



PUBLIC OPINION
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*Opinion Research &
Public Policy Analysis*

TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Results of Statewide Voter Survey

DATE: January 26, 2009

The bipartisan polling team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R) recently partnered to complete a statewide survey of California voters on issues related to environmental protections in California.¹ The results confirm that voters are highly concerned about the economy and the state budget deficit. But they also make clear that even in economic hard times, **California voters remain firmly committed to protecting the state's environment.** Roughly two-thirds of voters maintain that a strong economy and a clean environment can go hand-in hand; that California's current environmental laws should be strengthened or better enforced; and that proposals to weaken environmental laws should be kept separate from plans to address the state's budget deficits. By sizable margins, California voters reject a variety of specific proposals to weaken environmental laws – particularly proposals to allow increased pollution from diesel engines and pesticides. Instead, voters back investments in public works that will support clean energy industries and prevent future environmental or traffic problems.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

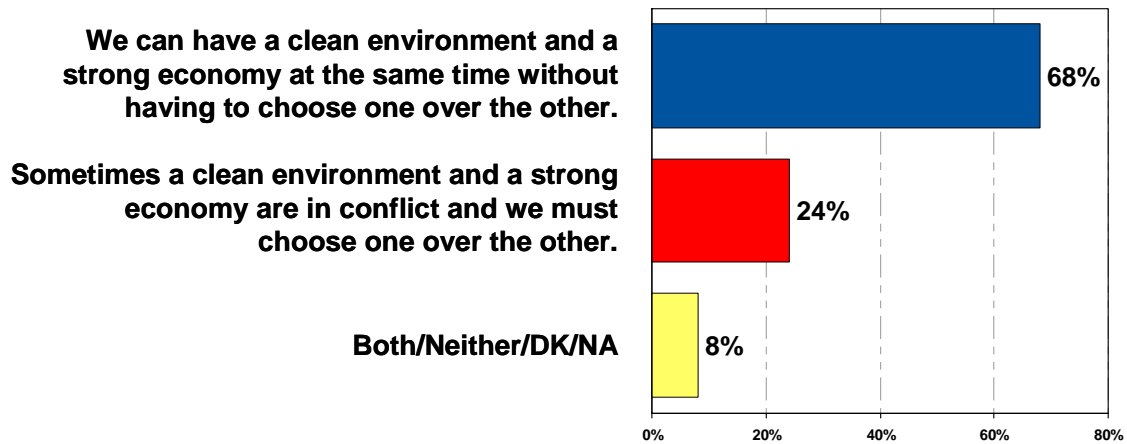
- **Voters rank the economy and the state budget deficit among the top problems facing California, but also express concern about a variety of environmental issues.** Voters are highly concerned about the economy and the state budget deficit – nearly nine voters in ten (89%) rate each as an “extremely” or “very serious” problem. At the same time, solid majorities are also concerned about a variety of environmental issues – including the state's dependence on oil (71%), air pollution (59%), and global warming (53%). Only a minority

¹ **Methodology:** From January 22-25, 2009, FMM&A and POS completed 800 telephone interviews with registered voters in California who are likely to cast ballots in the November 2010 general election. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 3.5%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be larger.

of voters (40%), however, perceive that there is a problem with an excess of environmental regulations.

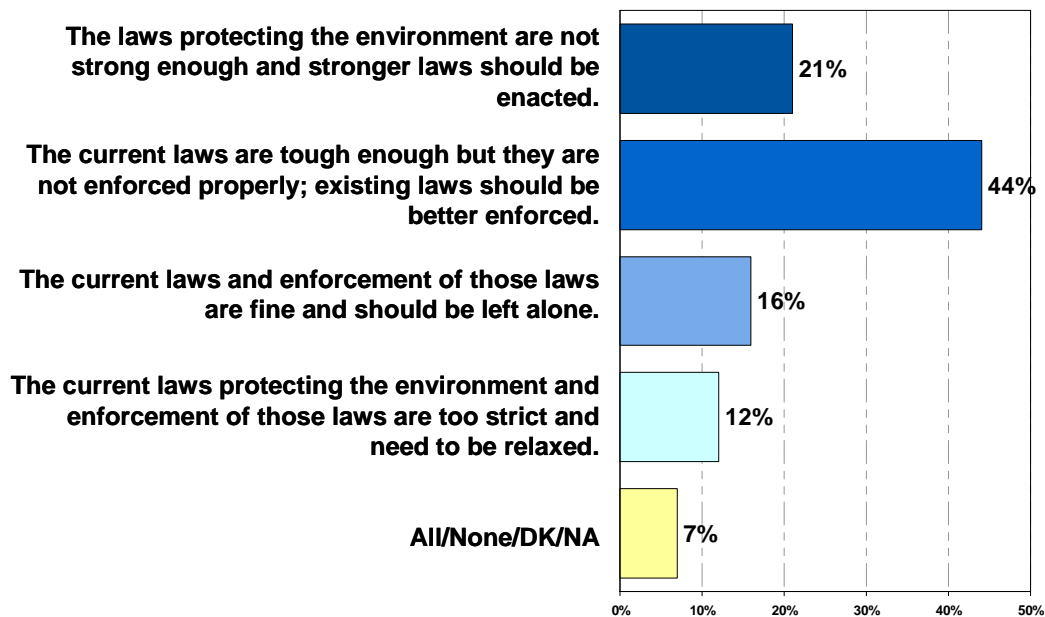
- **Despite their concerns about the economy, voters firmly believe that California can have a strong economy and a clean environment at the same time.** California voters have no problem reconciling their simultaneous concern about the state’s economy and its environment. As shown in **Figure 1**, more than two-thirds of voters (68%) believe the state can have a clean environment *and* a strong economy at the same time – nearly three times the proportion who believe that we have to choose between the two (24%).

FIGURE 1:
Choice of Statements About the Environment and the Economy



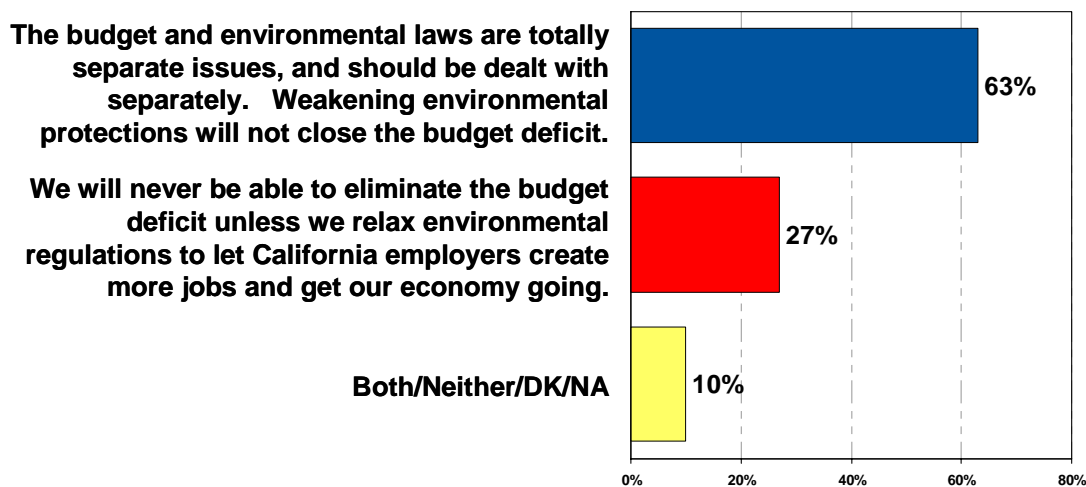
- **To that end, two thirds of California voters call for tougher environmental laws or better enforcement of existing protections.** California voters’ desire for a clean environment is evident in the results of another question – one which asked them to choose between four positions on the state’s environmental laws: that they should be strengthened, better enforced, left alone, or relaxed. As **Figure 2** makes clear, roughly two-thirds of California voters (65%) call for stronger state action on the environment: either stronger laws than are currently on the books (21%) or better enforcement of existing laws (44%). Only about one voter in ten (12%) calls for the relaxation of environmental laws.

**FIGURE 2:
Preferred Approach to California’s Environmental Laws**



- California voters want decisions about environmental protections made separately from the budget process.** There is also a broad consensus among California voters that decisions about environmental laws should be made outside the context of the state budget. Survey respondents were informed that the Governor has said that “he will veto any plan to address the state budget deficit unless it also includes these provisions to exempt certain industries from some environmental laws.” Then, when given the choice of two positions on this issue (as illustrated in **Figure 3**), respondents preferred – by more than a two-to-one margin – that decisions about environmental laws be made separately from decisions about the state budget.

**FIGURE 3:
Choice of Statements About the Role of Environmental Regulations in the Budget Process**



- **Voters strongly oppose a variety of specific proposals to weaken California’s environmental laws.** Respondents were also offered a list of some specific changes to California’s environmental laws, as detailed in **Figure 4** below. As the table makes clear, sizable majorities of voters oppose each of these proposals; particularly notable is that seven in ten voters oppose the weakening of environmental standards to allow more pollution from diesel engines or pesticides.

FIGURE 4:
Support for Proposed Changes to Environmental Laws
(Split Sampled)

Proposal	Support	Oppose	Undecided
Allowing increased pollution from diesel engines	18%	77%	5%
Reducing air quality controls on pesticides	25%	71%	4%
Creating a three-member committee of the Governor’s appointees to approve state construction projects without full environmental protections	31%	63%	6%
Exempting specific state-funded construction projects from environmental protections	34%	60%	6%
Limiting the public’s right to have input on plans for state-funded construction projects	37%	58%	6%
Asking Congress to exempt infrastructure projects in California from federal environmental laws	39%	55%	7%

- **Voters favor investments in public works projects that will have multiple benefits for their communities.** Looking forward and considering future state infrastructure investments, voters support a number of approaches consistent with their desire for a strong economy and a clean environment. As **Figure 5** on the following page makes clear, voters think California should target its investments in ways that will support clean energy industries; offer benefits to the community that go beyond jobs; and support the goal of reducing energy use. And a 70-percent majority of voters *rejects* the idea that we should fund transportation projects that will create jobs, while also contributing to long-run problems with the environment and traffic.

FIGURE 5:
Agreement with Statements About Infrastructure Investments
(Split Sampled)

Statement	Agree	Disagree	DK / NA
Transportation investments should support the goal of reducing energy use.	91%	6%	3%
Investments in public works projects should be based on their overall benefit to the community, and not just to create jobs.	83%	14%	2%
California should prioritize creating jobs in clean energy industries over creating jobs in other, older industries.	80%	16%	4%
We should <u>not</u> fund transportation projects that will add to our environmental problems and the problem of congestion in the long run, even if those projects create construction jobs in the short run.	70%	27%	2%

Taken together, the survey results reveal a California electorate that is highly concerned about the economy and the budget deficit, but that has not wavered in its commitment to maintaining a clean environment. Voters not only reject a variety of specific proposals to weaken environmental laws, and urge that debate over environmental laws be removed from the budget process, but they even call for environmental laws to be strengthened or better enforced. And looking to the future, voters back improvements to the state’s infrastructure that will not only create jobs, but will promote clean energy and prevent environmental problems and traffic from worsening.