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## IGS Poll

### Title

Release #2026-06: Democracy and Voting Rights

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8bk2x7kd>

### Journal

Berkeley IGS Poll

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### Publication Date

2026-04-02



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Release #2026-06

Thursday, April 2, 2026

***California Voters Express Serious Concern about American Democracy; Strongly Support Ballot Initiative Funding Transparency, Voting Rights Protections, and Enhanced Language Access to the Ballot.***

The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds that voters favor reforms to ensure greater equality and transparency in the state's electoral process. Fully 76% of California voters support requiring that the top three funders in support of and the top three funders opposed to a state ballot measure are listed as part of the official ballot summaries provided to voters. Just 3% are opposed, with 21% offering no opinion. This is a rare reform issue on which Democrats (78%), Republicans (74%), and No Party Preference (75%) all agree by overwhelming margins.

With the federal Voting Rights Act in the process of being rolled back by the U.S. Supreme Court, a new proposal has been introduced in the state legislature to enact a new California Voting Rights Act. The survey asked voters whether they would support California enacting its own Voting Rights Act to protect from discrimination and voter suppression. Fully 66% of registered voters supported the proposal, with 21% opposed and the remaining 13% offering no opinion. This proposal divided the parties sharply, with 88% of Democrats in favor, as compared to 25% of Republicans. No Party Preference voters supported the measure by a wide margin, 66% to 19%.

The new legislative proposal includes an expansion of language services coverage. A substantial majority (59%) of voters also favor 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 5,000 of the voters in a county. Twenty-six percent of voters oppose this change, with the remaining 16% offering no opinion. As with the question of adopting a California Voting Rights Act, this issue also splits the parties, with 79% of Democrats supportive but just 24% of Republicans agreeing; No Party Preference voters, however, support the proposal by 58% to 23%.

When asked to evaluate the state of American democracy today, 67% expressed the view that democracy is under attack; another 23% believe American democracy is being tested

but is not under attack, while just 9% report that American democracy is in no danger. This represents a small increase from the already high share of voters (64%) who believed American democracy was under attack in IGS's June 2025 survey.

IGS Co-Director Eric Schickler noted that, "Californians are deeply concerned about the state of American democracy – and agree on at least some reforms to improve transparency about campaign funding, even as Democrats and Republicans have very different views about the need for legislation to protect voting rights and language access to voting."

"Today's *Berkeley IGS Poll* results echo what we've been hearing in communities across the state: voters are concerned about democracy and worried about federal attacks on our right to vote." said Aaron Robertson, Director of Political Voice for Catalyst California.

### **California Voters Favor Greater Transparency on Ballot Initiative Funding**

Statewide ballot initiatives have long been the subjects of extremely expensive campaigns. Critics have charged that it is often difficult for voters to know which groups were behind the advertisements in support of and opposed to the proposed initiatives. The IGS survey asked voters whether they would support or oppose a requirement that the top three funders of each initiative be listed as part of the official ballot summaries provided to voters. This reform garnered widespread, bipartisan support: 76% of all registered voters were supportive, as compared to 3% opposed and 21% who offered no opinion. The proposal garnered at least 70% support among each partisan group (Democrats, Republicans, No Party Preference voters), in each of the state's regions, and genders. There were only modest differences among racial groups, with white voters (84%) especially supportive, but 65% of Latinos, 67% of Black voters, and 73% of Asian Americans were also supportive of the proposal. Support was high across age groups, with older voters especially supportive (81% among those 65 or older), but even the youngest voters were highly supportive (68%).

"Voters have made it clear that knowing who's funding ballot measure campaigns is essential to making informed choices," said Trent Lange, Executive Director of the California Clean Money Campaign. "California led the nation by passing the California DISCLOSE act to clearly show the top funders on ballot measure ads. These new results show that voters across the board want that same transparency when they cast their ballots."

| <i>Table 1</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                      |                     |                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Would you support or oppose requiring that the top three funders in support of and the top three funders opposed to a state ballot measure are listed as part of the official ballot summaries provided to voters?</b> |                      |                     |                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Support<br/>%</b> | <b>Oppose<br/>%</b> | <b>Neither/no<br/>opinion<br/>%</b> |
| <b>Total registered voters</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>76</b>            | <b>3</b>            | <b>21</b>                           |
| <u>Party registration</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                      |                     |                                     |
| Democrats                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 78                   | 3                   | 19                                  |
| Republicans                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 74                   | 4                   | 23                                  |
| No party preference/other                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 75                   | 3                   | 21                                  |
| <u>Race/ethnicity</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                      |                     |                                     |
| White                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 84                   | 2                   | 13                                  |
| Latino                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 65                   | 4                   | 30                                  |
| Black/African American                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 67                   | 3                   | 30                                  |
| Asian American/Pacific Islander                                                                                                                                                                                           | 73                   | 4                   | 23                                  |
| <u>Age</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                      |                     |                                     |
| 18-29 years old                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 68                   | 3                   | 29                                  |
| 30-39 years old                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 77                   | 3                   | 20                                  |
| 40-49 years old                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 75                   | 3                   | 22                                  |
| 50-64 years old                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 78                   | 4                   | 18                                  |
| 65 and older                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 81                   | 2                   | 16                                  |

### **Support for State Voting Rights Act and Translation Services**

The U.S. Supreme Court has issued rulings in recent years (Shelby v. Holder in 2013, and Brnovich v. DNC 2021) that have narrowed the protections offered by the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. It is widely anticipated that the Court may overturn several of the VRA's remaining protections in a pending case (Louisiana v. Callais). The IGS survey asked registered voters if they would support California enacting its own Voting Rights Act in response to the Supreme Court's rollbacks. Nearly two-thirds of registered voters responded in the affirmative (66%); 21% were opposed and 13% offered no opinion. While Democrats overwhelmingly supported (88%) California enacting a Voting Rights Act, only 25% of Republicans agreed. No Party Preference voters mirrored the statewide total (66%). Support was strongest in the San Francisco Bay Area (74%) and the city of Los Angeles (71%) but registered 54% even in the least supportive region, the North Coast / Sierra. There were only relatively modest differences across racial groups, with 66% of non-Hispanic white voters, 69% of Latinos, 72% of Black voters, and 67% of Asian American voters in support. While voters 18-29 (70%) and 30-39 (71%) were the most supportive, more than 60% of each age cohort supported the change.

“This poll makes clear that Californians across the state support equal voting rights and expanded access to the ballot. In every region of the state from San Diego to the Central Valley to the Sierras, a clear majority wants California to protect the Voting Rights Act against U.S. Supreme Court limits. California voters want our state to step up and do

more to protect democracy and ensure every person regardless of their race, place of birth or political party have equal access to the ballot. Given the current federal debate and environment, this should be a top priority,” said Matt Barreto, Faculty Director, UCLA Voting Rights Project and Professor of Political Science & Chicana/o Studies, UCLA.

*Table 2*

**The federal Voting Rights Act protects voters from discrimination and unequal access to the ballot. Parts of it have been rolled back by the Supreme Court. Would you support or oppose California enacting its own Voting Rights Act to guarantee state voters are protected from discrimination and suppression?**

|                                 | <b>Support<br/>%</b> | <b>Oppose<br/>%</b> | <b>Neither/no<br/>opinion<br/>%</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Total registered voters</b>  | <b>66</b>            | <b>21</b>           | <b>13</b>                           |
| <u>Party registration</u>       |                      |                     |                                     |
| Democrats                       | 88                   | 3                   | 9                                   |
| Republicans                     | 25                   | 55                  | 19                                  |
| No party preference/other       | 66                   | 19                  | 15                                  |
| <u>Race/ethnicity</u>           |                      |                     |                                     |
| White                           | 66                   | 24                  | 10                                  |
| Latino                          | 69                   | 16                  | 15                                  |
| Black/African American          | 72                   | 14                  | 14                                  |
| Asian American/Pacific Islander | 67                   | 16                  | 17                                  |

California voters also expressed support for expanded access to translation and interpreter voting assistance for populations that do not currently receive them under the federal Voting Rights Act, if the group constitutes at least 5% or 5,000 voters in a county, which makes it hard for many groups to qualify for services. Among registered voters, 59% supported this reform, while 26% were opposed and 16% expressed no opinion.

As is characteristic of voting rights debates in the U.S. in the current context, there was a sharp partisan split in views on this change: 79% of Democrats expressed support, with just 9% opposed. By contrast, 57% of Republicans opposed the change, as compared to just 24% in favor. No Party Preference voters mirrored the statewide totals, with 58% supportive and 23% opposed.

In contrast to partisanship, differences among racial groups were modest. Majorities of each racial group support the proposal to offer these services to voters, with 59% of white voters, 65% of Latinos (including 80% of Spanish dominant Latinos), 56% of Black voters, and 59% of Asian Americans in support. Young voters were the most supportive (68%), but majorities of each age group also backed the proposal, with 53% of those 65 or older providing the closest margin (35% of these voters were opposed).

“In our fight to secure the right to vote for all eligible voters, we must meet voters where they are with the in-language resources they need. California voters agree this should be a priority for state leaders, with six in ten saying they want to see language services expanded for more voters who need them,” said Pedro Hernandez, Legal and Policy Director, California Common Cause.

Table 3

**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 5,000 of the voters in a county?**

|                                 | Support<br>% | Oppose<br>% | Neither/no<br>opinion<br>% |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Total registered voters</b>  | <b>59</b>    | <b>26</b>   | <b>16</b>                  |
| <u>Party registration</u>       |              |             |                            |
| Democrats                       | 79           | 9           | 12                         |
| Republicans                     | 24           | 57          | 18                         |
| No party preference/other       | 58           | 23          | 19                         |
| <u>Race/ethnicity</u>           |              |             |                            |
| White                           | 59           | 30          | 11                         |
| Latino                          | 65           | 16          | 19                         |
| Black/African American          | 56           | 21          | 23                         |
| Asian American/Pacific Islander | 59           | 22          | 19                         |

### **California Voters View American Democracy as Under Attack**

The IGS survey first asked registered voters whether they believed American democracy is under attack, is being tested but not under attack, or is in no danger in June 2025. At the time, 64% expressed the view that American democracy was under attack, 26% believed it was being tested, and 10% responded that it was in no danger. When asked the identical question in March 2026, 67% believe it is “under attack,” while 23% believe it is “being tested” but not under attack and 9% report that it is in no danger. The main split in views is along party lines: 84% of Democrats and 64% of No Party Preference voters believe American democracy is under attack, as compared to just 40% of Republicans. Even so, another 38% of Republicans believe that American democracy is being tested, suggesting that at least some concerns are present in both parties. At least 60% of each gender, age, racial, and education group express the view that American democracy is under attack. The belief that American democracy is under attack is highest among women (71%), voters 65 and older (71%), San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles City voters (72% in each case), Black voters (77%) and white voters (72%). It is important to emphasize that few pollsters thought to ask whether American democracy was in serious danger prior to the past few years. The very high rates of concern across groups suggests that Americans’ belief in the durability of their democracy cannot be taken for granted.

“Californians recognize the serious threats to our democracy and see the urgent need for state action to protect voting access. We need to act now to give voters confidence that they will be able to vote safely and securely this year and that the vote count will be defended from interference,” Angélica Salceda, Director of the ACLU of Northern California’s Democracy, Speech and Technology Program.

| <i>Table 4</i>                                                                                  |                                                   |                                                                      |                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Which of the following best describes your view of democracy in the United States today?</b> |                                                   |                                                                      |                                                   |
|                                                                                                 | <b>American<br/>democracy is<br/>under attack</b> | <b>American<br/>democracy is<br/>tested but not<br/>under attack</b> | <b>American<br/>democracy is in<br/>no danger</b> |
|                                                                                                 | <b>%</b>                                          | <b>%</b>                                                             | <b>%</b>                                          |
| <b>Total registered voters</b>                                                                  | <b>67</b>                                         | <b>23</b>                                                            | <b>9</b>                                          |
| <u>Party registration</u>                                                                       |                                                   |                                                                      |                                                   |
| Democrats                                                                                       | 84                                                | 13                                                                   | 3                                                 |
| Republicans                                                                                     | 40                                                | 38                                                                   | 22                                                |
| No party preference/other                                                                       | 64                                                | 26                                                                   | 9                                                 |
| <u>Race</u>                                                                                     |                                                   |                                                                      |                                                   |
| White                                                                                           | 72                                                | 20                                                                   | 8                                                 |
| Latino                                                                                          | 63                                                | 26                                                                   | 11                                                |
| Black/African American                                                                          | 77                                                | 17                                                                   | 5                                                 |
| Asian American / Pac. Islander                                                                  | 61                                                | 30                                                                   | 8                                                 |
| <u>Age</u>                                                                                      |                                                   |                                                                      |                                                   |
| 18-29                                                                                           | 65                                                | 26                                                                   | 8                                                 |
| 30-39                                                                                           | 67                                                | 25                                                                   | 6                                                 |
| 40-49                                                                                           | 62                                                | 27                                                                   | 11                                                |
| 50-64                                                                                           | 66                                                | 22                                                                   | 11                                                |
| 65 and older                                                                                    | 71                                                | 19                                                                   | 9                                                 |

### **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 March 9-15, among 5,109 California registered voters. Funding for the inclusion of the questions reported in this release into the poll was provided to IGS by the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

To enable the survey to also obtain voter preferences in the Los Angeles mayoral primary election, the survey included an oversampling of voters in the city of Los Angeles. After following data collection, the overall results were weighted to return the disproportionate sampling of L.A. City voters to their actual share of the overall statewide electorate.

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. Reminders were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further invitations.

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 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 sample to population characteristics of 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 a sampling error of about +/-2 points at the 95% confidence level.

### **Question Wording**

Would you support or oppose requiring that the top three funders in support of and the top three funders opposed to a state ballot measure are listed as part of the official ballot summaries provided to voters?

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 5,000 of the voters in a county?

The federal Voting Rights Act protects voters from discrimination and unequal access to the ballot. Parts of it have been rolled back by the Supreme Court. Would you support or oppose California enacting its own Voting Rights Act to guarantee state voters are protected from discrimination and suppression?

Which of the following best describes your view of democracy in the United States today?

- (1) American democracy is under attack
- (2) American democracy is being tested, but it is not under attack
- (3) American democracy is in no danger

### **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 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>.