

# 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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**RELATIVELY LOW VOTER AWARENESS OF CANDIDATES IN “DOWN BALLOT” STATEWIDE RACES. THE DEMOCRAT LEADS IN ALL SIX PARTISAN RACES, BUT BY VARYING MARGINS. STATISTICAL TIE IN NON-PARTISAN RACE FOR STATE SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

In addition to the governor’s race in the upcoming November 4 statewide elections, California voters will be asked to make choices in seven so-called “down ballot” races. These include the six partisan election contests for Lt. Governor, Attorney General, State Controller, State Treasurer, Secretary of State and Insurance Commissioner, as well as the non-partisan office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In its latest statewide survey, *The Field Poll* asked voters to offer their impressions of the candidates, and their current voting preferences in each contest if the election were being held today.

The results show that most of the candidates are not very well known to the likely voting public. However, each candidate is viewed more favorably than unfavorably among voters who can offer an opinion.

In each of the six partisan races the Democratic candidate currently leads his or her Republican rival, but by varying margins. The closest partisan contest is the election for Secretary of State, in which Democratic State Senator Alex Padilla is running seven percentage points ahead of Republican Institute Director Pete Peterson, 43% to 36%, with 21% undecided.

In addition, the poll finds a statistical tie in the non-partisan contest for Superintendent of Public Instruction. Likely voters currently divide 31% in support of educator Marshall Tuck, 28% for incumbent State Schools Superintendent Tom Torlakson, and a huge 41% undecided.

**Image ratings of the statewide down ballot candidates**

There has not been much advertising so far in these seven statewide races, nor have they received much media coverage. As a result, the poll finds likely voters largely in the dark about many of the candidates. However, each is viewed more positively than negatively among those voters able to offer an assessment. Table 1 below shows the degree to which likely voters offer an opinion of each of the candidates and the extent to which those with an opinion give a favorable or unfavorable assessment.

<b>Table 1</b>			
<b>Image ratings of the statewide “down ballot” candidates (among likely voters)</b>			
	<b>Favorable</b>	<b>Unfavorable</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<u>Lt. Governor candidates</u>			
Gavin Newsom (D), Lt. Governor	46%	26	28
Ron Nehring (R), small businessman	28%	15	57
<u>Attorney General candidates</u>			
Kamala Harris (D), Attorney General	47%	27	26
Ronald Gold (R), attorney	37%	15	48
<u>Secretary of State candidates</u>			
Alex Padilla (D), State Senator	38%	22	40
Pete Peterson (R), Institute Director	32%	16	52
<u>Controller candidates</u>			
Betty Yee (D), member State Board of Equalization	40%	16	44
Ashley Swearingin (R), Mayor	22%	17	61
<u>Treasurer candidates</u>			
John Chiang (D), State Controller	52%	15	33
Greg Conlon (R), businessman	26%	17	57
<u>Insurance Commissioner candidates</u>			
Dave Jones (D), Insurance Commissioner	37%	16	47
Ted Gaines (R), insurance agent	28%	17	55
<u>Superintendent of Public Instruction candidates*</u>			
Marshall Tuck, educator	27%	11	62
Tom Torlakson, State Schools Superintendent	40%	14	46

(D) indicates Democratic candidate, (R) indicates Republican candidate

\* This is a non-partisan race.

**Likely voter preferences in the down ballot contests**

The poll finds the Democratic candidate leading his or her Republican rival in each of the six partisan contests, but by varying margins. The closest race is the election for Secretary of State. In that contest, Democratic State Senator Alex Padilla currently runs seven percentage points ahead of Republican Institute Director Pete Peterson, 43% to 36%, with 21% undecided.

Preferences are even more closely divided in the non-partisan election for State Schools Superintendent. In that race, the challenger Tuck is currently the choice of 31% of likely voters, the incumbent Torlakson 28%, while a huge 41% are undecided.

<b>Table 2</b>	
<b>Voter preferences in California’s “down ballot” candidate races in the upcoming November general election (among likely voters)</b>	
	<b>Total likely voters</b>
<b><u>Lt. Governor</u></b>	
Gavin Newsom (D)	49%
Ron Nehring (R)	29
Undecided	22
<b><u>Attorney General</u></b>	
Kamala Harris (D)	49%
Ronald Gold (R)	37
Undecided	14
<b><u>Secretary of State</u></b>	
Alex Padilla (D)	43%
Pete Peterson (R)	36
Undecided	21
<b><u>Controller</u></b>	
Betty Yee (D)	46%
Ashley Swarengin (R)	32
Undecided	22
<b><u>Treasurer</u></b>	
John Chiang (D)	52%
Greg Conlin (R)	26
Undecided	22
<b><u>Insurance Commissioner</u></b>	
Dave Jones (D)	47%
Ted Gaines (R)	32
Undecided	21
<b><u>Superintendent of Public Instruction*</u></b>	
Marshall Tuck	31%
Tom Torlakson	28
Undecided	41

*(D) indicates Democratic candidate, (R) indicates Republican candidate. \* This is a non-partisan race.*

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Methodological Details**

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* completed August 14-28, 2014 among 467 voters considered likely to vote in the November 2014 general election. Interviews were administered by telephone using live interviewers in English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, and Vietnamese. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize respondent fatigue, the overall sample was divided into two random subsamples of 236 or 231 likely voters each on some of the questions in this report. The overall sample included supplemental interviews with the state's ethnic voter population. Funding for the supplemental interviews with Asian American voters was provided by Professor Karthick Ramakrishnan of the University of California, Riverside as part of the National Asian American Survey project.

Individual voters were sampled at random from voters with telephones drawn from the statewide voter registration rolls. The supplemental sample of Asian Americans was developed from voter roll listings targeting Chinese American, Korean American and Vietnamese American voters based primarily on their ethnic surnames. Once a voter's name and telephone number had been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter on either their landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the overall sample was weighted to align it to the proper distribution of voters by race and ethnicity and to other political, demographic and geographic characteristics of the California registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates of any probability-based survey depend on sample size and the percentage distributions being examined. The maximum sampling error for the overall likely voter sample is +/- 4.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while the random subsamples of likely voters have a maximum sampling error of +/- 6.5 percentage points. The maximum sampling error estimates are based on survey findings in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., results at or near 50%). Percentages at either tail of the distributions (i.e., results closer to 10% or 90%) have somewhat smaller margins of error. There are other potential sources of error in surveys of public opinion besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of this survey sought to minimize these other possible errors.

*The Field Poll* was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The Poll has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. *The Field Poll* receives financial support from leading California newspapers and television stations, who purchase the rights of first release to *Field Poll* reports in their primary viewer or readership markets. The *Poll* also receives funding from the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes, as well as from foundations, non-profit organizations, and others as part of the *Poll's* policy research sponsor program.

### **Questions Asked**

In the election for Lieutenant Governor, small businessman Ron Nehring, Republican, is running against incumbent Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom, Democrat. If the election were being held today, for whom would you vote for Lieutenant Governor – Republican Ron Nehring or Democrat Gavin Newsom?\*

In the election for Secretary of State, Institute Director Pete Peterson, Republican, is running against State Senator Alex Padilla, Democrat. If the election were being held today, for whom would you vote for Secretary of State – Republican Pete Peterson or Democrat Alex Padilla?

In the election for Controller, Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin, Republican, is running against Board of Equalization member Betty Yee, Democrat. If the election were being held today, for whom would you vote for Controller – Republican Ashley Swearingin or Democrat Betty Yee?

In the election for Treasurer, businessman Greg Conlon, Republican, is running against state Controller John Chiang, Democrat. If the election were being held today, for whom would you vote for Treasurer – Republican Greg Conlon or Democrat John Chiang?\*

In the election for Attorney General, retired state prosecutor Ronald Gold, Republican, is running against incumbent Attorney General Kamala Harris, Democrat. If the election were being held today, for whom would you vote for Attorney General – Republican Ronald Gold or Democrat Kamala Harris?\*

In the election for Insurance Commissioner, insurance agent Ted Gaines, Republican, is running against incumbent Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones, Democrat. If the election were being held today, for whom would you vote for Insurance Commissioner – Republican Ted Gaines or Democrat Dave Jones?\*

In the election for the non-partisan office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, incumbent State Schools Superintendent Tom Torlakson is running against educator Marshall Tuck. If the election were being held today, for whom would you vote for Superintendent of Public Instruction – Tom Torlakson or Marshall Tuck?\*

I am going to read the names of some people who are running for political office in California this year. For each, please tell me whether you have a generally favorable or unfavorable opinion of that person or whether you don't know enough about him or her to have an opinion. (CANDIDATES READ IN RANDOM ORDER) (SEE RELEASE FOR CANDIDATES)\*

\* asked of a random subsample of likely voters