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California voters fear federal interference in the state's election

-- Large majorities also critical of this year's ballot propositions --

by Mark DiCamillo
Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*

As voters go to the polls to vote today, the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds that about half (49%) are not confident that the state's election will be free of federal interference, and nearly two in three (63%) express concerns about the federal government stopping the vote count before all ballots have been processed and tabulated, with 33% of voters very concerned.

In addition, large majorities of the voting electorate express major criticisms of this year's ballot propositions, with more than eight in ten saying the way they were worded made it difficult for them to understand and that special interests had largely taken control over which initiatives qualified for the ballot. Another 62% felt there were too many of them to vote on this year.

These findings come from a *Berkeley IGS Poll* of a random sample of 2,787 registered voters across California completed October 19-25 in English and Spanish.

Observed Matt A. Barreto, Faculty Director of the UCLA Voting Rights Project, "This poll makes clear that California voters are reacting to unprecedented challenges to democracy in real-time. Voters are voicing alarm bells when a majority express concerns that the Federal Government will attempt to intervene after election day to stop the vote count. And this includes majorities in every region of the state. Given that California is currently defending itself against DOJ lawsuits before the election, it is not surprising that California voters are concerned over these threats to our democracy."

In reacting to voter criticisms of ballot propositions, Professor Eric Schickler, co-Director of the Institute of Governmental Studies, said, "California voters are dissatisfied with how the state's ballot proposition process is working. The initiative is meant to be an outlet for voters when special interest groups lead legislators to fail to respond to their concerns. But now most voters believe the initiative process is itself too beholden to special interests."

About half of the state's registered voters are not confident that today's elections will be free of federal interference

Forty-nine percent of California voters report being not too or not at all confident that this year's elections will be free of federal government interference, while 42% say they are confident.

Democrats and liberals are the subgroups more likely to say this, with about six in ten lacking confidence that the federal government will not interfere in the state's elections this year. Republicans and political conservatives are less apt to feel this way, with a majority (54%) expressing confidence and 27% not confident.

Fears of federal interference are also somewhat greater among women, younger voters and voters of color.

Table 1

How confident are you that this year's election in California will be free of federal interference?

(among registered voters)

	Confident (net) %	Very confident %	Somewhat confident %	Not confident (net) %	Not too confident %	Not at all confident %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	**42**	**17**	**24**	**49**	**29**	**20**	**10**
Party registration							
Democrats	38	10	28	58	36	22	4
Republicans	54	34	19	27	15	12	19
No Party Preference/others	38	14	24	52	29	23	10
Political ideology							
Strongly conservative	58	46	12	23	11	12	19
Somewhat conservative	52	30	23	33	18	15	14
Moderate	40	15	26	47	29	18	12
Somewhat liberal	35	7	28	61	34	26	4
Strongly liberal	34	7	26	63	38	25	4
Gender							
Male	47	18	28	44	26	18	10
Female	36	15	21	54	31	22	10
Age							
18-29	36	13	23	55	36	19	10
30-39	34	11	23	56	32	24	10
40-49	44	15	29	45	21	24	11
50-64	42	21	22	45	27	18	13
65 or older	49	23	26	45	27	18	6
Race/ethnicity							
White non-Hispanic	48	19	29	44	24	19	8
Latino	33	16	17	54	31	23	13
Asian American	43	14	29	51	35	16	7
Black/African American	29	17	12	64	41	22	8

The sum of percentages may add to slightly more or slightly less than 100% to the net subtotals due to rounding.

Nearly two in three are concerned that the federal government might try to stop the vote count before all ballots are counted

By a greater than two-to-one margin (63% to 30%) voters here express concerns that the federal government might try to stop the vote count in the days after the election before California and other states have completed processing and counting their ballots in the midterm. About one in three (33%) say they are very concerned.

There are large partisan and ideological differences related to this possibility, with 85% of Democrats and similar proportions of liberal voters expressing concern, compared to only about one in five Republican (22%) and strongly conservative voters (18%) reporting such concerns. About half of Democrats and strongly liberals say they are very concerned.

Concerns about the federal government attempting to stop the vote counts are broadly shared, with majorities of men and women and voters of all age and racial subgroups expressing concern.

Table 2

How concerned are you that the federal government might try to stop the vote count in the days after the election, before California and other states have completed processing and counting all the ballots cast in this year's general election?

(among registered voters)

	Concerned (net) %	Very concerned %	Somewhat concerned %	Not concerned (net) %	Not too concerned %	Not at all concerned %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	**63**	**33**	**30**	**30**	**11**	**19**	**7**
Party registration							
Democrats	85	48	37	12	9	3	3
Republicans	22	8	14	68	16	52	10
No Party Preference/others	64	33	31	27	11	16	9
Political ideology							
Strongly conservative	18	12	5	78	7	72	4
Somewhat conservative	29	11	18	61	19	42	10
Moderate	64	31	33	25	11	14	11
Somewhat liberal	84	44	40	13	10	3	3
Strongly liberal	86	51	35	11	10	1	2
Gender							
Male	57	28	29	36	12	24	7
Female	69	39	30	25	11	14	6
Age							
18-29	61	28	33	29	15	14	10
30-39	65	36	28	28	15	13	7
40-49	57	29	27	34	13	21	10
50-64	64	33	31	32	7	25	4
65 or older	66	37	29	30	9	21	4
Race/ethnicity							
White non-Hispanic	62	30	32	33	11	23	5
Latino	66	40	27	25	8	17	8
Asian American	62	29	32	29	17	12	10
Black/African American	70	42	28	27	19	9	3

The sum of percentages may add to slightly more or slightly less than 100% or to the net subtotals due to rounding.

Large majorities of the voting electorate are critical of this year's statewide ballot propositions

There is considerable criticism among Californians considered most likely to vote in today's elections about this year's statewide ballot propositions. Much of this criticism has to do with the way the propositions were worded making them difficult to understand and with the perception that special interests had largely taken control over which initiatives qualified for the ballot.

Greater than eight in ten of the state's likely voters (82%) agreed with the statement, "the way most of the ballot propositions are worded in this election makes them hard for me to understand what they

would end up doing." A similarly large majority (82%) also agreed with the statement, "special interest groups have now largely taken control over which initiatives end up qualifying for the ballot."

Both of these criticisms are shared by voters across all party, ideological and demographic subgroups of the electorate, with about eight in ten voters across each subgroup agreeing with these two statements.

A somewhat smaller but still sizable majority, 62%, also agreed with the statement "there are too many ballot propositions on the ballot this year." Older voters were more likely to agree than younger voters about this, with seven in ten voters ages 65 or older (70%) agreeing that there were too many propositions on this year's election ballot, while less than half of those under age 40 felt this way.

Table 3

Reactions to criticisms about the statewide ballot propositions in this year's election

(among likely voters in this year's election)

	Wording makes them too hard to understand		Special interests have control over which ones qualify		Too many on the ballot this year	
	Agree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Disagree %
Total registered voters	**82**	**14**	**82**	**6**	**62**	**18**
Party registration						
Democrats	82	14	83	5	62	20
Republicans	83	13	83	7	59	16
No Party Preference/others	81	14	79	6	64	16
Gender						
Male	78	16	84	5	60	22
Female	86	11	81	7	64	15
Age						
18-29	83	15	83	3	43	37
30-39	78	18	81	4	47	25
40-49	78	16	82	7	55	24
50-64	84	12	80	10	64	15
65 or older	83	12	84	4	70	13

Differences between the sum of percentages for each statement and 100% equal those with no opinion

About the Survey

The findings in this report are based on a *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. The poll was conducted online in English and Spanish October 19-25, 2026 among 2,787 registered voters throughout California, including a weighted subset of 1,447 voters who had already voted or were considered likely to vote in this year's election. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times* and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

Data collection for the poll was completed by distributing email and text message invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Each email or text invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. Invitations were sent in Spanish to voters who requested that their official voting materials be sent to them in Spanish and given the choice of conducting the survey in English or Spanish. Reminders were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt-out link was

provided for voters not wishing to receive further invitations. Voters who said that they had already voted were included after verification that their ballots had been received by their county registrar.

Samples of the state's registered voters were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California and were derived from information contained on state and local voter registration rolls, which are public documents. The sample was stratified by age and gender to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents.

To protect the anonymity of respondents, the personally identifiable information of each voter that was listed on their voting record was purged from the data file prior to data analysis and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. In addition, after the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the data file to align the overall registered voter sample to population characteristics of all registered voters both statewide and within major regions of the state.

The sampling error associated with the survey results is difficult to calculate precisely because of sample stratification and post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that findings from the overall registered voter sample have an approximate sampling error of +/- 2.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from the likely voter sample have an approximate sampling error of +/- 3 percentage points.

Question wording

The following are some statements about voting on the statewide ballot propositions. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each one. ***(ORDERING RANDOMIZED)***

-- The way most of the ballot propositions are worded in this election makes them hard for me to understand what they would end up doing.

-- There are too many ballot propositions on the ballot this year.

-- Special interest groups have now largely taken control over which initiatives end up qualifying for the ballot.

When thinking about the upcoming general election, how confident are you that this year's elections in California will be free of federal interference – very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, not at all confident?

How concerned are you that the federal government might try to stop the vote count in the days after the election, before California and other states have completed processing and counting all the ballots cast in this year's general election – very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, not at all concerned?

About the Institute of Governmental Studies

The Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is an interdisciplinary organized research unit that pursues a vigorous program of research, education, publication and public service. A component of the University of California system's flagship Berkeley campus, IGS is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. IGS's co-directors are Professor Eric Schickler and Professor G. Cristina Mora.

IGS conducts periodic surveys of public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll, which is disseminated widely, seeks to provide a broad measure of contemporary public opinion, and to generate data for subsequent scholarly analysis. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll.* For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll.