



October 7th Special Election in San Diego County

The Recall

Gray Davis continues to be in serious trouble here in San Diego County as 58.5% say they will vote to remove him from office. The fact that 53% say they “definitely” will vote to recall him apparently seals Davis’ fate. Only 29% say they will vote no to retain Davis (24% definitely) and another 10% are unsure.

But What if Everyone Voted?

We also asked those who 11% who said they are not registered to vote how they would mark their ballot if they could go to the polls. Here the Governor does significantly better. Forty-two percent say they would vote to oust Davis while one-third say they would vote against the recall. This is certainly not a vote of confidence from non-voters, but it would be a boost to Davis if they registered and voted. [dbl hor bar: recall among voters, recall among all]

The Horse Race to Replace

With exactly a month until California’s historic recall election, movie actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, receives 23% of the vote while Democrat Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante is close behind at 21%. However, Schwarzenegger’s lead over Bustamante increases significantly to 25% to 18% when those who are “absolutely certain” they will vote are isolated. Republican State Senator Tom McClintock gets 16% and actually surpasses Bustamante’s vote among absolutely certain voters. Republican businessman Peter Ueberroth is at 5%. At 8%, the other 130 candidates receive more support than Ueberroth and newspaper columnist Arianna Huffington (1.3%) combined.

Twenty-one percent are undecided so San Diego County is largely up-for-grabs among the frontrunners. Even 19% of those who are certain they will cast a ballot are uncertain who they will cast it for. Interestingly, 3% who say they will vote in the recall election state that they will not vote for Davis' replacement. [paired hor bars: major candidates (not Huffington) all voters, certain voters]

Very High Interest

Despite cries that California is being made a laughingstock by even holding a recall election, voters are more enthused about this election than most that are regularly scheduled. Seventy-percent say that they are "absolutely certain" to vote in the October 7th special election. Only 2% say they will definitely not vote. Those who are certain to vote tend to be in the 40 to 70 year age range, white (75% of the likely electorate is white), come from all income levels, and, most importantly, are disproportionately Republican and conservative. If the disparate energy levels continue through election day, it will be very difficult for Democrats to catch up to Republicans. [hor bar: turnout w/selected demos attached]

Strength of Support

Sixty-one percent say they are definite about who they would choose as a replacement for Davis. Bustamante claims slightly more "definite" voters than Schwarzenegger. But in a boost for Schwarzenegger, McClintock's supporters may be acknowledging their candidate's potential for splitting the vote and sending a Democrat back to the Governor's mansion. McClintock's supporters are more likely to fall into the "probable" category indicating they may abandon him if Schwarzenegger ultimately needs their vote. Similarly, both Uebberoth and Huffington's support is weaker than the two front-runners'. [hor bars: very simple, just a bar of those "definitely" voting for a major candidate)

Is McClintock Hurting the Terminator?

There are many potential “keys” to success for the candidates. Probably the most important one for Schwarzenegger is the challenge McClintock is mounting from the right. McClintock is clearly siphoning some conservative Republican votes from Schwarzenegger. One-third of very conservative voters and 16% of moderate conservatives are voting for McClintock. On the other hand, Bustamante has a relatively free ride on the left with Huffington’s independent campaign gaining no traction. In fact, Bustamante looks like McClintock’s stronger opposite: very strong support from very liberal voters, solid support from moderate liberals but modest to no support from the rest of the ideological spectrum. It is Schwarzenegger who bridges the ideological divide by capturing significant support from very liberal voters as well as – almost unbelievably – very conservative voters. [hor bars: support for Schwarzenegger/Bustamante/McClintock by ideology]

Hispanics the Key for Davis and Bustamante?

One area to which pundits seem riveted is ethnicity and, in particular, whether Hispanic voters will be a substantial factor for Bustamante and, hence, to Davis. Our data show that, as far as San Diego County’s electorate is concerned, Davis is not getting much help from Hispanics. True, Hispanics display less support for the recall than non-Hispanics, but 51% support removing Davis while 40% would vote to retain him. [Bar w/line: recall by ethnicity]

In reality the race breaks along classic party and ideological lines. Republicans are voting overwhelmingly for the recall while Democrats support their Governor, though they are not nearly as united. Conservatives are generally voting to remove Davis while – in a very scary development for Davis -- liberals are *split* on the recall. If these patterns hold statewide, there is no way Davis can survive. [bar w/line: recall by ideo]

In the replacement race Bustamante takes 49% of the Hispanic vote but

Schwarzenegger manages to pull in 27%. Hispanics are clearly not a monolithic voting block in this race. [hor bars: support for Schwarzenegger/Bustamante by ethnicity]

Proposition 54

At this point, proposition 54 is ahead by a substantial margin with 48% voting “yes” (35% definitely) and 29% voting “no” (17% definitely). With 24% unsure how they would vote at this time, it’s clear that this proposition is taking a back seat to the more intense recall fight. Proposition 54 would ban the state from collecting personal ethnic or racial data. [dbl hor bar: prop 54 among voters, prop 54 among all]

The Racial Component

As in the recall and replacement questions, Hispanic voters defy easy categorization. Thirty-five percent say they will vote for proposition 54 (27% definite) while 41% say they will vote against it (27% definite). Hispanics are clearly less likely to support the proposition than whites, but, again, they are not voting together in lock-step. African-Americans, native-Americans and Asians follow similar voting patterns. [hor bars: prop 54 by whites/Hispanics/others]

How the KPBS/Competitive Edge Research Poll Was Conducted

The survey was conducted by professional telephone interviewers on September 6th and 7th and contains 401 responses. Qualified respondents were limited to adults residing in San Diego County. A blended sampling technique, which combines listed and random digit dial (RDD) sampling methodologies, was used. It gives every County resident an equal chance of participating while increasing the accuracy of the voter data. The RDD sample was provided by Scientific Telephone Samples, Inc., and the listed sample was provided by Competitive Edge.

Verification procedures were followed and no surveys were rejected in the process. Editing, coding, computer processing and tabulation of the data were done at Competitive Edge's office in San Diego. The computer tabulations were produced using SPSSPC+ version 11.0, a statistical package copyrighted by SPSS, Inc.

The confidence level associated with samples of this type is such that, with a question where the respondents answer 50% "yes" and 50% "no," 95% of the time the results are within plus or minus 4.9% of the *true value*, where true value refers to the results obtained if it were possible to interview every possible qualified respondent. The degree of error is reduced when responses have larger (e.g. 60%-40%, 70%-30%, etc.) percentage differences. Conversely, the margin of error is increased somewhat when a subset of the entire 401 responses is analyzed. The maximum margin of sampling error for the countywide subset of 350 voters is 5.2%.