



BLOG POST · JULY 27, 2022

Anxious California Voters Will Weigh In on Climate Policy this Fall

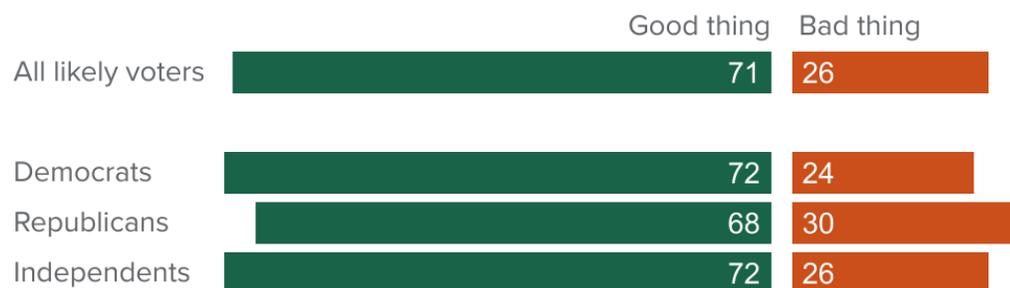
Mark Baldassare

This blog post from Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO, will be published at 9:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Wednesday, July 27, 2022, to accompany the release of PPIC's new statewide survey. The information in this post—like the survey itself—is embargoed for 9:00 p.m. PT on July 27. Once the post is live, it will be available online at <https://www.ppic.org/blog/anxious-california-voters-will-weigh-in-on-climate-policy-this-fall/>.

Californians are in a state of angst over the related threats of drought, wildfires, and climate change—even as they struggle with economic woes—according to the [July PPIC environment survey](#). Many residents look to state government to lead on climate policies amidst growing signs that [President Biden and Congress](#) are in political gridlock and the [US Supreme Court](#) has acted to limit federal actions. Most California voters say they want to weigh in on environmental policies at the ballot box, and they like what voters have done in the past when faced with making big policy decisions in response to environmental crises. Californians will have another turn to weigh in on environmental policy with [Proposition 30](#) this fall. This ballot measure would provide funding for programs to reduce greenhouse emissions by increasing the tax on personal income over \$2 million—and it has early, favorable reviews.

About seven in ten likely voters say that it is a “good thing” that a majority of voters can make laws and change public policies about environmental issues by passing initiatives. At a time of deep partisan divisions, it is noteworthy that strong and similar majorities across political parties (72% Democrats, 68% Republicans, 72% independents) agree. Strong majorities across the state’s regions—as well as across age, gender, homeownership, income, and racial/ethnic groups— also say it is a good thing that a majority of voters can make environmental policies by passing initiatives. This widely held belief is consistent with past [PPIC surveys](#) that find that most likely voters view the initiative process overall as a “good thing.”

An overwhelming majority of California likely voters say it is a good thing that a majority of voters can make laws and change public policies about environmental issues by passing initiatives



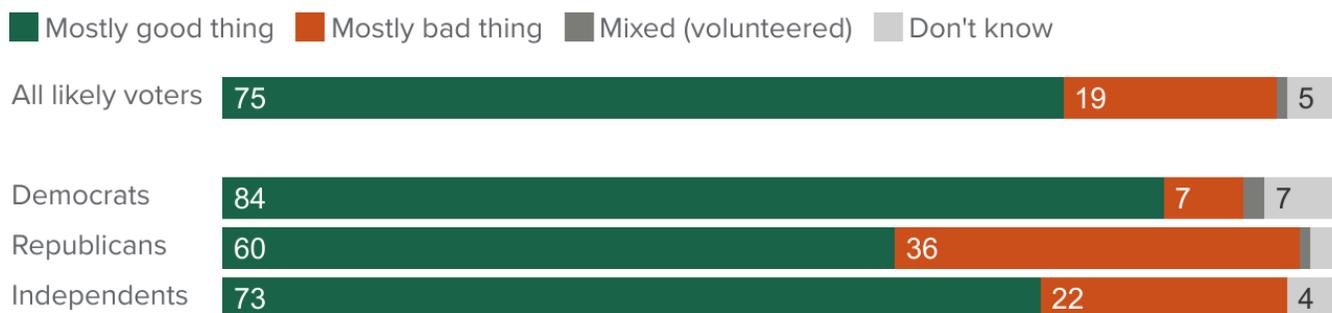
SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, July 2022. Survey was fielded from July 8–15, 2022 (n=1,648 adults, n=1,132 likely voters).

FROM: PPIC Blog, July 2022.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of [Proposition 20](#) in the wake of the [1969 Santa Barbara oil spill](#) and public outcries about coastal access. This citizens’ initiative, titled “The Coastal Zone Conservation Act,” passed in 1972 ([55% yes](#)) despite a [100-to-1](#) spending advantage by its opponents. Today, 75% of likely voters say that it has been “mostly a good thing” that Proposition 20 passed, establishing the California Coastal Commission and regional commissions to plan and regulate the use of land and water in California’s coastal zone. Solid majorities have positive views of Proposition 20 across party lines (84% Democrats, 60% Republicans, 73% independents). Overwhelming majorities across regions and among age, homeownership, income, and racial/ethnic groups say it has been mostly a good thing. This favorable view of Proposition 20’s impact reflects

Californians' concern for their coastline: 93% say that ocean and beach conditions are important to the economy and quality of life for California's future.

Most likely voters say passing Prop 20 – the 1972 measure that established the California Coastal Commission and regional commissions – has been mostly a good thing



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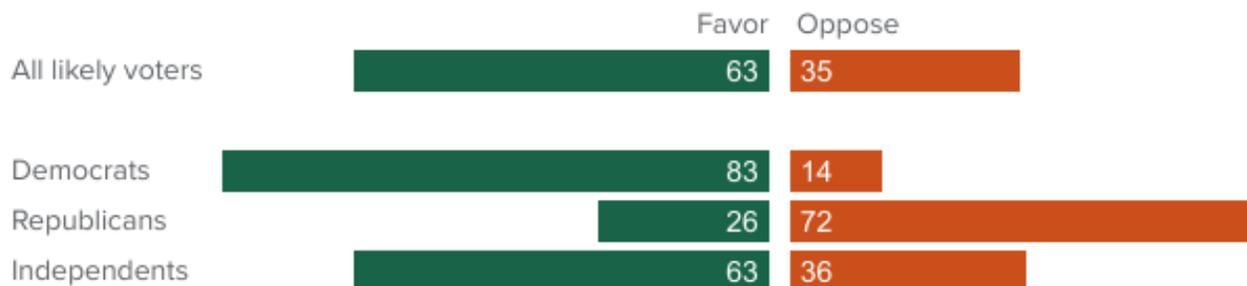
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California voters have cast ballots on several major environmental initiatives over the past half century. For example, Proposition 65 in 1986 (63% yes) created restrictions on toxic discharges, Proposition 132 in 1990 (56% yes) established marine protection zones, Proposition 23 in 2010 (61% no) was an effort to suspend the “Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006,” and Proposition 39 in 2012 (61% yes) raised corporate taxes to pay for clean energy projects. This year, two environmental initiatives qualified for the November ballot, and one will go forward as Proposition 30.

After reading a brief summary of Proposition 30, 63% of likely voters say that they favor this citizens' initiative, which provides funding for state programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the tax on personal income over \$2 million. The additional revenue would support zero emission vehicle programs and wildfire-related activities. Notably, and in a departure from the Proposition 20 trends, partisans are deeply divided about this climate policy (favor: 83% Democrats, 26% Republicans, 63% independents). Half or more across regions and demographic groups are in favor.

We caution against reading too much into these results since they measure early support for the concept behind Proposition 30, not the proposition itself. (Later PPIC surveys will use the exact wording of the Proposition 30 ballot title and label—including the initiative's fiscal impacts—and will be taken at a time when voters are cognizant of the pros and cons from the voter's guide and paid commercials.) Still, the results are consistent with the solid support and partisan divisions on climate change reflected in our July survey—and are a harbinger of things to come in what is likely to be a lively debate about state climate policy.

A solid majority of likely voters favor the November ballot initiative that would tax personal income over \$2 million with revenues used to fund programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and wildfire-related activities



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In closing, it is important to note that initiatives are not seen by voters as a panacea for making state climate policy. When it comes to environmental issues, 46% of likely voters view the initiative process as controlled “a lot” by special interests and 47% see the legislative process as controlled “a lot” by special interests. Moreover, legislative bills and executive actions on state climate policy have strong majority support in our July survey: 68% of likely voters want the state government to take action, separate from the federal government, on climate issues. Forty-five percent say that candidates’ positions on environmental issues are “very important” in their vote for governor this year.

Voters seem to prefer a “[hybrid democracy](#)” which blends the initiative and legislative processes. In response to an environmental initiative that was eligible for the November ballot, the legislature passed and the governor signed a bill requiring state regulations to reduce plastic waste. Eighty-three percent of likely voters say they favor this law—including solid majorities across parties (94% Democrats, 63% Republicans, 85% independents) and overwhelming majorities across regions and demographic groups.

When it comes to climate change, 69% of likely voters say it is either very or somewhat important for California to act as a world leader. The good news for voters is that they get to be the decision makers on a climate policy this fall. Win or lose, Proposition 30 will be a chance to talk about areas of agreement and disagreement, and an opportunity to try to reach a broader political consensus on one of the most vexing issues of our time.