



Poll finds strong desire for accountability and real solutions

06/29/11 by *What's Next California*

What's Next California, a coalition of organizations including California Forward, PPIC, New America Foundation and the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, today presented initial highlights of the first statewide deliberative poll in California. The unprecedented civic engagement project found that Californians overwhelmingly want to engage with government and are clamoring for real solutions.

A group of more than 400 scientifically randomly sampled Californians gathered in Torrance last weekend to participate in deliberations over tax and fiscal reform; initiative process; reforming the way the legislature represents voters and reforming the way programs and services are delivered with more emphasis on local accountability and control.

The record turnout found that Californians are more than willing to engage when they feel their voices will be heard and their opinions have the ability to shape policy.

While data are still preliminary and full results are forthcoming, an initial analysis found:

- Strong demand for greater transparency and accountability
- Clear lack of trust in current system
- Strong desire for solutions
- Unwillingness to abdicate control to the legislature, but a recognition that the legislature needs tools to solve problems

"The impressions to take away from this poll are clear," said Lenny Mendonca, California Forward and New America Foundation. "Californians want to fix the problem and believe we can reach agreement on reasonable solutions. They are calling for greater accountability, transparency and want the legislature to stand up and develop solutions that will fix our problems for the long term."

Specifically, the poll found the following changes in opinion after deliberation:

- Creating a formal review process to allow an initiative's proponents to amend an initiative following public input" support rose from 59% to 76% after deliberation.
- Publishing the top five contributors for and against each ballot measure in the ballot pamphlet" Support rose from 82% to 91%
- Allowing the legislature to amend an initiative that has already passed, subject to a public review and the agreement of the initiative's proponents" Opposition increased from 44% to 51%

Because of the unprecedented participation and larger sample size, full results are still being analyzed. Findings will be released after a full scientific analysis and peer review.

Jim Fishkin of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University and creator of the Deliberative Poll format, was enthusiastic about What's Next California.

"I have never seen engagement and excitement like last weekend," said Fishkin. "Californians are willing and able to engage when they trust their government and believe there will be a high level of transparency and accountability, I am hopeful these results change the dialogue in Sacramento and spur real change."

What's Next California partners also include the Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership at Pepperdine University, California Common Cause, The Nicolas Berggruen Institute, The Bill Lane Center for the American West at Stanford University, and MacNeil/Lehrer Production's By the People, which filmed the proceedings for a television special to be broadcast later this summer.



Comments

