

**WHAT'S NEXT CALIFORNIA?
A CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE DELIBERATIVE POLL
FOR CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE**

REPORT

**PREPARED BY
THE CENTER FOR DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AT
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Overview: “What’s Next California” Deliberative Pollⁱ

For the first time ever, a scientific sample of California’s registered voters was convened to deliberate in depth about the problems facing the state. They considered 30 proposals from a broad coalition of reform groups, vetted by an extensive advisory group. The sample was demonstrably representative in its demographics, as well as in political party and ideology. Over the course of the weekend’s deliberations it became dramatically more informed and changed its views in surprising ways.

The fundamental idea of the project was to set an agenda for possible reforms that could be put before the voters or the legislature. This report assesses the success of the undertaking. The analyses detailed here offer a route to responsible advocacy. These are the proposals that the voters of California would support (or would not support) on the basis of actually listening to the competing arguments and getting the best information we could make available, in a transparent and balanced way. In this process the people have been given the opportunity to set a reform agenda under the best and most transparent conditions this broad coalition of sponsors could muster. The results hold many surprises, both about which proposals have weight with the public after discussion, and which do not. In addition, the reasons for support at the end are detailed here for each proposal.

In this overview we draw on the quantitative data from questionnaire results before and after deliberation. We also make use of a separate data set, put together by the Center for Deliberative Democracy, of transcriptions of the small group discussions. This data is reported on in a supplement to the report and quoted at points in this overview. In addition to the extensive results already made available on the web, this report also makes use of regressions to identify the levers of opinion change as people discuss and become more informed about the proposals.

What is a Deliberative Poll?

Ordinary polls provide a snap shot of the public’s impressions of sound bites and headlines. Most citizens most of the time are not well informed about complex public issues. Deliberative Polling addresses the question: what would a scientific sample of the public think about policy issues if it could be engaged in good conditions for thinking about them? Those good conditions include balanced briefing materials, small group discussions with trained moderators, questions composed in small groups to panels of competing experts in plenary sessions and an opportunity to register one’s opinions in confidential questionnaires both before and after this process of deliberation. As this report will detail, there were very substantial changes in opinion after deliberation in this project.

Deliberative Polls have been conducted in 18 countries under the direction of the team at the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University. *What’s Next California* was the first statewide Deliberative Poll in California.

Why a Deliberative Poll?

A Deliberative Poll reveals which proposals the public would support on the basis of good information and which ones they would not. Further, it shows the reasons that have weight with the public supporting or opposing various reforms, once the public is really engaged in thinking about them. This Deliberative Poll should spark a thoughtful dialogue about the kinds of reforms that are seriously worth pursuing.

The Sample Gathered in Torrance, CA

A random sample of registered voters from throughout the state was recruited to travel to Torrance for the weekend. 435 were committed and 412 showed up on the day, an exceptionally high turnout compared to previous Deliberative Polls throughout the world. The 412 were compared to a separate sample of 300 registered voters who were never invited to Torrance. The 300 in the comparison group were weighted to reflect the population of registered voters. In both samples there were up to ten call backs to reach those initially drawn in the sample. Participants were paid an honorarium for the weekend participation plus all travel expenses.

There were no significant differences between the 412 and the 300 in gender, age, education, employment status, ethnicity, political party or political ideology. There were, however, small differences in income and religious attendance and some significant differences in attitudes toward some specific policy proposals. To ensure that any differences in specific policy attitudes did not affect our results, we conducted a further matching analysis to establish weightings for the participant sample and then reanalyzed the changes in attitudes. The results remained substantially unchanged as detailed in the section on representativeness in this report. Hence, we report the unweighted results for the participants here and we only note significant changes for those questions which yielded similar results whether the sample was weighted or unweighted.

Questionnaires were administered in three waves—T1 at home by telephone survey, T2 on arrival and T3 on departure. Mobile phones were included in the sample in order to include those without land lines. Since the advisory group process continued during the initial recruitment period, many of the final proposal questions could not be asked at T1. Results below are presented as before and after deliberation. When a T1 measurement is available we supply it as the “before deliberation” response in our presentation of the summary results. Otherwise, the results are from comparing the arrival questionnaire, before the weekend deliberation, with the final questionnaire on departure. The full questionnaires and the responses to all three waves are posted online at <http://cdd.stanford.edu>. The weighted and unweighted results for participants will also be posted there as well.

Agenda

The weekend discussions focused on specific reform proposals in four areas: the structure of the legislature, the initiative process, state-local reform and taxes (and related fiscal issues). A total of 30 proposals were considered under these four headings. An initial briefing document of nearly 100 pages was developed by the coalition of partner organizations, led by the Lane Center for the Study of the American West at Stanford University. An extensive state-wide Advisory Group passed on the balance and accuracy of the briefing materials. The weekend discussions alternated small group and plenary sessions on the four topic areas. Moderators, recruited by the Davenport Institute at Pepperdine University, were trained by the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford.

Reforming the Initiative Process

Participants showed overwhelming support for initiative process reforms that would empower voters to better understand the consequences of initiatives they are asked to evaluate, and showed little interest in options that would have enabled the Legislature to affect their content in any way. Support for “creating a formal review process to allow an initiative’s proponents to amend an initiative following public input” increased 17 points from 59% to 76%. “Publishing the top five contributors for and against each ballot measure in the ballot pamphlet” increased its support

from 82% to 91%. “Allowing an initiative’s proponents to withdraw it after it qualifies for the ballot” increased from 50% (at home on first contact) to 57% after deliberation.

There were four proposals suggesting ways in which the legislature might remove or amend an initiative, or place a counter measure on the ballot. None of these achieved support above 37% after deliberation. “Allowing the Legislature to amend an initiative that has already passed, subject to two-thirds vote, even if an initiative’s proponents do not agree” sank 6 points to only 18%. A similar proposition with public review and the agreement of the initiative’s proponents sank from 43% to 37%. Allowing the Legislature to place a countermeasure on the ballot to an already qualified initiative ended up at 30%. Allowing the Legislature to remove an initiative from the ballot by enacting it into law ended up at 35% after deliberation. Participants wanted the initiative to remain the people’s process. They wanted to keep it away from the Legislature, to which they gave low approval ratings.

Reforming the Legislature

Participants began with a low regard for the legislature and its efficacy (close to 70% questioned whether the legislature was able “to get important things done” and about the same percentage disapproved of the Assembly and the State Senate). Participants thought the ability of the Legislature “to get things done” was affected by “tensions between the political parties” a view that increased from 64% to 72% after deliberation.

Despite these difficulties, they were willing to support major structural changes in the legislature to improve its performance. For example, there was a dramatic increase in support for “lengthening Assembly terms from 2 years to 4 and Senate terms from 4 years to 6.” When first interviewed at home, this reform received support from only 33% of the participants. By the end of the weekend, the support had climbed 47 points to 80%. An explanation can be found in two other questions. Before deliberation, 68% agreed that “increasing State Legislators’ terms will let them spend less time fundraising and campaigning and more time legislating.” After deliberation agreement with this proposition climbed 14 points to 82%. The contrasting argument against increased terms, that “increasing State Legislator’s terms will make them less responsive to their districts” dropped 23 points, from 41% agreeing initially to only 18% agreeing after deliberation. The participants clearly thought that legislators needed to spend less time campaigning and more time legislating if they were to represent their districts effectively. These connections and others like them are explored in the regressions presented later in the report.

As deliberators came to support longer terms, they also moved sharply against proposals for a part time legislature. Before deliberation there was majority support for “reducing the length of the state legislative session and requiring legislators to spend more time in their districts.” This proposal dropped 11 points, from 57% to 46%. There was an even larger drop in support for a related part time legislature proposal “making the state legislature part-time and paying legislators part-time salaries.” This proposal dropped 18 points from 45% to only 27%. Some clues to their reasoning, supported by the regressions, is suggested by two other questions. Agreement that “part-time legislators will tend to represent their districts more closely” dropped 9 points from 43% to 32%. And agreement that “part-time legislators will tend to be more open to corruption” increased 9 points from 45% to 54%.

Participants strongly supported reforms that would empower the public by making good data available to them for public oversight and increasing government accountability, including requiring the Legislature to establish performance goals and track and report progress (86% before and 90% after), requiring economic impact analysis of major legislation (89% before and 90% after).

Lastly, participants addressed the issue of the size of the legislature. There was strong support both before and after for “increasing the number of Assembly districts from 80 to 120” (support increasing from 61% to 63%). When asked about the fundamental trade-off between “having fewer Legislators, even if that means that each legislator represents more people” and the alternative, a situation where “each Legislator should represent fewer people, even if that means that the Legislature contains more Legislators” there was a sharp increase in support for having more legislators each representing fewer people. This option increased 14 points from 57% to 71% after deliberation. Given the low regard the participants had for the job the legislature is doing, this support for increasing the number of representatives is noteworthy.

State-Local Restructuring

Participants supported giving local governments (cities and counties) greater control over financing of local programs, in exchange for establishing performance goals, monitoring and public reporting. “Transferring from the state to local governments control and financing of services at the local level and requiring minimum standards for delivering them” increased from 67% to 73%. “Allowing local governments to raise taxes for local services in exchange for increased coordination of service delivery and public reporting of performance” increased 9 points from 54% to 63%. “Requiring state and local governments to identify policy goals and publish their progress toward meeting them” increased from 89% to 92%. After deliberation, 77% of participants supported allowing local governments to maintain control of savings from successful program management, in exchange for strong public accountability. After deliberation, 68% also supported specific funding for regional policy priorities extending beyond the borders of a single city or county.

At the same time, slightly more participants after deliberation thought the state should be responsible for “the most important policy decisions” (state-48%; local-26%; undecided-26%), and were evenly split on the question of how much taxation authority should be at the state vs. local level (local-33%; state-35%; undecided-33%). Yet when asked whether “decision-making authority” should be mostly at the local level or at the state level, 43% chose the local level after deliberation and only 27% chose the state level (with 29% in the middle). Clearly there is some receptiveness to local control for many aspects of policy, a conclusion supported by the support for state-local restructuring.

Tax and Fiscal Reforms

Most of the proposals for increased revenue received little support. A notable exception was the proposal for “reassessing non-residential property more frequently than now.” This rose 20 points from 52% to 72%. Another revenue proposal increased significantly but failed to achieve majority support. “Applying the sales tax to services as well as goods while reducing the sales tax rate” increased 7 points from 38% to 45%.

Proposals for limiting the home mortgage deduction, for reassessing all property more frequently (with an exemption to rise with inflation) and to allow local electorates to raise the property tax rate

above the current 1% rate cap all received minority support both before and after. However, a proposal to lower “the supermajority vote required in the Legislature to raise taxes” from two thirds to 55% rose a surprising 18 points, from 32% to 50%.

The generally low support for tax increases may be linked to a perception of government waste. Participants believed government is wasting a whopping 39 cents on the dollar. Nevertheless they believed government should provide certain benefits and services even if that required higher taxes, a position that increased 12 points from 45% to 57% after deliberation.

Participants also indicated strong support for fiscal discipline by the legislature. After deliberation, 83% supported publication of three to five year budget projections prior to budget votes. “Requiring the Governor and the Legislature to adopt two-year instead of one-year budgets” increased 16 points from 56% before deliberation to 72% afterwards. There was also increased support for paygo. “Requiring legislation creating new programs that cost \$25 million or more to indicate how they will be paid for” increased from 82% when respondents were asked at home to 90% by the end of the deliberations. Participants also supported limiting one-time revenue “spikes” to one-time expenditures or paying down state debt and filling the state rainy day fund (84% after, 80% before).

Efficacy and Mutual Respect

At the beginning only 25% of participants thought “public officials care a lot about what people like me think.” This opinion increased 12 points to 37%, a significant increase, but still a low level of external political efficacy. Similarly participants started with 42% agreeing that “people like me don’t have any say in what government does” a view that dropped 9 points to 33% after deliberation. When asked about those “who disagree strongly with you about issues like those we have been asking you about” 80% agreed before deliberation that “I respect their point of view, even though it is different from mine.” This position rose to 88% after deliberation.

Evaluations of the Process

At the end of the weekend the participants were asked a battery of evaluation questions. The process received uniformly high marks. When asked to rate it on a scale from “a waste of time” to “extremely valuable” 89% rated it on the “extremely valuable” side of the scale. 91% agreed that “my group moderator provided the opportunity for everyone to participate in the discussions.” 93% disagreed strongly with the view that “my group moderator sometimes tried to influence the group with his or her own views.” 62% agreed that “my group moderator tried to make sure that opposing arguments were considered.” 82% thought the briefing materials were mostly or completely balanced. And 88% agreed that “I learned a lot about people very different from me—about what they and their lives are like.”

Knowledge

Participants were asked a series of eight knowledge questions before and after deliberation. As in other Deliberative Polls, they provided evidence of strong knowledge gains. Overall correct answers to the eight questions increased significantly by 18 points. Some changes were even larger, such as the question about the area of the budget which takes the single largest share (K-12 education). Correct answers to this question increased 38 points to 74%. Because knowledge tends to be correlated with other knowledge, the index offers good evidence that the participants became significantly more informed about the public issues on the agenda of *What’s Next California*.

Summary Analyses of Specific Proposalsⁱⁱ

Proposal A1 Creating a Formal Review Process to allow an initiative's proponents to amend an initiative following public input.

The support for this proposal increased significantly from about 59% to 76%. The regressions show some interesting connections with fundamental values. The more participants placed a value on education and having an informed society, the more they supported this proposal. This seems compatible with the idea of public review in an effort to get the proposal right. The more the participants placed a value on government reflecting the “will of the people” and on making collective decisions even if some disagreed, the more they supported this proposal. These values also connect with getting the public’s views accurately reflected in the proposals. On the other hand, the values in the economic freedom index, which concern freedom to just decide for yourself without any interference from others, tended to produce decreased support for this proposal.

The transcripts express concerns about how to understand what is on the ballot and the hope that this proposal might lead to clearer and more understandable propositions. So there was support expressed for a review process of “*citizens to clarify the supporter’s intent and to see what its’ about if it’s not clear, so that they make it so that it is clear.*” There is a concern that “*yes means yes and no means no.*” Confusing propositions sometimes lead people to vote differently than what they actually intend.

Proposal A2c Allowing the Legislature to amend an initiative that has already passed, subject to a public review and the agreement of the initiative’s proponents.

Support for this proposal dropped significantly from 43% to 37% while opposition increased from 44% to 51%. Those who were satisfied with the state legislature tended to support this proposal as did those who thought “the California State Legislature is able to get important things done.” But these are minority views and attitude toward the state legislature is clearly a lever for opinion change on this proposal. In the regression examining empirical premises, both Republican and Democrat party identification worked in support of this proposal, except for those Republicans who also thought Government was wasting money (the interaction between Republican and Government Waste). For those Republicans, the effect is negative for this proposal.

There seemed to be real hesitation for all the proposals about giving the Legislature any power to change or second guess initiative proposals. Note this excerpt from the transcripts:

“this 2c and 2d gives the legislators power to change them, even if it’s a guess as to what the initiative initially started up with. That’s cutting into the initiative process in the sense that we’re giving the power back to them....its supposed to be about the people putting in what they want, whereas this, it’s giving ultimate power to the legislature...it sounds good but they could change it even if it’s not what we want.” Another respondent felt even more strongly about the legislature second guessing: *“it makes me furious that the legislature thinks that I’m too stupid to make the decision.”*

Proposal A4: Requiring all ballot measures that require new expenditures to indicate how they will be paid for.

This “paygo” measure had overwhelming support both before and after, (87% and 85%). The regressions show that those who value the economic freedom index (valuing people being able to make choices about economic matters) will tend to support this measure while those who think a part time legislature would have good effects tend to oppose this proposition. Those Democrats who viewed the legislature as able to get things done (not a large group) also tend to oppose. As noted there was general support across the political spectrum. The reasoning behind this proposal was expressed by one of the participants this way:

“I think what’s missing in the initiative process is the cost. Because I think the whole point of it is that the legislature gets stuck with these initiatives passing. The average citizen does not understand unintended consequences, whether it’s financial or otherwise, legal, you name it. So the point is that if you are reviewing an initiative, you’ve got to know the consequences or the cost, or where it’s going to come from. And I think there’s a disconnect there.”

Another participant put it in terms of making responsible choices now rather than obligating future generations:

“If we’re putting something on the ballot, that’s going to be paid for that we know where it’s coming from. And its not kicking it down the road, like saying we’re going to pay for this with bonds or something where we’re going to have to pay it back years from now. But if this is going to be part of our priority as a state, that we should figure out are we gonna cut other things to pay for it, or are we gonna raise taxes, or what are we gonna do so that it’s covered and not left to future generations to pick up the tab.”

Proposal A7 Publishing the top five contributors for and against each ballot measure in the ballot pamphlet

Support for this proposal rose significantly from 82% to 91%. The proposal began with overwhelming support and it went higher. The regressions show that the value of education (including the value of an educated society) was a lever of opinion change in support of this proposal. Those Republicans who also thought the legislature was competent to get things done (a small minority) tended to oppose this. Generally there was support across all sectors of the population for this proposal.

The transcripts show a consistent desire for transparency:

“When you spoke about listing who was backing certain initiatives... I think that when we look at ads on TV during the political process time, during election time, you know how you’ve actually paused your TV to see who sponsors it. And sometimes it makes a big difference on how you’re gonna vote.” And similarly:

“Somebody once told me that the straightest line to the truth is to follow the money. So, you know, maybe something should be written... whoever makes the initiative or when its presented—where is the money coming to support the initiative? And how much does it cost?”

B1 Increasing the number of Assembly districts from 80 to 120

Support for this proposal began high, and moved slightly higher to 63% after deliberation. The regressions show that those who valued low taxes and small government tended to oppose (perhaps because of the cost of more legislators), while those who valued the government providing benefits even if that meant higher taxes tended to support this proposal. Those who were satisfied with local government also tended to support.

The transcripts focused on the difficulty of effective representation with so many constituents:

“Its unbelievable to think that one senator has 1 million constituents...I could never speak for a million people...California is bigger than most countries.”

“I want to express shock at the number in Table B1 [number of constituents]. I had no idea.”

“There’s no chance you’re gonna have a one-on-one with your state representative where there’s half a million people.”

However, there was also a sensitivity to the cost issue on the other side of the argument:

“Our representatives have an enormous amount of people that they have to represent...shouldn’t this be broken a little more and maybe have a few more people involved that can get to know their constituents, too? The tax money has to pay for that. They have to pay their salaries. That’s a problem. No question about that. The last thing I want to do is raise taxes.”

And then there was the issue of how much difference the proposal would make:

“what I wonder is, is there a difference in what you can do between representing 450,000 as opposed to representing a little over 300,000. It’s 150,000 different. You’re still representing over 300,000 people. How can it make a real difference?”

B2 Expanding the size of districts and electing more than one legislative representative from each district

Support for this proposal was just under 50% both before and after. A significant lever of opposition comes from those want low taxes and small government. Or conversely those who are willing to support higher taxes and benefits provide a source of support. The equality index (equal opportunity, minimizing the gap between rich and poor and making sure no one suffers from lack of food or shelter) is a significant lever of support both before and after deliberation. After deliberation those placing a value on government reflecting “the will of the people” also tended to support this proposal. Participants who came to support this proposal may have concluded that multi member districts might allow for groups to get representation they might not have otherwise and hence have their interests represented.

The transcripts suggest that the public best understood this proposal by comparing it to proportional representation with multiple parties on the European model. Obviously, multi member districts do not amount to a system of proportional representation but the likelihood of multiple parties with multi member districts is what caught their attention:

“In proportional representation systems, overseas anyway, how it’s played out is you get smaller parties represented. So you get Green Party, you get far right parties. You get people who could never muster a majority from any district because just too far out there or too specialized.”

Another suggestion was that the need for multi-party cooperation might end up a good thing:
“But if you had a coalition where you had the Green party... and the Tea Party over here and all that, then you’d have to negotiate because the Democrat(s) don’t have a majority and the Republican(s) don’t have a majority....”

*But generally the transcripts express skepticism as to how it would work:
“If you look at Europe where that’s very common in all these countries, it doesn’t appear to work better than our system at all. They spend a lot of time starting all over, reconvening, forming new coalitions.”*

And people bring their own experience to the discussion:

“As a former Canadian, three party system, or multiple party system, as far as I can see, never worked up there. That’s the reason Canada can never get anything done. British Columbia, I used to live up there, and all they would do is gang up on each other.... Multiple parties don’t work.”

Proposal B3 Replacing the current State Senate and Assembly with a single house of 120 members

Support for this proposal increased significantly from 32 to 43%, but still well short of majority. A single house index of two questions was highly significant in identifying the levers of opinion change. On the one hand those who thought “a single house would make it easier to pass important legislation” tended to support the proposal. On the other hand, those who thought “a single house would deprive the system of important checks and balances” tended to oppose. In addition independents who thought local decisions were dominated by special interests tended to move against this proposal. The two key arguments—breaking the log jam of decision with a unicameral design, seen as an advantage, and losing checks and balances, seen as a disadvantage, were supported by the discussions in the transcripts:

“I personally think we probably at this point a unicameral House would be beneficial for California because they have such difficulty operating together anyway.”

“One thing I really want to talk about is the unicameral legislature. It’s really interesting to me... Get rid of both houses and you know, instead of having 40 Senators and 80 Assemblymen, have 120 Representatives. I mean I see that as being able to get more done.”

“Nebraska...I was there in 69, but Nebraska is a pretty efficient state and they seem to get things done. I like the idea of smaller districts and being able to talk to your specific legislator...I would prefer having maybe a unicameral, but having more members, where you can, where they’re in your community and you can actually speak with them...”

On the other hand, there was also discussion of checks and balances from two houses in almost a classic Madisonian argument about tyranny of the majority:

“The way our system is set up is on checks and balances. We need two groups, that’s necessary.”

“So they give each other a check. You can’t do one without the other. If you have one group, that’s almost like a dictatorship in the legislature.”

Proposal B4 Making the State Legislature part-time and paying legislators part-time salaries.

Support for this proposal dropped significantly from 45% at time 2 to 27% at time 3. The Part Time Legislature Index was highly significant. Those who thought “part-time legislators will represent their districts more closely” and those who thought “part-time legislators will be less likely to be career politicians” tended to support the proposal. But those who thought “part-time legislators will be more open to corruption” and “will be less informed about policy issues” tended to oppose. After deliberation, Democrats who thought the Legislature was able to get things done also tended to oppose this proposal. As for fundamental values, those concerned with equality and equal opportunity in policy outcomes (the equality index) moved to oppose this proposal as did those who valued education and an educated society (the importance of education index). Advocates of low taxes and small government tended to support this proposal as did those who were satisfied with the performance of local government.

The argument in favor was that they could get closer to their districts if they were part time. They could use technology and perhaps save money:

“You benefit two ways: one, you’re spending more time at your district and you’re actually involved with your area; two, you’re reducing the cost of the travel. And that’s a lot of money right there. I mean they have to kinda keep up with technology in a sense.”

“when I’m saying part-time is get them out of Sacramento. Let them be home. They could do their job on the internet.”

On the other hand with the common perception that the Legislature was not functioning well now and that the state had big problems, there was a greater sense that the state might get an even less effective legislature if it was part-time:

“I don’t want somebody part-time handling the decisions that’s gonna affect my life during the long term. There’s no such thing as half way crooked. You’re either all in or you’re not.”

“I feel very uncomfortable with taking work part-time because I feel---and just my opinion, a lot of people are doing part-time work...So when you give them that part-time, how much more part-time are they gonna be doing if you gave him that title already. Now, they’re gonna be doing even less work.”

Proposal B7 Lengthening Assembly terms from 2 years to 4, and Senate terms from 4 years to 6

Support for this proposal increased from 45.5% to 81% over the weekend. This large increase actually understates the overall change since this was one of the proposals asked at time 1, when the support was only 33%. An index of two empirical premises about this proposal, the Increasing State Legislator’s Terms Index was highly significant in the regressions and sheds light on the reasoning behind this change. Counting in favor of this proposal, those who agreed that “increasing state legislators’ terms will let them spend more time legislating” tended to support this proposal. Those who felt that “increasing state legislator’s terms will make them less responsive to their districts” tended to move against this proposal. These conclusions apply to Independents (decline to state) voters and to Republicans. In addition the interaction with Republicans for the Terms Index was also significant, indicating that Republicans who felt that increasing terms would give legislators more time to legislate and do their job also tended to support this proposal. On the other hand, Democrats who thought the Legislature was now able to get things done did not tend to support this proposal. And those independents who thought a part-time Legislature would work well did not tend to support this proposal for longer terms.

In the transcripts the arguments tended to back up the position that longer terms would allow more time for legislating rather than just campaigning and raising money:

“I think we need to expect from them that they have a long term. That they don’t get into office, like they do now, with a two year term and the first item of business is how can I get re-elected?”

“I think it’s really a good idea if they don’t have to run every two years. Because every two years they’re out there handing out their hands. You have to be influenced by who you get your money from.”

“Maybe longer term limits is the idea, but I don’t like the fact that they are constantly campaigning”

Longer terms might also give legislators the freedom from campaigning that might allow them to come to some agreements:

“If people aren’t worrying about being re-elected in six months, maybe they’ll compromise more and get the budget passed. But it’s like if I cave on this, I won’t get elected and people will remember because the election is coming up. .. Maybe a longer term will get people more likely to stay at the table and compromise and get something done.”

Proposal B9 Establishing clear goals for each government program and assessing whether progress is being made toward these goals at least once every ten years.

Support for this proposal started very high at 86% and increased to 90% after deliberation. The value of education, including the value of an educated society is highly significant as a lever of opinion change. Democrats who thought the legislature was deadlocked by party conflict also tended to support this proposal.

The basic idea of making the decisions adhere to standards over time had broad support in the transcripts: “I would like...some way of reviewing if programs work; and if they don’t, I’d like for them to stop. And if they do, I’d like for them to have more funding.”

Some of the participants offered a business analogy:

“I think there’s a good argument..for holding government to the same procedural and performance based standards as companies, especially public ones..”

“In business you have your three to five year business plan set and sure you might need to make some adjustments ...but three to five years out, you kind of have a framework for what your working on.”

But the business analogy suggests a twist on the proposal: the idea of an independent audit to strengthen confidence that the goals are adhered to:

“I would like B9 better if it included the audit independence concept somehow in there and the same for B8 economic impact analysis...someone who’s really competent to do that and is gonna present the numbers independently.”

Proposal C1 Transferring from the state to local governments control and financing of services provided at the local level and requiring minimum standards for delivering them

Support for this proposal started high and rose significantly from 67% to 73%. Satisfaction with local government was a significant lever of opinion change in support of this proposition. On the other hand, those who valued state over local authority tended to oppose this proposal. Independents who believed that decisions at the local level are likely to be dominated by special interests also tended to oppose this proposal.

The transcripts show support for the general concept of this proposal but also concerns about local corruption and disparities between communities that might result from local control. These concerns suggest areas that the various proposals need to address.

“If you are going to give power back to the local level...you need standards.”

“In my head I would much rather have the decisions on what streets get repaired or what happens here to the local government but playing devil’s advocate, I would say look at the Bell city situation.”

“If the money flows more to the locality and they have authority to spend it more than they have now, how do we as a state in the whole make sure that that money is being spent in a way that people get equal access and get equal treatment. Because that’s the struggle in passing—it’s the struggle between the federal government and the states....the issue is how do you pass the money and the authority down and still maintain your standards.”

“All communities will be required to set minimum standards. What I’m talking about is the con for that..may not address the current issue of wealthier areas of the state being better able to provide quality services...”

Proposal C2 Allowing local governments to raise taxes for local services in exchange for increased coordination of service delivery and public reporting of performance

Support for this proposal increased significantly from 54% to 63%. In the regressions, satisfaction with local government was a strong lever of opinion change in favor of this proposal as was the value of making public decisions together even when some disagree. Levers of opinion change against this proposal included the value of having a low tax/low service

government and the value of supporting state authority over local government. Those valuing equality and equal opportunity also tended to support this proposal.

The transcripts show openness to the idea of local governments taxing themselves when combined with transparent accountability:

“Maybe these services that are offered to our local government, in our local government, maybe in the past we have been too reliant on the state government or on the federal government. And now at this point, communities need to kind of shift their way of thinking and start thinking about how they can generate that income to provide those services.”

“I think this whole idea...I’ll say decentralizing and allowing, if you will, allowing money to stop at the community level rather than going back up to Sacramento and back down, should ultimately be a reflection of the services that we want our communities to provide. And I personally believe that communities should be allowed to determine the services they want. And ultimately, the effect of some of the tax limitations that came about in Prop 13, in many respects, limit the ability of...cities to exercise their independent discretion...can they get the money back from Sacramento to use it the way they want?”

There is also an idea that local officials can be held more accountable for how local taxes are spent:

“Well, I think it allows citizens to be more empowered and see where their money goes. People talked about that before, too. Like I support a tax when I know that that money’s actually being spent on fixing the pothole that’s on my street. If I can see the result of where that money goes, and I can feel confident about it, then I’m much more likely to support it...then you have local government officials who are right there accountable who you could run into in the supermarket.”

Proposal C4 Direct any savings resulting from successful local management of state resources to those local governments, in exchange for monitoring their own performance and being accountable and innovative in their operations

Support for this proposal was high both before and after deliberation (going from 74% to 76%). Satisfaction with local government and with the legislature were both levers of opinion change after deliberation. If you were satisfied with local government you tended to support this proposal. If you were satisfied with the legislature, you tended to oppose it. And if you valued collective decisions even when some disagree, then you tended to oppose. One key result: Independents who felt that decisions of local government were currently dominated by special interests tended to support this proposal.

In the transcripts, participants found the idea generally appealing:

“I like the idea of we give the money to the local government to do what they will with the services, and if they’re able to find a more efficient, effective way to do it, then whatever money that’s left over, they can use too. Like they don’t have to send that back to the state.”

However, they also worried that if the surpluses became substantial, they could generate further inequalities between communities:

“The problem I see with this is that some communities are more wealthy than others. If they..go about saving money, if they build their wealth and build their wealthy communities, rather than giving the money back to the state, the other communities are going to suffer.”

[comparing Glendale and Beverly Hills] “How are you gonna prevent that kind of pattern of inequality from developing across communities when.. richer communities tend to realize a greater surplus?”

“If you really decentralized, you could really end up with huge gaps in the quality of education because rich districts put their money in their districts and poor districts have less money to put in.”

Proposal C5 Requiring state and local governments to identify policy goals and publish their progress toward meeting them.

Support for this proposal rose from 89% to 92%. The value of education (including the value of an educated society) was a positive lever of opinion change for this proposal. The Economic Freedom index (which concerns people being able to decide for themselves how they will spend money) similarly had a positive effect. The only interaction of interest was that Democrats who thought that local government was likely to be dominated by special interests tended to oppose this proposal.

The transcripts show support for transparency and accountability:

“I see the fact that there’s no disclosure of anything. When you ask someone, they stonewall you. They hide everything...”

“Here’s C5, what I like about it is because they would be required to publish an annual report.”

And respondents also see synergy with C1:

“C1 combined with C5 would increase the accountability, where the government needs to set standards and goals and show how their decisions are meeting those goals.”

The hope is that the accountability would lead to action if goals were not met:

“They can set up a mechanism of review. If certain levels of performance weren’t achieved, the the city or government, local government, would have to come up with an action plan they could present to the state or whatever agency they’re under...then have a review sooner..within a couple years if you corrected it.”

But some questioned whether it was necessary:

“Proposal [C] 5 says they should identify explicitly the results they seek...Now you said yourself, the people that run efficiently, they already do that.”

Proposal D1 Requiring legislation creating new programs or tax cuts that cost \$25 million or more to indicate how they will be paid for

This proposal rose from 84% to 88% after deliberation. The regressions identify three of our basic values as positive levers of opinion change on this proposal—concern for equality, economic freedom (people being able to make their own choices with respect to money) and the notion that government needs to reflect “the will of the people.”

The transcripts show an awareness of the need for the state to find some means of controlling its finances:

“The current balanced budget requirement does not impose enough fiscal discipline because we have seen budget gimmicks in the past years that allow the state to spend more than income revenues cover.”

[comparing this proposal to:] *what did Arnold do? He couldn’t balance the budget so he just borrowed.”*

On the other hand, the pay go requirement may render vulnerable programs that do not have powerful supporters:

“I like the transparency and seeing how much something’s going to cost, but I’m concerned about the third point on the con side. When they are looking for funding sources, they can delve into budget areas that do not have this powerful support entity and say “okay that’s where we’re going to take the money.”

Respondents see the logic of both the revenue and spending sides of the proposal:

“when I look at this pay as you go, if you have an idea for a new program, or you wanna say I wanna implement this tax cut, you have to say, well, what’s gonna change? What program are we gonna eliminate in order to have that tax cut, or what are we gonna do to make sure that we have enough to cover our expenses, which is what you would do with your own money, right, like you pay as you go.”

“It’s a double negative. It’s sort of an odd way of phrasing it, but yeah, if you’re gonna cut down in revenue, you have to figure out how that new gap in revenue is gonna be met by anything else.”

Proposal D5 Reassessing non-residential property more frequently than now

Support for this proposal increased significantly from 52% to 72%.

The equality index is a strong lever of opinion change in favor of this proposal. The economic freedom index, focused on people being able to make their own individual choices about their money, counts against it. In the regression on basic orientations, those who favor low taxes and small government tended to move against this proposal, but those who were in favor of making collective decisions even when some disagreed tended to support it. Democrats tended to support this proposal as did those who believed in state authority rather than local decisions.

Independents who favored a part time legislature tended to move against as did Republicans. Democrats who thought the legislature was in partisan deadlock tended to favor.

The transcripts show an awareness of fairness and equality arguments in support of this idea:

“It’s a split roll where commercial property gets reassessed every five years or something instead of never. Commercial property, technically, can never change hands even though the company that runs it can change or its owned by a holding company that leases it out to the people who actually operate it, so it will never change hands. They enjoy all the benefits and it’s the homeowners who have to shoulder the burden.”

“I have a problem with it in that it hurts small businesses the most. And small businesses are a big part of the economy and one reason why the economy is in such bad shape right now.”

“Right now you have (mention of a big aerospace company) owns a huge tract of land in the middle of LA. The same people basically own it...that hundreds of millions of dollars piece of property is still being taxed at 1976 rates.”

“I like how it says it increases fairness between residential and non-residential property.”

Proposal D7 Decreasing the super-majority vote required in the Legislature to raise taxes (about 67%) to 55%

Support for this proposal rose from 32% to 50%. The regressions show some basic values as levers of opinion change. The equality index works in favor while the economic freedom index (which may lead to opposition to most tax increases) lessens support. Those who believe in low

taxes and small government tend to oppose as do Republicans in general. But those who believe in the need for collective decisions even when some disagree tend to support this proposal. Independents who agree to the part-time legislature index (that part-time legislators will represent their districts more closely and will be less likely to be career politicians) tended to be against this proposal. The more independents thought the government wasted money, the more they opposed this proposal. Interestingly, Republicans who supported the part-time legislature index tended to support this proposal as did Democrats who thought there was government waste.

The transcripts focus on the deadlock in government balanced against some protection for minority points of view. The question they debate is what is the right threshold?

“I think that threshold is just too high. Because the way things are now you can’t get enough cooperation in both parties with a two-thirds rule to get the revenue that we need. So I think it’s just too high right now, two thirds.”

“Two-thirds is really difficult to get something passed. I mean I worked on two different tax increase things on property taxes, one for schools and one for that we actually passed for the fire department. And to get two thirds majority on those votes is a really difficult threshold to meet.”

“The reason for some higher percentage is that the higher you go, the more it’s okay, acceptable, to force whatever the position, whether it’s taxes or whatever, on an objecting minority. That principle is just basic in founding this country. The reason I could never support a 51 per cent vote on revenue issues. I just think it’s too oppressive. But I could say you could go from 66 to 60.”

“When people talk about the gridlock and removing the two-thirds majority, I cringe. Because basically what you are saying is we want a one-party rule and it doesn’t matter what party is in power. Just the principle of taking away the bargaining chip from the other party. When you but heads you force people to compromise. But if everything passed on a simple majority then you’re just giving power to one party.”

ⁱ Deliberative Polling is a trade mark of James S. Fishkin. Any fees from the trade mark go to support research at the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University. For more on Deliberative Polling see <http://cdd.stanford.edu>.

ⁱⁱ Detailed quantitative results for every proposal are presented in the body of the report.