficit with the following plan—about half through spending cuts to most state agencies and about half through the extension of temporary tax increases. In general, do you favor or oppose the governor's budget plan?

- 48% favor
- 41 oppose
- 11 don't know

15. At this time, how much of a problem for state and local government budgets is the amount of money that is being spent on their public employee pension or retirement systems? Is this a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in California today?

- 47% big problem
- 32 somewhat of a problem
- 12 not a problem
- 8 don't know

16. As the state government looks for ways to balance the budget this year, do you think the state government should decrease the pension plans of government employees, or not?

- 53% yes, state should
- 39 no, state should not
- 8 don't know

17. Would you favor or oppose changing the pension systems for new public employees from defined benefits to a defined contribution system similar to a 401(k) plan?

- 71% favor
- 16 oppose
- 13 don't know

18. Next, Proposition 13 is the 1978 ballot measure that limits the property tax rate to 1 percent of assessed value at time of purchase and annual tax increases to no more than 2 percent until the property is sold. Overall, do you feel passing Proposition 13 turned out to be mostly a good thing for California or mostly a bad thing?

- 56% mostly a good thing
- 26 mostly a bad thing
- 5 mixed (*volunteered*)
- 12 don't know

19. And, overall, do you think the property tax limitations imposed by Proposition 13 have had a good effect or a bad effect or no effect on local government services provided to residents in the state of California?

- 24% good effect
- 25 bad effect
- 32 no effect
- 18 don't know

20. Under Proposition 13, a two-thirds vote at the ballot box is required to pass any new local special taxes, such as a local sales tax to fund transportation projects. Do you favor or oppose this feature of Proposition 13?

- 57% favor
- 35 oppose
- 8 don't know

21. On another topic, the California Legislature has operated under term limits since 1990, meaning that members of the state senate and state assembly are limited in the number of terms they can hold their elected office. Do you think that term limits are a good thing or a bad thing for California, or do they make no difference?

- 61% good thing
- 10 bad thing
- 25 no difference
- 4 don't know

22. Some people have proposed reducing the total amount of time a person may serve in the state legislature from 14 years to 12 years and allowing a person to serve a total of 12 years either in the assembly, the senate, or a combination of both. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?

- 68% good idea
- 23 bad idea
- 9 don't know

23. Changing topics, overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Barack Obama is handling his job as president of the United States?

- 56% approve
- 38 disapprove
- 6 don't know

[rotate questions 24 and 25]

24. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Dianne Feinstein is handling her job as U.S. Senator?

- 48% approve
- 34 disapprove
- 19 don't know

25. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Barbara Boxer is handling her job as U.S. Senator?

- 45% approve
- 38 disapprove
- 17 don't know

26. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Congress is handling its job?

- 30% approve
- 58 disapprove
- 12 don't know

27. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way your own representative to the U.S. House of Representatives in Congress is handling his or her job?

- 50% approve
- 32 disapprove
- 18 don't know

[question 28 not asked]

29. Overall, do you think that **[rotate]** [1] Congress **[and]** [2] the Obama administration are doing more than enough, just enough, or not enough to help create jobs?

- 6% more than enough
- 26 just enough
- 62 not enough
- 5 don't know

30. If you were setting priorities for the federal government these days, would you place **[rotate]** [1] a higher priority on spending to help the economy recover **[or]** [2] a higher priority on reducing the budget deficit?

- 48% spending to help the economy recover
- 44 reducing the budget deficit
- 7 don't know

31. How serious a problem do you think the budget deficit is for the country right now—very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious?

- 63% very serious
- 28 somewhat serious
- 5 not too serious
- 2 not at all serious
- 2 don't know

32. Who do you think is doing the better job in the current efforts to agree on a new federal budget: **[rotate]** [1] Barack Obama and the Democrats in Congress, **[or]** [2] the Republicans in Congress?

- 48% Obama and the Democrats
- 25 Republicans in Congress
- 3 both equally (*volunteered*)
- 12 neither (*volunteered*)
- 12 don't know

As you may know, Congress may try to cut federal programs in order to reduce the budget deficit. For each of the following programs, please tell me whether you think it is more important to reduce the federal budget deficit, or more important to prevent that program from being significantly cut.

[rotate questions 33 to 35]

33. How about Medicare—the federal health program for the elderly?

- 21% reduce the deficit
- 75 prevent significant cuts
- 4 don't know

34. How about defense spending?

- 51% reduce the deficit
- 40 prevent significant cuts
- 9 don't know

35. How about Medicaid—the federal health program for the poor?

- 29% reduce the deficit
- 67 prevent significant cuts
- 5 don't know

[question 36 not asked]

37. If you had to choose, what do you think should happen to most illegal immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years? **[rotate]** [1] They should be given a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status **[or]** [2] They should be deported back to their native country?

- 65% chance to keep their jobs
- 30 deported back to their native country
- 5 don't know

38. Do you favor or oppose a law that would allow illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college?

- 68% favor
- 27 oppose
- 4 don't know

Changing topics,

[rotate order of questions 39 to 41]

39. Do you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of the federal government in Washington?

- 35% favorable
- 52 unfavorable
- 13 don't know

40. Do you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of the state government in Sacramento?

- 31% favorable
- 55 unfavorable
- 15 don't know

41. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of your local government?

- 54% favorable
- 32 unfavorable
- 14 don't know

[question 42 not asked]

43. On another topic, will the recent protests in Arab countries increase or decrease the chances for peace and stability in that region, or not make much difference either way?

- 30% increase the chances
- 22 decrease the chances
- 37 not make much of a difference
- 3 too early to tell (*volunteered*)
- 9 don't know

44. Do you think the U.S. has a responsibility to actively promote democracy around the world, or is that not the responsibility of the U.S.?

- 28% does
- 64 does not
- 4 depends (*volunteered*)
- 4 don't know

45. Next, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote in California?

- 67% yes [*ask q45a*]
- 33 no [*skip to q46b*]

45a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or are you registered as a decline-to-state or independent voter?

- 45% Democrat [*ask q46*]
- 31 Republican [*skip to q46a*]
- 4 another party [*specify*] [*skip to q47*]
- 21 decline-to-state or independent [*skip to q46b*]

46. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?

- 49% strong
- 48 not very strong
- 3 don't know

[skip to q47]

46a. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

- 49% strong
- 48 not very strong
- 3 don't know

[skip to q47]

46b. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?

- 21% Republican Party
- 48 Democratic Party
- 25 neither (*volunteered*)
- 6 don't know

47. Next, would you consider yourself to be politically:

[read list, rotate order top to bottom]

- 10% very liberal
- 17 somewhat liberal
- 30 middle-of-the-road
- 23 somewhat conservative
- 14 very conservative
- 5 don't know

48. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics?

- 21% great deal
- 38 fair amount
- 32 only a little
- 8 none
- 1 don't know

[d1-d17: demographic questions]

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The institute's research focuses on the underlying forces shaping California's future, cutting across a wide range of public policy concerns, including economic development, education, environment and resources, governance, population, public finance, and social and health policy.

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Mark Baldassare is President and Chief Executive Officer of PPIC.

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