

The People's Voice

Annual Poll Shows Voters' Priorities for Legislature

Key takeaways for state policy makers are evident in the California Chamber of Commerce poll *The People's Voice 2024*, the 10th in a series of annual surveys of California voters.

- Voters want more focus on growing jobs in the state, protecting our economy, and prioritizing spending on housing, law enforcement, homelessness, public education and economic development.
- Voters like direct democracy through the state's initiative process but remain concerned about costs, including the cost of homeownership and energy policies.
- Voters remain steadfast in their opposition to new taxes and policies that would advance single-payer health care.

GROWING JOBS

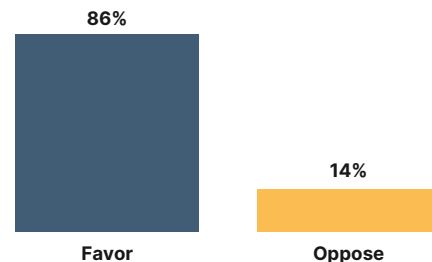
More than 90% of voters agree that California needs to do more to attract and retain businesses in the state. By a 71% to 12% margin, voters say that “good paying jobs are hard (versus easy) to find,” and a plurality (45%) report that “major employers or businesses have left their community in recent years to relocate to another state (that is, outside California).”

VIEWS ON SACRAMENTO POLICIES

Only 37% of voters agree that the policies from Sacramento have improved their lives, leaving an opportunity for the new Legislature to step in and change outcomes.

Voters were asked to judge the Legislature on how effectively they are spending on various priority programs. Trust was wide-ranging.

CALIFORNIA VOTERS VALUE DIRECT DEMOCRACY ENABLED BY INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM



Source: CalChamber People's Voice, 2024.

Opinions were about evenly split on the effectiveness of wildfire prevention and response and water supply and conservation, while public safety and addressing climate change received a 43% approval on effective spending. At the far end of the spectrum was the effectiveness of spending on homelessness, which received overall negative reviews from 85% of voters.

SPENDING PRIORITIES

In assessing policy priorities in a possibly tight state budget context, voters were asked to select which programs should or should not be protected against cuts.

Top priorities for keeping in place (based on the percentage of those polled choosing them) were programs for housing, law enforcement and homelessness, with economic development and public schools in the next tier. On the other side, voters pointed to benefits for undocumented residents, prisons, courts and climate change programs as lowest priority for spending.

NO NEW TAXES

The venerable citizens' initiative that stabilized property taxes, Proposition 13 from 1978, continues its nearly five-decade run of popularity — viewed favorably by 85% of voters.

Voters also are highly skeptical of weakening Proposition 13. In 2020, Californians rejected a ballot measure that would

have enacted a split roll property tax to raise billions in new taxes on property used by businesses and farmers. It's possible that California voters will consider this measure once again in a future election.

By a 3-to-1 margin, voters want to hold the line on new taxes rather than raise taxes for essential programs.

HOUSING

The cost and availability of housing remains top of mind for Californians, whether homeowners or renters. Voters support several policies that could reduce costs or spur more housing construction:

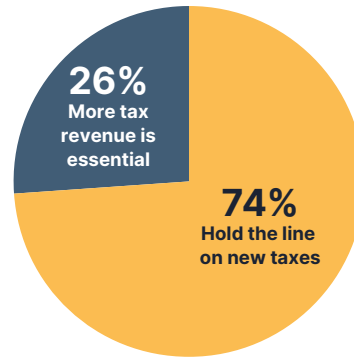
- **89%** support reducing the amount of fees on new housing levied by local governments.
- **79%** support limiting litigation over housing projects that have already been approved by local officials.
- **74%** support enacting laws such that if a housing project passes all the state's strict building and environmental impact requirements, then local activists and local laws cannot block that project.
- **73%** support using tax dollars to increase subsidies for low-income housing and local housing and shelters for homeless individuals and families.
- **69%** support reforming regulations that add expensive and time-consuming roadblocks to building new housing units.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Voters generally support the state taking an active role in addressing climate change, but they are concerned by the cost and impact on their lifestyle. Californians have become much more sensitized to inflation and affordability, and embrace fuel and utility costs as an avatar of the overall cost of living. Nearly four out of five voters (79%) believe new policies to reduce carbon emissions are more likely to cause prices and costs in California to increase.

- **84%** oppose intentionally designing roads or highways to be more congested to discourage driving.
- **78%** oppose new fees for driving gasoline-powered vehicles.
- **71%** oppose banning the sale of gasoline-powered vehicles by 2035.
- **68%** oppose taxing vehicles based on how many miles they drive.
- **65%** oppose phasing out the use of natural gas cooking in homes and restaurants.

VOTERS DO NOT WANT PROPOSITION 13 DISRUPTED AND WANT TO HOLD THE LINE ON NEW TAXES



Source: CalChamber People's Voice, 2024.

- **64%** oppose banning construction of new gas stations.
- **62%** oppose phasing out the use of natural gas for home heating and water heating.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Legislature dove into the artificial intelligence (AI) subject area in 2024, considering more than 50 bills, including some that would have deeply regulated the development of AI models and tools. Voters are clearly aware of this new technology, and since surveyed on it in 2023, have an increasingly positive attitude about AI.

Asked about the impact that AI will have on their lives over the next few years, 37% of voters indicated it would be positive, versus 29% saying it would be negative. This is a reversal from the previous year, when the same question was 27%–35%, positive/negative.

Voters similarly reversed their opinion on the effect of AI on their children's lives over the next several decades, with 47% believing it will be positive, and 36% negative.

HEALTH CARE

Single-payer health care is an evergreen issue in the Legislature, no matter the partisan tilt in the federal government. With this in mind, 91% of voters report that they are satisfied with their health insurance (asked of those with insurance), and 49% report that they are “very satisfied.”

Among those with private health insurance, 81% respond that they would rather keep their private insurance, as opposed to switching to a government-run single-payer approach.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY

California voters value direct democracy enabled by initiative and referendum. By a hefty 6-to-1 (86%–14%) margin, voters favor the ballot measure process that allows California voters to directly create new laws or repeal existing laws.

METHODOLOGY

The CalChamber poll was conducted by Bold Decision and Pierrepont Consulting & Analytics with online interviews from November 6–9, 2024, with 1,014 online interviews of California 2024 general election voters. The margin of error for this study is +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. This is the 10th year CalChamber has published The People's Voice survey.



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