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## IGS Poll

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## ***Californians show broad-based support for outreach efforts to encourage voting among under-represented populations.***

A *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted on behalf of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund among 5,095 California registered voters finds broad-based public support for outreach programs designed to encourage voter participation among the state's under-represented populations.

The poll finds large majorities of voters supporting the funding of community organizations and other non-partisan voter outreach groups to provide information and education to voters on when and how to vote. Californians also support the establishment of a state "democracy fund" to support election offices and pay for community groups to conduct voter education and provide translation and interpreter assistance programs for voters.

Support for these programs and services includes large majorities of the state's Democrats and No Party Preference voters, as well as both white voters and voters of color.

Highlights from the poll's results include the following:

- Three in four voters (74%) support state government efforts to expand voter outreach services to encourage participation among underrepresented groups, such as younger adults, voters of color, and limited-English speaking voters. Just 17% are opposed.
- By a 70% to 19% margin voters endorse state and local government funding for community organizations and non-partisan voter outreach groups to alert voters when an election is being held and their options for voting.
- A two-to-one majority favors the creation of a state "democracy fund" dedicated to supporting election offices, translating more voting materials, expanding access to voting, and providing funding for community groups to conduct voter education.
- Additionally, the poll finds that two in three voters (65%) support state-provided comprehensive translation and interpreter assistance services to populations not covered by the federal Voting Rights Act, but who account for at least 5% (or 10,000) of voters in a county. Support increases to three in four voters when they are asked more specifically about providing translated voters guides (77%), providing voter registration materials in language (76%), making bi-lingual poll workers available for those who vote in person (76%), and making translated ballots available for those voting by mail or in-person (75%).

### **Context and commentary**

California has more immigrants, and more limited-English proficient voters than any other state, but the language services required for elections under state law do not cover many of the state's diverse language groups. Currently, comprehensive language services are provided only in counties that meet the thresholds of the federal Voting Rights Act. Some services are required locally under state law for language groups that do not meet the federal thresholds, but they do not include critical components of voting, such as translated voter registration forms, ballots or voter guides. The legislature is currently considering a bill (AB 884) that would make more services available to groups that do not meet the federal Voting Rights Act thresholds.

In some past elections, the legislature has appropriated funds for voter outreach and education, but no significant new state investments have been made in voter education for the November general election. In recent years, community groups have received state funding to do outreach around census participation and Covid vaccinations. Some counties are already dedicating voter outreach resources to grants for community groups who can be trusted messengers to deliver information about when an election is being held and how to vote.

IGS Co-Director, G. Cristina Mora notes “the findings show that California voters are keen to have more widespread democratic participation in elections. While many current trends have placed the future of democracy on shaky ground, including documented voter suppression tactics in other states, these findings suggest that public opinion in California is very much invested in strong and broad-based democratic participation.”

“A functioning and healthy democracy is one that is participatory and representative of the people,” said Melissa Romero, Deputy Legislative Director with California Environmental Voters. “It should be the top priority of every elected official in California to ensure that voters have the information and education they need, especially in a state as diverse as California.”

“Voters of color and young voters are the fastest-growing voter groups in the U.S.,” said Reshma Shamasunder, Executive Director of Asian American Futures. “It’s exciting to see strong support for outreach to communities often left out in California’s political process. We have the public’s support—let’s make sure every eligible voter in California has a voice in shaping our state’s future and democracy this critical election year.”

“While California has made serious progress in making voter registration and voting easier, one area in which we lag behind several other states is language access to our elections,” said Jonathan Mehta Stein, Executive Director of California Common Cause. “California has millions of limited-English speaking immigrant voters. They deserve to cast their ballots without barriers. This polling shows huge portions of the California public believe in that vision.”

“Our communities want to be a part of California, and having access to election information and in-language ballots would mean that our communities would not have to struggle when they vote,” said Rahmo Abid, Director of Campaigns and Organizing with the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans. “Many new recent arrivals to California do not speak the languages covered by state and federal law, and the state should fix this by recognizing our communities and providing access to information and ballots we can understand.”

“Too many of California’s 3 million eligible voters who use non-English languages are not able to fairly and equally register and cast their ballots,” said Deanna Kitamura, Voting Rights Managing Attorney at Asian Law Caucus. “The poll’s widespread support for comprehensive language services shows that Californians want voters to have equal access to the polls, whether we speak

Somali, Arabic, Korean, Hmong, or Khmer. Our democracy is stronger when we all are able to cast our vote.”

“At over 26 million eligible voters, California is America’s largest democracy,” said Christian Arana, Vice President of Civic Power and Policy at the Latino Community Foundation. “California voters are rightfully asking their elected leaders to invest in their voter participation via outreach and community-based organizations. To safeguard our mantle as the nation’s beacon of democracy, we must heed these overwhelming calls.”

**Survey findings across voter subgroups**

The poll finds consistent and broad-based support for these programs among the state’s registered Democratic and non-partisan voters, as well as among whites and voters of color. By contrast, Republicans hold either mixed or negative opinions about each of these programs.

*Table 1*

**Do you support or oppose state government expanding voter outreach services to encourage voting participation among underrepresented groups, such as younger adults, people of color, and voters who do not speak English well? (among California registered voters)**

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	91	4	6
Republicans	38	48	14
No Party Preference/others	75	15	10
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	70	22	7
Latino	73	15	12
Black/African American	83	9	8
Asian American/Pacific Islander (net)	<u>84</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>
Chinese American	83	6	10
Vietnamese American	82	11	8
Korean American	93	1	6
Other AAPI	84	12	4

*Table 2*

**Do you support or oppose state and local governments devoting funding and resources to community organizations and non-partisan voter outreach groups to provide information to voters alerting them as to when elections are being held and their options for voting? (among California registered voters)**

	<b>Support</b> %	<b>Oppose</b> %	<b>No opinion</b> %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	86	7	7
Republicans	42	45	13
No Party Preference/others	69	20	11
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	71	22	7
Latino	68	19	12
Black/African American	77	13	11
Asian American/Pacific Islander (net)	<u>75</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>10</u>
Chinese American	74	14	13
Vietnamese American	69	18	13
Korean American	80	11	9
Other AAPI	77	14	9

*Table 3*

**Would you support or oppose creation of a state-funded “democracy fund” dedicated to support election offices, translate more voting materials, expand access to voting and pay for community groups to conduct voter education? (among California registered voters)**

	<b>Support</b> %	<b>Oppose</b> %	<b>No opinion</b> %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>8</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	79	13	7
Republicans	23	68	8
No Party Preference/others	60	31	9
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	56	39	5
Latino	63	25	11
Black/African American	66	24	11
Asian American/Pacific Islander (net)	<u>67</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>9</u>
Chinese American	69	21	11
Vietnamese American	59	29	13
Korean American	73	22	4
Other AAPI	68	22	9

**Table 4**

**Would you support or oppose the state offering comprehensive translation and interpreter voting assistance to populations not covered under the federal Voting Rights Act, but who account for at least 5% or 10,000 of the voters in a county?**  
*(among California registered voters)*

	Support %	Oppose %	No opinion %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	83	9	7
Republicans	34	58	7
No Party Preference/others	64	24	12
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	61	32	7
Latino	69	20	11
Black/African American	67	22	11
Asian American/Pacific Islander <i>(net)</i>	<u>78</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>8</u>
Chinese American	79	14	7
Vietnamese American	82	8	9
Korean American	84	9	7
Other AAPI	74	19	7

**Table 5**

**Would you support or oppose California offering the following specific types of translation and interpreter assistance services for voters not covered by the federal Voting Rights Act, but who account for at least 5% (or 10,000) of voters in a county?**  
*(among California registered voters)*

	Total registered voters %	Democrat s %	Republican s %	No Party Preference / others %
<u><b>Providing translated voter guides</b></u>				
Support	77	90	50	79
Oppose	17	5	45	13
No opinion	5	5	5	7
<u><b>Providing voter registration materials in-language</b></u>				
Support	76	89	50	77
Oppose	17	6	44	16
No opinion	6	5	6	7
<u><b>Making bilingual poll workers available when voting in person</b></u>				
Support	76	87	49	79
Oppose	18	7	45	14
No opinion	6	5	6	7
<u><b>Making available translated ballots for voting by mail or in person</b></u>				

Support	75	89	45	78
Oppose	19	6	50	15
No opinion	5	5	5	6

**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 on behalf of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund. The poll was administered online May 29-June 4, 2024, in five languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean. A total of 5,095 registered voters across California were included in the survey.

The poll was conducted by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state’s registered voters. Each email invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provided voters with a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. To accommodate non-English language voters, voters whose voting record indicated that they preferred to have their voting materials sent to them in a Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese or Korean were sent their email invitations in-language asking them to choose which language they preferred to complete the survey. Reminder emails were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further email invitations. Voter email addresses were derived from public information contained on the state’s voter registration rolls and were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California.

To protect the anonymity of respondents, each voter’s email address and all other personally identifiable information included on their voting record were purged from the data file and replaced with an anonymous identification number during data processing. After the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to align the sample to population characteristics of the overall registered vote statewide, and where possible, within each of the state’s major regions.

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 based on the overall sample of registered voters are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

**Question wording**

Would you support or oppose state government expanding voter outreach services to encourage voting participation among underrepresented groups, such as younger adults and people of color, and voters who do not speak English well?

Would you support or oppose state and local governments devoting funding and resources to community organizations and other non-partisan voter outreach groups to provide information and resources to voters alerting them as to when elections are being held and their options for returning their ballot?

Would you support or oppose the creation of a state funded ‘democracy fund’ dedicated to support election offices, translate more materials, expand access to voting, and pay for community groups to conduct voter education?

Would you support or oppose the state offering comprehensive translation and interpreter voting assistance services to populations that do not currently receive them under the federal Voting Rights Act, but account for at least 5% or include at least 10,000 of the voters in a county?

Would you support or oppose California offering the following specific types of translation and interpreter assistance services for these voters?

- (1) Making available translated ballots for voting by mail or in-person
- (2) Providing voter registration materials in-language
- (3) Providing translated voter guides
- (4) Making bi-lingual workers available when voting in-person

#### **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 Associate Professor G. Cristina Mora.

IGS conducted periodic surveys of California public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll seeks to provide broad measures of contemporary public opinion and generate data for scholarly analysis. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of the poll. For a complete listing of reports issued by the poll, please visit <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

#### **About the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund**

The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund works to advance equality and justice so every person can thrive and live life with dignity and hope. Rooted in the Bay Area, it focuses on a set of issues that include building a fairer, more representative democracy in California; advancing more humane approaches to immigration and expanding opportunities for immigrant youth and families; and making higher education more affordable for lower-income California students. It has awarded over \$695 million in grants since its founding in 1953.