

By [Gina Baleria](#) | June 30, 2011 9:30 a.m.



via <http://www.nextca.org/>

Increased support for longer legislative terms and a move toward local governance were some of the highlights of California's first ever [Deliberative Poll](#), which occurred from June 24-26 in Torrance, CA.

These and other preliminary results were released on Wednesday at [The Commonwealth Club](#) in San Francisco.

Deliberative poll creator and Stanford professor **James Fishkin** said the goal is to allow people to get educated on issues and have the time and space to think critically.

"We put the whole state in one room... to provide an opportunity not for just like-minded people to speak to each other, but to share across the political divide," Fishkin said. "The themes that came out were transparency, accountability, citizen empowerment, making the system work somehow."

Deliberative Poll participant **Sandra Turnbull** from Oakland attended the Commonwealth Club event and said it was incredible to be part of the historic Deliberative Poll.

"It brought me together with people from all over the state and with all different points of view," said Turnbull. "Usually, I'm speaking to the choir, and it was really nice to be in a situation where I could hear from people who were older than me, younger than me, more conservative, more liberal... and learn from other people."

Complete results are not yet available, but Fishkin says the preliminary findings are fascinating,

Support for lengthening legislative term limits increased 35% from the beginning of the weekend to the end, once people had the chance to discuss and deliberate.

"This is the most dramatic thing I've seen in a long time," said Fishkin, especially since other polls show that people do not think highly of the legislature. "I think they came to the conclusion that the legislature was having difficulty... and they felt something had to be done."

Participants also increased their support for two-year budgets by 16 points and moved toward support of restructuring government. "There was a sense that done in the right way, local government might be held accountable for local service delivery."

"The results show unequivocally that Californians are tired of things standing in place," said CA Forward Leadership Council member **Lenny Mendonca**. They don't have a lot of trust in the legislature or the process as a whole. They want much more accountability and performance."

CA Forward Leadership Council member **David Davenport** said he "came away encouraged. There's so much in the media about how frustrating it is to live in California – businesses and people are leaving the state. But, The Californians who attended this deliberative poll were very passionate. They were positive that we can improve the state [and] move California Forward again."

412 registered voters participated – a scientifically random sample of the entire state. The attendance rate was higher than Fishkin had ever seen.

"This was so amazing... they have to drive the whole length of the state or get on an airplane... this has never happened," Fishkin said. "I'm still sort of stunned."

Complete results will be available in mid-July.