

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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**LARGE MAJORITY FAVORS THE  
HEALTH CARE REFORM PACKAGE  
MAKING ITS WAY THROUGH THE  
LEGISLATURE. SUPPORT FOR \$2 PER  
PACK CIGARETTE TAX HIKE TO HELP  
PAY FOR IT.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

By a nearly three to one margin (64% to 23%) California voters are inclined to favor a major health care reform plan backed by Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Democratic Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, which is now making its way through the state legislature. A two to one majority (63% to 33%) also supports the state increasing cigarette taxes by \$2 per pack to help pay for it.

These findings come from the latest *Field Poll*, conducted December 10-17 among a random sample of 1,283 registered voters statewide.

Earlier this week the state Assembly approved the broad outlines of the plan, which must now go to the state Senate. If it clears the Senate, its major tax elements must be approved by voters, most likely in the November 2008 election.

A summary of the multi-faceted health reform proposal was presented to the cross-section of the 1,283 registered voters included in the latest survey. That summary was worded as follows:

*"The broad outlines of the reforms being proposed call for making changes within the framework of the current health insurance system. Those who currently have insurance could retain their same coverage. Those who do not have insurance would be required to obtain a minimum level of coverage from either an employer, government agency, or by paying for it themselves. The state would subsidize the costs of insurance for low income people. Middle income families would receive tax credits if they need to buy their insurance in the open market. Insurance companies would be required to offer coverage to anyone without regard to health condition. Most employers would be required to offer health insurance to their employees or pay into a state fund."*

In this setting, nearly two in three voters (64%) say they favor the package either strongly (30%) or somewhat (34%). This compares to 23% who are opposed (11% strongly and 12% somewhat). About one in eight (13%) have no opinion.

Seventy-four percent of Democrats favor the plan, 38% strongly and 36% somewhat. Among non-partisans, 59% are inclined to be supportive - 27% strongly and 32% somewhat. A majority of Republicans are also in favor, but to a somewhat smaller degree. Slightly more than one-half (52%) of GOP voters are supportive either strongly (21%) or somewhat (31%), while 34% were opposed.

The differences observed across the other major regional and demographic subgroups of the state's voting population are relatively small, with varying majorities across all subgroups supporting the package.

**Table 1**  
**Voter opinions about the proposed health reform package**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b>Favor strongly</b>	<b>Favor somewhat</b>	<b>Oppose somewhat</b>	<b>Oppose strongly</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Party</b>					
(.42) Democrats	38%	36	9	7	10
(.34) Republicans	21%	31	16	18	14
(.24) Non-partisans/others	27%	34	13	9	17
<b>Region</b>					
(.25) Los Angeles County	34%	33	8	9	16
(.09) San Diego County	29%	31	15	17	8
(.10) Orange County	22%	32	20	14	12
(.14) Other Southern California	28%	34	11	13	14
(.16) Central Valley	26%	36	14	12	12
(.21) San Francisco Bay Area	32%	36	11	9	12
(.05) Other Northern California*	29%	36	12	9	14
<b>Gender</b>					
(.47) Male	26%	35	13	13	13
(.53) Female	32%	33	11	10	14
<b>Age</b>					
(.15) 18-29	26%	41	11	9	13
(.18) 30-39	30%	38	10	9	13
(.20) 40-49	31%	33	13	12	11
(.28) 50-64	31%	34	13	12	10
(.19) 65 or older	28%	27	13	14	18
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>					
(.64) White non-Hispanic	26%	36	13	12	13
(.24) Latino	36%	30	11	10	13
(.05) African-American*	40%	28	7	13	12
(.07) Asian/other	30%	32	15	8	15
<b>Household income</b>					
(.10) Less than \$20,000	42%	27	10	6	15
(.20) \$20,000 - \$39,999	37%	31	12	8	12
(.29) \$40,000 - \$79,999	29%	32	14	12	13
(.41) \$80,000 or more	24%	43	13	12	8
<b>Attention paid to health reform efforts</b>					
(.15) Following very closely	43%	26	8	15	8
(.41) Following somewhat closely	31%	37	12	10	10
(.30) Following not too closely	25%	34	14	10	17
(.13) Following not at all closely	21%	34	13	13	19

\* Small sample base.

**Reasons offered for favoring the health reform package**

Voters who said they were inclined to favor the proposal were asked to state in their own words their reasons for doing so. Replies were then coded into general categories of response. The three most frequently cited reasons for favoring the health package are:

- “everyone needs insurance/ you could get wiped out without it” (38%)
- “something needs to be done/ the system is broken, needs to be changed” (19%)
- “it will get more people insured, broadens coverage to more people, gets us closer to universal coverage" (16%)

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**Table 2a**  
**Volunteered reasons for favoring the health reform package**  
**(among voters favoring the health reform proposal)**

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Everyone needs insurance/you could get wiped out without insurance	38%
Something needs to be done/the system is broken/needs to be changed	19
It gets more people insured/broadens coverage/ gets us closer to universal coverage for everyone	16
Will help low income, poor people get insurance	7
Encourages more employers to cover their workers/employers should offer health benefits	5
It would help me/makes my coverage more affordable	5
It will reduce costs, save money in the long run/ costs more if you are paying for people who aren't covered	4
It keeps our market-based system in place/oppose government-provided care	2
Current system is not fair because we end up paying for those who currently don't have coverage	1
Other reasons (less than 1% each)	5
Don't know	10

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*(Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)*

**Reasons for opposing the health reform package**

The main reasons volunteered by opponents of the health reform package are:

- “too much state involvement, oppose socialized medicine, not fair to taxpayers” (26%)
- “people shouldn’t be forced to get insurance” (15%)
- “it puts too much of a burden on small business, employers won’t be able to afford it” (11%)

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**Table 2b**  
**Volunteered reasons for opposing the health reform package**  
**(among voters opposing the health reform proposal)**

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Too much state involvement/oppose socialized medicine/not fair to taxpayers	26%
People shouldn't be forced to get insurance/oppose mandating insurance	15
Too much of a burden on small business/many employers wouldn't be able to afford it/ties the hands of business	11
Too many still won't be able to afford the insurance/not fair to those forced to buy insurance	9
Doesn't go far enough/a band-aid approach/prefer single-payer system/make it more like Canada	8
Who's going to pay/skeptical about how it will be funded	8
Oppose giving state-funded insurance to illegal immigrants	4
My insurance costs will go up	1
Other reasons (less than 1% each)	10
Don't know	18

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*(Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)*

**Reactions to tax proposals to help fund the health care proposal**

The Field Poll also tested voter reaction to four tax alternatives that had been proposed as ways for the state to help pay for health reform package.

Of the four, the one that receives a majority of voter support is the proposal to increase state cigarette taxes by \$2 per pack. Statewide, nearly two in three voters (63%) favor this idea, 50% strongly. Just one in three voters (33%) are opposed.

Slightly more voters also support (47%) than oppose (41%) the idea of having the state continue operating the state lottery but issuing bonds against its future proceeds, with the proceeds devoted to health care. The idea of leasing the operations of the state lottery to a private company and using the proceeds for health care is narrowly opposed 46% to 42%.

Generating the strongest opposition is the proposal to increase the state sales tax by one cent. Half of the state's registered voters oppose this idea, 40% strongly. This compares to 46% who favor this idea.

**Table 3**  
**Voter opinions of four state tax proposals to help pay**  
**for the proposed health reform package**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b><u>Favor strongly</u></b>	<b><u>Favor somewhat</u></b>	<b><u>Oppose somewhat</u></b>	<b><u>Oppose strongly</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
Increase cigarette taxes by \$2 per pack	50%	13	8	25	4
Have state continue operating the lottery but issue bonds against its future proceeds and use the proceeds for health care	23%	24	15	26	12
Increase state sales taxes by one cent	23%	23	10	40	4
Lease the operations of state lottery to a private company and use the proceeds for health care	20%	22	14	32	12

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 1,283 registered voters in California, including 543 Democrats, 439 Republicans and 301 voters registered as decline to state or with another party.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish December 10-17, 2007. Up to eight attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the results were weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depend on sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of 1,283 registered voters is +/- 2.9 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (percentages around 10% or around 90%) have a smaller margin of error. While there are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error, the overall design and execution of the survey minimized the potential for these other sources of error. The maximum sampling error will be larger for analyses based on subgroups of the overall sample.

### **Questions Asked**

How closely have you been following news about the governor's and state legislature's efforts to reform California's health care system – very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?

The broad outlines of the reforms being proposed call for making changes within the framework of the current health insurance system. Those who currently have insurance could retain their same coverage. Those who do not have insurance would be required to obtain a minimum level of coverage from either an employer, government agency, or by paying for it themselves. The state would subsidize the costs of insurance for low income people. Middle income families would receive tax credits if they need to buy their insurance in the open market. Insurance companies would be required to offer coverage to anyone without regard to health condition. Most employers would be required to offer health insurance to their employees or pay into a state fund. Generally speaking, do you favor strongly, favor somewhat, oppose somewhat or oppose strongly this proposed health reform package?

(IF FAVOR:) Why do you favor the proposed health reform package?

(IF OPPOSE:) Why do you oppose the proposed health reform package?

Several funding sources have been suggested as ways to help pay for this proposed health reform package. For each funding source I read, please tell me whether you favor it strongly, favor it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or oppose it strongly. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Do you favor this proposal strongly, favor it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or oppose it strongly as a way to help fund this proposed health reform package? (SEE RELEASE FOR ITEMS READ)