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Feinstein Job Ratings Remain Underwater, while Initial Voter Assessments of Senator Padilla are Generally Positive.

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The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds that for the second time in four months more of the state's registered voters disapprove than approve of Dianne Feinstein's job performance as U.S. Senator. In a statewide poll completed last week 46% of voters said they disapproved of the job Feinstein was doing, while just 35% approve. Another 19% have no opinion. The poll's late January measure showed similar results.

Feinstein, 87, is currently serving her fifth term in the U.S. Senate. Throughout her more than two-decade tenure in office she had consistently received more positive than negative job performance marks from the state's voters, typically by wide margins. However, results from each of the *Berkeley IGS Polls* conducted this year find that voter opinions of Feinstein have taken a decidedly negative turn.

Although the latest poll finds that Feinstein's job approval decline spans virtually all segments of the state's registered voter population when compared to the ratings she received in December 2017, the steepest declines have been among the state's liberals and voters under the age of 40.

IGS Co-Director Eric Schickler commented, "Feinstein's decline among liberals and young voters suggest that core Democratic constituencies are now less likely to view her as an effective advocate."

By contrast, when voters are asked about the job that newly appointed U.S. Senator Alex Padilla is doing, more rate him positively (34%) than negatively (20%), although a relatively large proportion (46%) has no opinion. Padilla's largest source of support comes from Latino (48%) and Black (37%) voters, who rate the junior Senator about twenty and ten points higher than Whites.

IGS Co-Director G. Cristina Mora notes that "Senator Padilla's strong support among Latino and Black voters seems to reflect his ability to personally connect with communities of color. The son of a Mexican-immigrant short-order cook, Padilla has spent much of the first four

months of his Senate term working on legislation that affects immigrant and working-class families.”

Padilla, 48, formerly served as California Secretary of State, State Senator and Los Angeles City Council President before Governor Gavin Newsom appointed him to fill the vacancy left by Kamala Harris, after she was elected Vice President in last year’s presidential election. He is the first California Latino to serve in the U.S. Senate.

Feinstein’s ratings remain underwater, while initial assessments of Padilla are positive

When the state’s registered voters are asked to assess the job performance of the state’s two U.S. Senators, more report that they disapprove of the job Feinstein is doing (46%) than approve (35%), while 19% have no opinion.

By contrast, Padilla, who has only been in office for three months, receives generally positive reviews from the voting public, with 34% approving and 20% disapproving, although nearly half of state’s voters (46%) have yet to form an opinion of him.

Table 1
Voter opinions of the job that Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla are doing as U.S. Senator
(among California registered voters)

	U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein %	U.S. Senator Alex Padilla %
<u>Approve</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>34</u>
Approve strongly	12	18
Approve somewhat	23	17
<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>20</u>
Disapprove somewhat	19	7
Disapprove strongly	26	13
No opinion	19	46

The trend of Feinstein’s job performance ratings over the years

Feinstein was first elected to the Senate in 1992, the so-called “year of the woman” in California politics, when both she and fellow Democrat Barbara Boxer won election as the first women ever to represent California in that body.

Throughout her long tenure Feinstein has generally received positive job performance marks from the statewide electorate, and in some years was rated positively by greater than two-to-one margins. However, in recent years she has come under increasing criticism from voters.

Last January the *Berkeley IGS Poll* reported that for the first time more voters disapproved of the job Feinstein was doing than approved by a 45% to 35% margin. The latest poll finds similar results, with 46% now reporting that they disapprove of her performance, while 35% approve.

Table 2
Trend of Dianne Feinstein job approval ratings as U.S. Senator
(among California registered voters)

	Approve %	Disapprove %	No opinion %
Late April 2021	35	46	19
Late January 2021	35	45	20
December 2017	48	37	15
2015 (average)	44	29	27
2014 (average)	44	35	21
2013 (average)	47	33	20
2012 (average)	49	30	21
2011 (average)	45	34	21
2010 (average)	46	37	17
2009 (average)	46	35	19
2008 (average)	48	32	20
2007 (average)	54	30	16
2006 (average)	51	31	18
2005 (average)	52	27	21
2004 (average)	54	26	20
2003 (average)	52	32	16
2002 (average)	49	26	25
2001 (average)	57	27	16
2000 (average)	57	27	16
1999 (average)	51	28	21
1998 (average)	56	27	17
1997 (average)	47	35	18
1996 (average)	46	36	18
1995 (average)	50	40	10
1994 (average)	47	39	14
1993 (average)	47	32	21

Note: *Late April 2021, late January 2021 and December 2017 surveys conducted by the Berkeley IGS Poll. Earlier measures conducted by The Field Poll, as reported in release #2519, published October 14, 2015 by Field Research Corporation.*

Feinstein's recent ratings decline steepest among liberals and voters under age 40

Although the latest poll finds that Feinstein's job approval decline spans virtually all segments of the state's registered voter population, when compared to the ratings she received in December 2017, the steepest declines have been among the state's liberals and voters under the age of 40.

For example, three and one-half years ago 70% of liberal voters said they approved of the job Feinstein was doing in the Senate. However, the latest poll finds fewer than half of the state's liberals (47%) saying they approve, a 23-percentage point decline.

Feinstein's job approval rating has also declined 21 points among voters age 30-39 and 17 points among voters age under age 30.

The breadth of Feinstein's job ratings decline is also demonstrated by these other findings from the latest poll:

- Only about half of the state's Democrats (53%) now approve of the job Feinstein is doing. In addition, her approval rating among the state's independent or No Party Preference voters is just 28%.
- Feinstein's job ratings are underwater in every major region of the state, including her home region, the San Francisco Bay Area, where 37% of voters approve and 45% disapprove.
- More voters across all age groups rate her performance negatively than positively, as do pluralities of men and women.
- While more Latinos continue to approve than disapprove of the job Feinstein is doing, whites rate her negatively five to three.

Table 3
Comparing U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein’s current job performance ratings
to those she received in December 2017 across subgroups of registered voters

	Late April 2021			December 2017		
	Approve %	Disapprove %	No opinion %	Approve %	Disapprove %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	35	46	19	48	37	15
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	53	29	18	67	17	16
Republicans	10	79	11	23	71	6
No party preference/ others	28	45	27	40	38	22
<u>Political ideology</u>						
Conservative	16	73	11	24	66	10
Moderate	36	36	28	49	35	16
Liberal	47	34	19	70	15	15
<u>Region</u>						
Los Angeles County	38	40	22	50	27	23
San Diego/Orange	34	48	18	46	40	14
Central Valley	30	50	20	41	46	13
San Francisco Bay Area	37	45	18	56	32	12
Other regions	32	48	20	44	48	8
<u>Gender</u>						
Male	31	53	16	44	43	13
Female	38	40	22	51	33	16
<u>Age</u>						
18-29	26	30	44	43	26	31
30-39	28	45	27	49	32	19
40-49	37	49	14	48	39	13
50-64	37	51	12	42	48	10
65 or older	44	49	7	57	37	6
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>						
White	32	55	13	48	44	8
Latino	41	31	28	45	29	26
All others	34	32	34	52	30	18

Note: December 2017 results from a Berkeley IGS Poll conducted December 7-16 among a random sample of 1,000 registered voters in California in English and Spanish by live telephone interviewers.

Initial appraisals of Padilla’s performance, while highly partisan, are more positive than negative across most voter subgroups

Given the highly partisan state of politics in both the state and the nation, it is not surprising that initial voter appraisals of the job that Democratic Senator Padilla is doing are highly partisan. Nearly all of the Democrats polled who were able to offer an opinion rate him positively (53% to 3%). The opposite is true among the state’s Republican voters, who disapprove of Padilla’s performance 52% to 8%. Similar wide differences are seen between the state’s liberal voters and conservatives.

Yet, Padilla obtains more positive than negative appraisals across virtually all other major segments of the registered voter population.

Regionally, he does best among voters in Los Angeles County, his home region. More voters also approve than disapprove of Padilla across each of the state’s other regions, with the exception of voters in the state’s sparsely populated North Coast/Sierras counties.

Latinos offer a very positive assessment of the state’s first Latino U.S. Senator, with nearly four times as many approving (48%) as disapproving (13%) of his performance. Yet, Padilla also receives generally positive assessments from each of the state’s other major racial segments, especially among Black voters.

Voters across all age and gender segments offer generally positive reviews of the Senator, although a majority of younger voters has not yet formed an opinion.

Table 4
Early voter opinions of the job Alex Padilla is doing as U.S. Senator
across subgroups of the California registered voter population

	Approve %	Disapprove %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	34	20	46
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	53	3	44
Republicans	8	52	40
No Party Preference/others	27	20	53
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	13	57	30
Somewhat conservative	15	42	43
Moderate	34	16	50
Somewhat liberal	46	3	51
Strongly liberal	53	2	45
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	40	17	43
San Diego County	33	19	48
Orange County	28	24	48
Inland Empire	28	20	52
Central Coast	32	18	50
Central Valley	29	26	45
San Francisco Bay Area	38	14	48
North Coast/Sierras	28	37	35
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	33	23	44
Female	36	16	48
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	27	15	58
30-39	30	17	53
40-49	36	22	42
50-64	38	22	40
65 or older	40	20	40
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	29	24	47
Latino	48	13	39
Asian/Pacific Islander	29	15	56
Black	37	13	50

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. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*. Results are based on the responses of 5,036 California registered voters. The survey was administered online in English and Spanish April 29 - May 5, 2021 by distributing email invitations to random samples of voters. Each email 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. Reminder emails were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to participate.

Samples of registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California and were derived from information contained on the state's official voter registration rolls. Prior to the distribution of emails, the overall sample was stratified by age and gender to achieve a proper balance of survey respondents across major segments of the registered voter population.

To protect the anonymity of survey respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from the original voter listing were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. Post-stratification weights were also applied to align the sample of registered voters responding to the survey to population characteristics of the state's registered voters.

The sampling error associated with the survey results are difficult to calculate precisely due to the effects of sample stratification and the 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 +/-2.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Question wording

As you know, Governor Gavin Newsom recently appointed California Secretary of State Alex Padilla to serve as U.S. Senator to complete the term of Kamala Harris now that she has become Vice President. Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way Alex Padilla is handling his job as U.S. Senator?

Dianne Feinstein is now serving in her fifth term as California's other U.S. Senator. Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein is handling her job as U.S. Senator?

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. The director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll* is Mark DiCamillo. For a copy of the detailed tabulations to this report or a listing of all past poll reports issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll*, please visit the poll's website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.