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Orange County Residents' Views on
November Ballot Items Dealing With Primary Elections

- Primary Elections: Prop 60 Leads, Prop 62 Trails in Orange County
With Many Still Undecided

Primary Elections

Two competing measures appear on the November ballot—Props 60 and 62. Prop. 60 seeks to maintain the status quo in the way California’s primary elections are held, while Prop. 62 proposes to change it.

Proposition 60, placed on the ballot by the state Legislature, would keep the present “closed” primary system in which the top vote-getters in each party’s primary election are placed on the November general election ballot. Proposition 62 would create a system in which voters can choose any candidate in a state or local primary election, regardless of the voter’s or the candidate’s party affiliation. The two top-vote-getters would be placed on the November ballot even if they belonged to the same party. Proposition 62 exempts presidential primaries. In late October, Gov. Schwarzenegger endorsed Prop. 62, despite opposition to it from his own party.

A measure similar to Prop. 62, Prop. 198, was approved by a large majority of the voters in 1996 and was used in the primaries of 1998 and 2000 before it was invalidated by the courts. The current Prop. 62 is intended to survive the court challenges that invalidated Prop. 198.

Since Props 60 and 62 are in direct contradiction with each other, if both pass, the measure with the greatest level of voter support will prevail.

As Table 1 shows, Orange County and California respondents hold very similar views on Prop 60, the status quo measure that would retain closed party primary elections. While Prop. 60 led at the time of these surveys, fully half of Orange County and statewide respondents still said they didn’t know how they would vote—a very large proportion.

Fewer than half of the respondents say they are undecided on Prop. 62, the open primary alternative to Prop 60. Orange County residents differ from the state as a whole on this measure. While Californians, as a whole, indicate modest support for Prop. 62, Orange County respondents indicate slight opposition to it.

“The public’s views on Prop. 60 are clearer than those on Prop. 62,” said Phil Gianos, professor of political science and director of the Center for Public Policy. “Support for the status quo—Prop 60—is fairly strong while opinion on 62 appears to be less focused. It’s interesting that at the state level, opinions are contradictory, with support for *both* measures despite they’re being contradictory, while in Orange County our results indicate that respondents are a little more consistent. They affirmatively support the status quo by supporting 60 *and* reinforce that view by slight opposition to Prop. 62.”

“For both these measures,” said Stephen Stambough, assistant professor of political science at CSUF, “there appears to be a significant lack of information and interest on the part of the public. This is especially true for Prop. 60, both in Orange County and statewide. For Prop. 60, that doesn’t bode well for its passage, because the response of voters is often to vote ‘no’ in such situations.”

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“For Prop. 62, there are fewer undecided voters,” said Stambough. “Of the two measures, Prop. 62 appears to have the best prospect of passage, and those prospects have skyrocketed now that now that Gov. Schwarzenegger has endorsed it. Such endorsements can be very effective in low information campaigns of this sort.”

The Orange County Business Council officially opposes Prop. 60 and supports Prop. 62; CSUF and the Center for Public Policy do not take positions on ballot measures.

Table 1

Orange County and California Views on Primary Election Initiatives

Likely Vote on Propositions 60 and 62 (Primary Elections) Among Orange County and California Respondents (Likely Voters)

Proposition 60

	<u>Orange County</u>	<u>California</u>
Yes	32%	34%
No	18	16
Don't Know	50	50
Number of Respondents	374	586

Proposition 62

	<u>Orange County</u>	<u>California</u>
Yes	35%	44%
No	40	31
Don't Know	25	25
Number of Respondents	374	586

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Note: Orange County data from CSUF Center for Public Policy and the Orange County Business Council survey; California data from the October Field Poll.

Question wording in both surveys:

Have you seen, read or heard anything about Proposition 60, having to do with the election rights of political parties?

- YES
- NO
- DON'T KNOW
- REFUSED

Proposition 60 is called the “Election Rights of Political Parties” legislative constitutional amendment. It requires that the November general election ballot include the candidate receiving the most votes from the candidates who ran in each party’s primary election. This would mean that each of the two main parties, Republican and Democrat, would have candidates on the ballot. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES, NO or DON’T KNOW HOW YOU WOULD VOTE on Proposition 60?

- YES
- NO
- DON'T KNOW
- REFUSED

Have you seen, read or heard anything about Proposition 62, having to do with how primary elections are conducted in California?

- YES
- NO
- DON'T KNOW
- REFUSED

Proposition 62 is called the “Election, Primaries” initiative constitutional amendment. It requires that California hold primary elections—the elections held in March—where voters may vote for any state or federal candidate regardless of the party registration of the voter or the candidate. The two primary election candidates receiving the most votes for an office, whether they are candidates from the same or different parties, would be listed on the general election ballot—that is, it would be possible, if this measure passes, that two Democrats or two Republicans could be on the ballot for one office without a member of the other party being listed. The proposition does not apply to presidential nominations. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES, NO or DON’T KNOW HOW YOU WOULD VOTE on Proposition 62?

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YES
NO
DON'T KNOW
REFUSED

In the Orange County survey, likely voters were defined as those who told us that they were likely or very likely to vote; the Field Poll does not report how it defines likely voters.

The current survey was conducted for the CSUF Center for Public Policy and Orange County Business Council team by the Social Science Research Center at California State University, Fullerton (SSRC). The SSRC Director is Gregory Robinson.

Telephone interviews were conducted utilizing Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) equipment and software. The CATI system is an information gathering protocol that contributes to the accuracy of data and to preserving the random nature of the sample.

A draft survey instrument was provided by the Center for Public Policy and refined by the Social Science Research Center for comprehensiveness, flow, length and factors that influence respondent cooperation and interest. Sample design and technical assistance with data analysis was provided by the SSRC.

Interviews were conducted Monday through Thursday 4-9 p.m. and on Saturday and Sunday between 2-8 p.m. between Sept. 30 and Oct. 20. Calculated conservatively, survey items to which 409 randomly selected respondents reply are associated with a confidence interval of plus or minus 4.94 percent.

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