



Governing California

Making sense of our state of disarray

300 Californians. One Deliberative Poll. One What?

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They'll be meeting in a hotel ballroom in Torrance all weekend... 300 Californians who represent a scientific, random sample of the people of this state. The event, called "[What's Next California?](#)" is billed as our first-ever statewide deliberative poll.

What the heck is a deliberative poll? You'd better [ask James Fishkin, the head of Stanford University's Center on Deliberative Democracy.](#)

It's essentially a new, in-depth kind of public opinion polling, according to Fishkin, where participants actually take time to learn about the issues, rather than shooting answers from the hip.

Here's a quick glimpse at a deliberative poll that took place in Michigan last year, where citizens tackled tough questions about tough economic times.

You can listen in on those Michigan citizens in more depth [here](#) in a PBS broadcast.

The California poll will tackle questions about how we might overhaul the way we govern ourselves in this state. The 300 citizens will be learning and talking about:

- legislative representation
- the initiative process
- state and local government restructuring
- taxation and fiscal policy.

Woohoo! I can hear you saying. Sounds like a rip-roaring time in Torrance!

Okay, yes, it's wonky stuff. But California governance could sure use some help. And if you spend a few minutes listening to the Michiganders in the PBS video, you might find it's pretty interesting. You're going to have people from vastly different backgrounds, with wildly divergent political views sitting down together in small groups actually listening to each other.


Here's [Fishkin's preview](#) of what it's all about. Even if you're not in Torrance, you can read up on the issues the participants will learn about and follow their agenda through the weekend on the "What's Next California?" [website](#).

And stay tuned on this site for details of what transpires over the weekend.

The deliberative poll was organized by an assortment of non-partisan government reform groups: [California Forward](#), the [New America Foundation in California](#), the [Public Policy Institute of California](#), the [Nicolas Berggruen Institute](#), [California Common Cause](#), the [Bill Lane Center for the American West](#) at Stanford University and the [Davenport Institute](#) at Pepperdine University. It is being coordinated by the [Center for Deliberative Democracy](#) at Stanford University and MacNeil/Lehrer Productions' [By the People](#) Project.


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