

# AT ISSUE

PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

## IMPROVING CALIFORNIA'S DEMOCRACY

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California's democracy depends on engaged and well-informed voters. The importance of a high-performing electorate in California goes beyond choosing elected officials. Through the citizen's initiative process, California's voters have a large and growing role in making public policy. But voters across the political spectrum express distrust and disillusionment with government—and a sizable portion of eligible Californians do not vote at all. Those who do vote are often polarized in their views of the role government should play. However, Californians of all political stripes tend to place more trust in local officials than in state and federal government. And they put their faith in the initiative process—believing that the voters themselves should make some statewide fiscal decisions. As Californians seek to bring their government closer to the people, we recommend several actions that would prioritize citizen participation in elections—an essential ingredient for a democracy that appears to be increasing its reliance on local governments and ballot initiatives.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 2012 election year, voters are making many important policy decisions in the context of a slow recovery from the Great Recession—and at a time when many express both deep frustration with government and strong support for government reform efforts. What does California's electorate look like today, and what do voters want?

This report examines several important voting trends in California. We first look at voter registration and participation, finding that millions of Californians are not registering to vote, that many who do register are not joining the major political parties, and that many registered voters are not participating in elections. We then analyze key voting groups and their defining issues, finding that many Californians are disgruntled, distrustful, and divided over the role of their state government today. However, we also find some key areas of agreement—particularly regarding trust in local government and the initiative process.

Improving California's democracy should be an essential goal during this historic reform era. Engaging the electorate is especially important at a time when Californians are seeking change in their state government at the ballot box. Our recommendations to improve California's democracy focus on engaging emerging voter groups, bridging the knowledge gap, and increasing the transparency of the initiative process.

## VOTERS AND NONVOTERS

Low voter registration, low voter turnout, and a demographically skewed electorate raise troubling questions about the legitimacy of the choices made by California voters.<sup>1</sup> Recent statistics on voter registration and the size and composition of the voter pool in state elections indicate that California's democracy has a number of shortcomings.

Today, California has 17.3 million registered voters out of a pool of 23.8 million eligible adults. This means that there are 6.5 million adult residents, or 27 percent of eligible adults, who are not registered to vote. Many other adults are currently excluded from registering to vote because of their immigration status. In all, there are about 28 million adults in California, many of whom are noncitizens who would be eligible to vote if and when they apply for and are granted U.S. citizenship.<sup>2</sup>

Demographically, today's registered voters are distinctly different from those who are not registered to vote. Specifically, registered voters tend to be college educated, homeowners, and white, while those who are not registered are mostly not college educated, renters, and nonwhites (Table 1). Registered voters tend to be older and have higher incomes, while nonvoters are younger and have lower incomes. These stark contrasts between voters and nonvoters have been in evidence for years, and the trends are similar when we compare those who frequently vote with those who are not registered voters.<sup>3</sup>

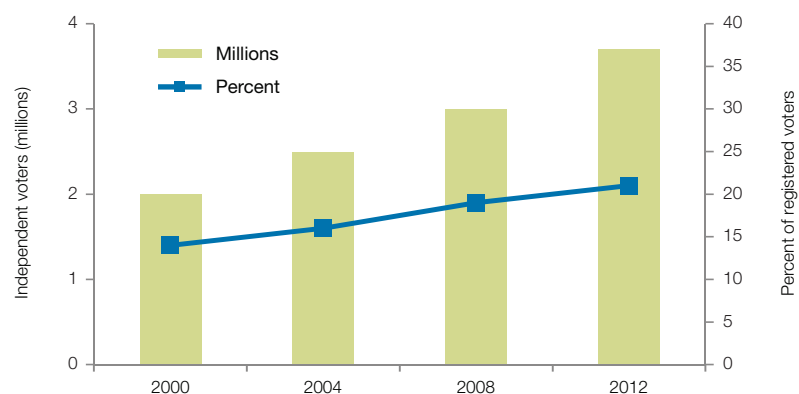
TABLE 1. CALIFORNIA'S EXCLUSIVE ELECTORATE

	Registered to vote	Not registered to vote
College educated	72%	32%
High school diploma or less	28	68
Homeowner	63	37
Renter	37	63
White	57	23
Others	43	77
35 and older	73	55
Under 35	27	45

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Survey, January, March, April, May, and July 2012 (10,510 adults in combined sample).

In recent decades, the partisan makeup of California's registered voters has been shifting.<sup>4</sup> Currently, only about half (53%) of eligible adults register to vote as members of a major political party. Compared to 2000, today's major party voters are a declining share of both eligible adults (56% to 53%) and registered voters (81% to 73%). The most dramatic change is the addition of more than 1.5 million registered independent voters, also known as "decline to state" or "no party preference" voters, in the past 12 years. The number of independents has grown by 85 percent since 2000, from 2 million to 3.7 million, or from 14 percent in 2000 to 21 percent today (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. INDEPENDENT VOTERS



SOURCES: California Secretary of State, Report of Registration, February 2000, February 2004, January 2008, September 2012.

Even among registered voters, turnout is a concern: in the June 2012 primary, 31 percent of registered voters—which amounts to only 22 percent of eligible adults, or 5.3 million voters—participated. This low turnout occurred despite the introduction of a new top-two primary system that many hoped would bring more voters to the polls (Table 2) and it continues a trend of low turnout in recent primaries.<sup>5</sup>

TABLE 2. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, 2012

	Millions	Percent
Adults eligible to vote	23.8	–
Registered to vote	17.3	73%
Major party voters	12.7	53
June primary voters	5.3	22

SOURCES: California Secretary of State, Report of Registration, September 2012; California Secretary of State, Statement of the Vote, June 5, 2012.

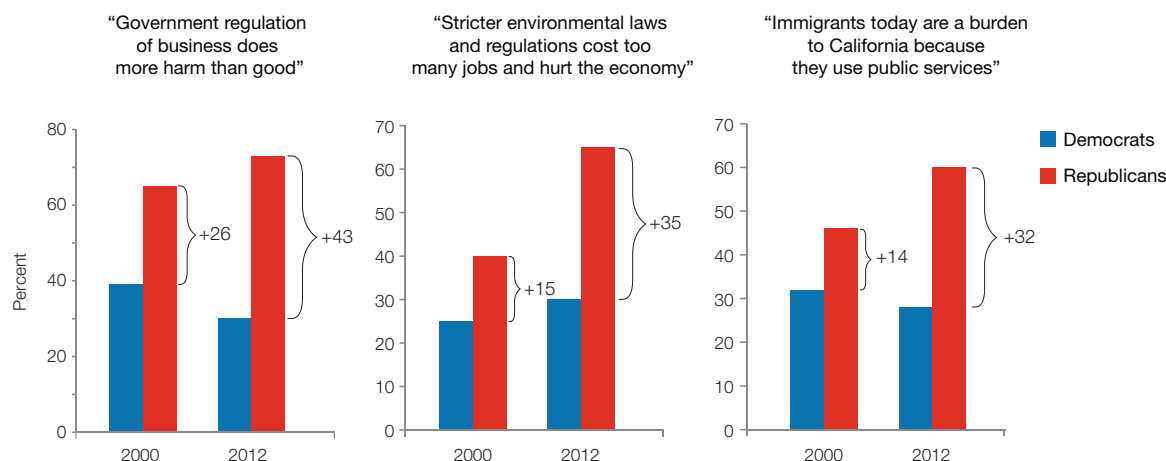
## KEY GROUPS, KEY ISSUES

No political party has a majority in California today. The electorate is currently made up of 43 percent Democrats, 30 percent Republicans, 21 percent independents, and 5 percent third party voters. Still, California is a solidly “blue” state in presidential elections. Democratic presidential candidates and U.S. Senate candidates have won every election in the state since 1992. In the 2010 election, the Democratic candidates won every statewide executive branch office.

What accounts for these trends? As is the case in national studies, we find that most of California’s independent voters express a major party preference.<sup>6</sup> Since independent voters are more likely to lean Democratic than Republican in California, the Democratic advantage swells from 13 points (43% to 30%) to 17 points (53% to 36%) when we account for the leanings of independent voters. California could become an even darker shade of blue if more people registered to vote, since those not registered to vote today are more than twice as likely to say that they lean Democratic than Republican (47% to 22%).<sup>7</sup> Still, in recent years most independents describe themselves as middle-of-the-road ideologically and most say that they have not belonged to a major political party and will not join a political party in the future.

While the number of independents is growing, adherents to the major parties are becoming ever more polarized. In California, as in the rest of the nation, increasing polarization between Democrats and Republicans has occurred throughout the Bush and Obama years. Today in California, more Democratic voters call themselves liberals than they did in 2000 (46% in 2000; 52% today) and more Republicans say they are conservatives (58% in 2000; 70% today).<sup>8</sup> We also find stark partisan contrasts on several important policy issues, such as business regulations, environmental laws and regulations, and the perceived costs and benefits of immigrants (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. THE GROWING PARTISAN DIVIDE



SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Survey, January 2000 (1,527 registered voters), February 2000 (1,582 registered voters), and March 2012 (1,334 registered voters).

**Latinos.** As California has transitioned from a majority white to a majority minority state, the Latino vote has increased steadily in overall size, percentage of the vote, and political significance.<sup>9</sup> Latinos currently make up 20 percent of registered voters, with 60 percent registered as Democrats, 14 percent as Republicans, and 22 percent as independents.<sup>10</sup> Latino voters are a key group in the success of Democratic candidates in statewide elections, and they have shown strong support for Barack Obama as well as other Democratic candidates in recent presidential, gubernatorial, and U.S. Senate races. Ideologically, Latinos are fairly evenly divided between those who call themselves liberal (36%), middle of the road (33%), and conservative (31%).

What issues distinguish Latinos from other voters? Immigration is a central concern. While 75 percent of Latinos say that immigrants are a benefit to California because of their hard work and skills, 47 percent of whites say that immigrants are a burden to California because they use public services. And while 85 percent of Latino voters say they want to open up a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who have been

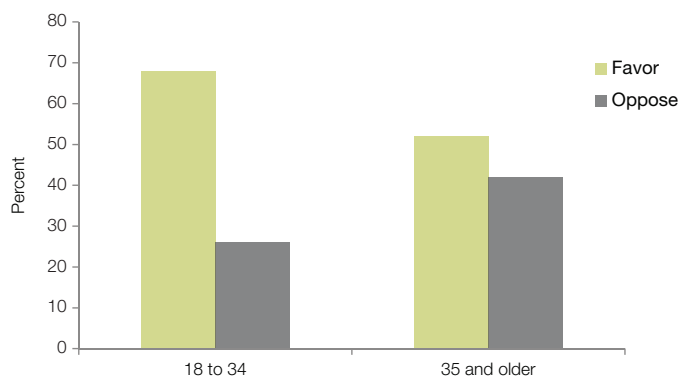
working in the United States, 34 percent of whites say that working illegal immigrants should be deported to their native countries.

In fact, attitudes toward immigration are significantly related to choices for president.<sup>11</sup> Latino voters' focus on immigration issues has been a disadvantage for the Republican candidates who have emphasized a hard line on illegal immigration. The Latino vote will be closely watched in the 2012 election as political observers monitor the progress of this fast-growing group.

**Young people.** The youth vote for Barack Obama in 2008 was an important factor in that historic presidential election. Today, 27 percent of California registered voters are ages 18 to 34. Democrats outpace Republicans by a 23-point margin (45% to 22%) among these younger voters, while 28 percent are independents.<sup>12</sup> Younger voters are also more likely to describe themselves as liberals than conservatives (41% to 28%). In keeping with their more liberal tilt, younger voters are more likely than older voters to favor legalization of marijuana (58% to 40%) and same sex-marriage (Figure 3).<sup>13</sup> In 2012, the youth vote will be closely watched as it relates to the overall turnout.

**FIGURE 3. SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**

"Do you favor or oppose allowing gay and lesbian couples to be legally married?"



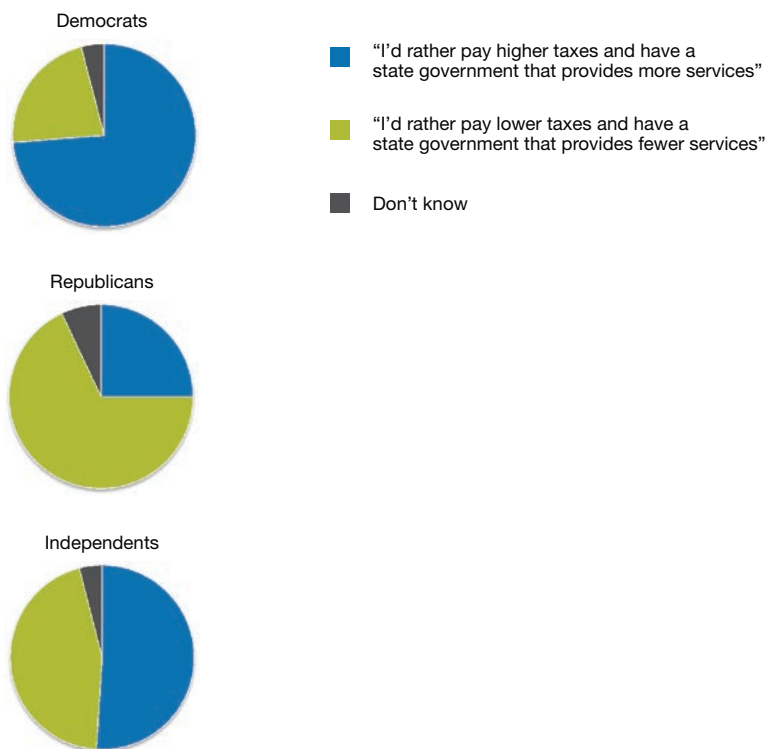
SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, March 2012 (1,334 registered voters).

**Women.** Women make up slightly more than half of the voters (51%) in the state and play a key role in California elections.<sup>14</sup> What is the nature of the “gender gap” in California? Women are much more likely to register as Democrats than as Republicans (50% to 30%). While 58 percent of Democrats are women, Republicans are evenly divided (50% men, 50% women), and only 42 percent of independents are women. Female voters tend to be less affluent than male voters. A key issue for women? Gun control. Women are more in favor of gun control than men (58% to 41%), and this holds true even after we control for party, ideology, age, education, income, and race/ethnicity.<sup>15</sup> Women’s support for three initiatives on crime and public safety issues will thus be closely watched in November—as will the overall female turnout, given women’s ability to boost the prospects of Democrats.

## POLICY CONFLICT AND CONSENSUS

California voters face difficult choices as federal, state, and local governments deal with spending and tax challenges resulting from the Great Recession. In November, voters will consider four initiatives that involve state taxes and the state budget in the context of fundamental partisan differences about the role of government.<sup>16</sup> For instance, most Democratic voters prefer to pay higher taxes and have the state government provide more services, while most Republican voters prefer to have lower taxes and a state government that provides fewer services. Independent voters are closely divided on the mix of state taxes and state services that they prefer (Figure 4). When asked about how to deal with the multi-billion dollar gap in the state budget today, Democrats prefer solutions that include state tax increases, while a majority of Republicans are in favor of solutions that include only state spending cuts. At least seven in 10 Democrats would favor raising taxes for K–12 public schools, public higher education, and health and human services, and majorities of Republicans are opposed to raising taxes for these types of state services. Democrats favor raising taxes on the wealthy to help reduce the state budget deficit, while Republicans are opposed to this idea. Independent voters tend to side with the Democrats on tax increases but, in keeping with their middle-of-the-road politics, they favor taxes by narrower margins than the Democrats do.<sup>17</sup>

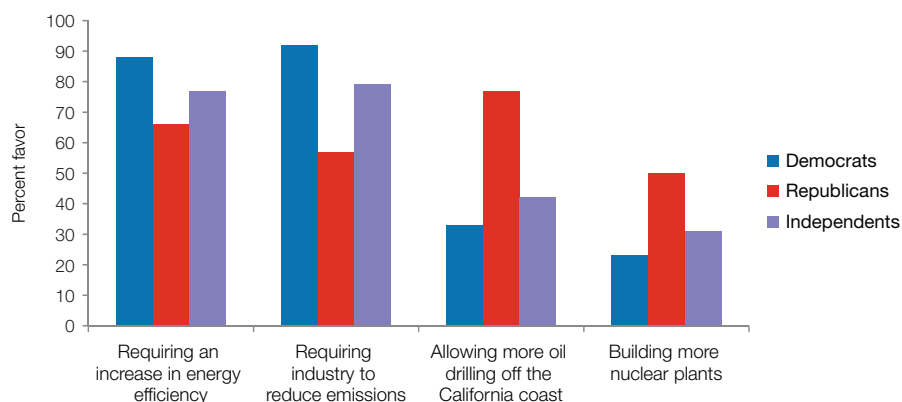
FIGURE 4. STATE TAXES AND SERVICES



SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, May 2012 (1,322 registered voters).

Still, there are some areas of modest agreement between Democrats and Republicans on the role of government, even while they differ on specific policies.<sup>18</sup> For instance, there is consensus across party lines that yearly increases in state spending should be strictly limited, although Democratic voters do not agree with Republican voters' view that the state could cut its current spending levels without affecting service levels. Democrats, Republicans, and independents agree that K–12 public education is the area of the state budget that they most want to protect from spending cuts, although most Democratic voters believe that more funding is needed to improve K–12 schools and most Republicans do not. There is majority support across parties for reducing industrial emissions and increasing energy efficiency to address global warming, but Democrats and Republicans differ on whether to allow more offshore oil drilling and building more nuclear plants (Figure 5).

**FIGURE 5. ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY**



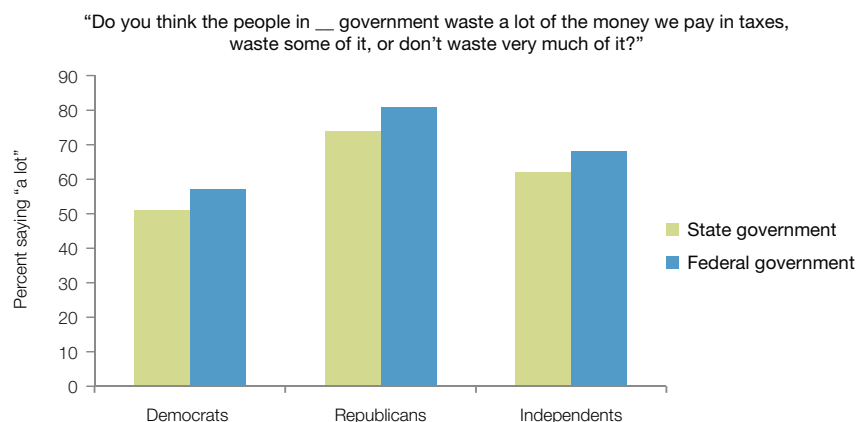
SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, July 2012 (1,668 registered voters).

Beyond policy specifics, one thing unites California voters above all else: pessimism about the state of the state and its governance system. Levels of political disillusionment have been at or near historic highs in recent years.<sup>19</sup> Majorities across parties believe the state is going in the wrong direction. With “jobs and the economy” named as the most important issue facing the state since the onset of the Great Recession, majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independent voters say that California is currently in an economic recession and most are expecting bad economic times for the next 12 months. California voters across party lines agree that the state budget situation is a big problem and that local government services—such as city and county governments and public schools—have been affected a lot by recent state budget cuts.



In this economic and fiscal climate, most Democrats, Republicans, and independents say their state and federal governments are wasting a lot of tax money (Figure 6). These sentiments were echoed in recent PPIC focus groups, in which a Democratic voter said, “We are tired of giving more money and not seeing results,” while a Republican voter asked, “How do we trust where the money is really going to go?”

**FIGURE 6. FISCAL DISTRUST**

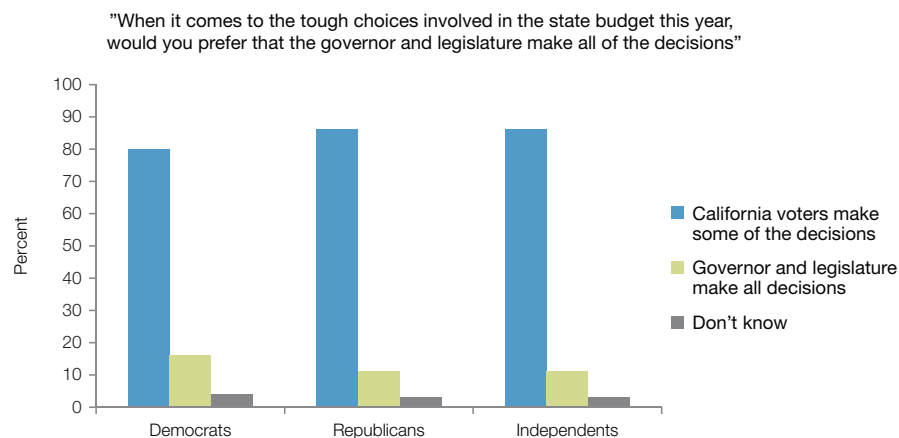


SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, May 2012 (1,322 registered voters).

Despite their partisanship, pessimism, and lack of trust, California voters do maintain some areas of hope and partisan agreement.<sup>20</sup> One of these areas is local government. In contrast to their views on federal and state governments, fewer California voters believe that their local governments waste a lot of money (38% Democrats, 40% Republicans, 36% independents). On issues as diverse as schools and public safety, Californians express more confidence in local than in state government and wish to see even more authority shifted to the local level.

Another area of strong agreement: faith in voter decisionmaking. When asked how to tackle the tough choices with the state budget this year, more than eight in 10 Democrats, Republicans, and independents prefer that California voters make some of the decisions on spending and taxes (Figure 7). Across party lines, California voters agree that the policy decisions made by voters through the initiative process are better than those made by the governor and legislature.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, California voters are frequently called upon to make important policy decisions at the ballot box. There were about 60 state ballot measures per decade in the 1990s and 2000s—up sharply from the 1970s and 1980s—and we are on track to maintain this pace in the 2010s.<sup>22</sup> This year is no exception, with important measures regarding spending, taxes, and other major policies appearing on both the June and November ballots.

**FIGURE 7. STATE BUDGET DECISIONS**

SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, May 2012 (1,322 registered voters).

California faces several challenges as we move toward a direct democracy that relies on voters to make public policy. As noted earlier, many people are left out of the voting process, and many of them are directly affected by the ballot-box choices made by their fellow Californians. Moreover, PPIC surveys indicate that voters lack basic knowledge about the important fiscal decisions that they are being asked to make.<sup>23</sup> For instance, only about one in five voters say they know a lot about how state and local governments spend and raise money, and most cannot name the largest area of state spending (K–12 public education) or the largest area of state revenues (personal income taxes). Finally, while the citizens' initiative is a cherished ideal in California, voters give the reality mixed reviews—partly because of the impact of special interests and partly because of the complex, confusing, and overwhelming choices voters are asked to make.<sup>24</sup> As a result, many California voters would like to see various changes and reforms to the initiative process.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis of Californians' current views of government finds a disgruntled electorate that is distrustful of Sacramento and Washington and disappointed in the elected officials representing them in the state legislature and the U.S. Congress. Republicans and Democrats are ever more divided about the taxes they are willing to pay for public services and the extent and type of government regulations they are willing to support. The increase in independent voters suggests that many California voters are distancing themselves from the major political parties—and even though most independents say they are closer to one party than the other, they prefer to remain unaffiliated.

In search of policy consensus among some key groups in California elections—independents, partisans, Latinos, youth, and women—we find differing priorities and expectations for government's role. Voters do agree on placing trust in local government and the initiative process, and they want change. In recent elections, voters have reformed the redistricting process, the primary, term limits, and the voting requirement to pass a state budget. The November ballot includes more budget reforms and a tax measure that would fund the shift of state prisoners to local authorities.

These recent efforts at government reform have yet to fully recognize that the most essential ingredient for a democracy built around local governments and ballot initiatives is active citizen participation in elections. Millions of California adults are not registered to vote, and many registered voters do not take part in elections. Moreover, the registered voter population is skewed toward the “haves” who often say they would like fewer public services and excludes the “have nots” who often say they would like more public services. Despite evidence of the growing use of mail ballots in recent years, PPIC surveys indicate that voters who use mail ballots are similar to those who go to the polls—and we do not see evidence of an increase in voter registration, a more diverse voting population, or an increase over time in primary voting.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, recent election reforms—including the top-two primary and independent redistricting—were supposed to lead to more voter participation. Instead, historically low voter turnout in the June primary this year brings new questions about the legitimacy of the candidate races in the November general elections.

The initiative process also holds challenges for California's democracy. Voters this November and in future general elections can expect to face a large number of complex ballot initiatives, but most will be making major policy decisions without knowing basic facts about how their government raises and spends money. In addition, voters who raise concerns about the influence of special interests and worry about the hidden agendas of financial sponsors may be more inclined to vote against any and all ballot initiatives when faced with a lack of full disclosure.

We recommend the following actions as Californians seek to bring their government closer to the people.

**Engage emerging groups.** We need to increase electoral participation by registering more voters and increasing voter turnout. Emerging groups such as younger voters, independents, and Latinos are key targets. Some of these groups have low rates of voter registration (e.g., younger adults, Latinos), and some are less likely to vote in important statewide elections even when they are registered to vote (e.g., younger voters, independents in the statewide primaries). Engagement efforts could include but are not limited to extending the time and location for voter registration and voting (such as the recently signed bill allowing same-day registration, starting as early as 2014), pre-registering 17-year-olds, working with federal immigration officials and state agencies to offer voter registration forms and Internet links to voter registration, and allowing voting through county registrar websites.<sup>26</sup> Along with the implementation of online voter registration for this fall's election, we should continue to explore use of the Internet, mobile phones, social media, and voter technology, while ensuring that precautions are taken to avoid voter fraud and system failure.

**Bridge the knowledge gap.** California voters are asked to make policy decisions without having a grasp of the basic fiscal facts about government. Too often, voter decisions are swayed by mail and television messages that contain half-truths and appeal to voter cynicism and ideological biases. Some studies find that the level of accurate knowledge may have little impact on voting choices, while others point to the major role of intermediaries in helping voters sort through complex ballot decisions.<sup>27</sup> A democracy that asks voters to be lawmakers should give voters all of the facts and let them decide for themselves how much they need to know. The voter pamphlet should be expanded and online nonpartisan information sources should be made easily accessible. In addition, public debates are critical, as are opportunities for discussion, in preparing voters for their role as major state policymakers.

**Increase transparency in the initiative process.** Voters are often uncertain about the identity and motives of initiative proponents and opponents. Stakeholder interests—which raise questions about the role of money in the process—should be made transparent at signature gathering, in advertising, in disclosures on voter pamphlets, and on the ballot itself. Other reforms of the initiative process could lead to fewer ballot items and less controversy over outcomes; these include legislative reviews that produce ballot compromises and early legal reviews to limit court challenges.

There is every reason to believe that all of the symptoms of California's 2012 election dysfunctions—low voter turnout in June, a November ballot filled with complex and confusing initiatives—will be repeated in 2014 and beyond. Obstacles to engaging Californians include their high level of political disillusionment and their belief that voting bears little relationship to the central concerns in their lives and their communities. Open primaries, redistricting, term limits, and vote-by-mail are important rule changes, but they do not do enough to address the challenges of helping a large and highly diverse electorate become more informed and involved.<sup>28</sup> State government alone cannot be expected to make a meaningful impact on election reforms. There should be many opportunities for local governments and civic groups, business and labor interests, and foundation and nonprofit organizations to work together on increasing civic participation and improving elections. In doing so, we will better meet the needs of California's democracy in the 21st century.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## NOTES

1. See, for example, Mark Baldassare, *At Issue: California's Exclusive Electorate* (Public Policy Institute of California, September 2006).
2. California Secretary of State, Report of Registration, September 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, *2010 Census of Population* (Department of Commerce, 2010); Laura Hill, "The Immigration and Citizenship Process," Just the Facts (Public Policy Institute of California, December 2010).
3. See, for example, Baldassare, *At Issue: California's Exclusive Electorate*; Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, "California's Likely Voters," Just the Facts (Public Policy Institute of California, August 2012).
4. Mark Baldassare, *At Issue: California's Post-Partisan Future*, (Public Policy Institute of California, January 2008).
5. Eric McGhee and Daniel Krimm, "California's New Electoral Reforms: How Did They Work?" Just the Facts (Public Policy Institute of California, June 2012).
6. See, for example, Bruce Keith, David Magleby, Candice Nelson, Elizabeth Orr, Mark Westlye, and Raymond Wolfinger, *The Myth of the Independent Voter* (University of California Press, 1992).
7. The data reported in this paragraph is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, combined data from January 2012, March 2012, April 2012, May 2012, and July 2012 (6,972 registered voters).
8. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Trends in American Values: 1987–2012* (Pew Research Center, June 2012). The data reported here is from Mark Baldassare, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, January 2000 (1,527 registered voters), and Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, July 2012 (1,668 registered voters).
9. See, for example, Mark Baldassare, *California in the New Millennium* (University of California Press, 2000); Mark Baldassare, *A California State of Mind* (University of California Press, 2002); and Jack Citrin and Ben Highton, *How Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Shape the California Electorate* (Public Policy Institute of California, December 2002).
10. The data reported in this section is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey* (combined data from January 2012, March 2012, April 2012, May 2012, and July 2012 (6,972 registered voters), and individual survey data from March 2012 (1,334 registered voters).
11. Immigration attitudes are significantly related to presidential voting, but there are no significant differences between Latinos and other voters on issues such as abortion, business, environment, and gun regulations, or the legalization of marijuana and the same-sex marriage, when we control for age, education, gender, income, political party, and political ideology.
12. The data reported in this paragraph is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, combined data from January 2012, March 2012, April 2012, May 2012, and July 2012 (6,972 registered voters), and individual survey data from March 2012 (1,334 registered voters).
13. Younger voters are no different from older voters in support for abortion, business, environment, and gun regulations and health care and immigration reform when we control for party, ideology, and demographic factors.
14. The data reported in this paragraph is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, combined data from January 2012, March 2012, April 2012, May 2012, and July 2012 (6,972 registered voters), and individual survey data from March 2012 (1,334 registered voters).
15. There are no significant differences between men and women in attitudes toward abortion, business, or environmental regulations, or same-sex marriage or marijuana legalization, or health care or immigration reform.
16. See national trends in Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Changing Views of Federal Spending* (Pew Research Center, February 2011); Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *The People and Their Government* (Pew Research Center, April 2010).
17. The data reported in this paragraph is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, May 2012 (1,322 registered voters).
18. The data reported in this paragraph is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, January 2012 (1,337 registered voters), April 2012 (1,310 registered voters), and July 2012 (1,668 registered voters).
19. The data reported in this paragraph is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, May 2012 (1,322 registered voters).
20. The data reported in this paragraph is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, January 2012 (1,337 registered voters), April 2012 (1,310 registered voters), and May 2012 (1,322 registered voters).
21. Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, "California's Initiative Process: 100 Years Old," Just the Facts (Public Policy Institute of California, September 2011).

22. Mark Baldassare and Cheryl Katz, *The Coming Age of Direct Democracy: California's Recall and Beyond* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2007). See also Baldassare et al., "California's Initiative Process: 100 Years Old."
23. The data reported in this paragraph is from Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, January 2012 (1,337 registered voters).
24. Baldassare et al., "California's Initiative Process: 100 Years Old."
25. Voter data from the California Secretary of State, Historic Vote-by-Mail (Absentee) Ballot Use in California ([www.sos.ca.gov/elections/hist\\_absentee.htm](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/hist_absentee.htm)) and Registered Permanent Vote-by-Mail Statistics, 1992–2010 ([www.sos.ca.gov/elections/vote-by-mail/pvmb-voter-survey-1992-2010.xls](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/vote-by-mail/pvmb-voter-survey-1992-2010.xls)). Survey data is from Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Jennifer Paluch, and Sonja Petek, *PPIC Statewide Survey*, January 2008 (1,497 registered voters) and November 2008 (2,016 registered voters); Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Jui Shrestha, May 2012 (1,322 registered voters). I thank Jack Citrin for the suggestion to review the trends in absentee ballot use in California.
26. For more on the same-day registration bill, see the CA.gov press release (<http://gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=17748>). See also the election reforms outlined in Catherine Hazelton, "Progress Report on the Future of California Elections," James Irvine Foundation's *News and Insights* blog, August 2, 2012 (<http://irvine.org/news-insights/entry/progress-report-on-the-future-of-california-elections>), and on the California Forward website ([www.cafwd.org/pages/democracy-reforms](http://www.cafwd.org/pages/democracy-reforms)).
27. Eric McGhee, "How Much Does the Public Know about the State Budget and Does It Matter?" *California Journal of Politics and Policy* 2 (1): 1–21; Arthur Lupia, "Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting in California Insurance Reform Elections," *American Political Science Review* 88 (1): 63–76.
28. I thank Dan Schnur for helpful comments on limits of current reforms and the obstacles to voter participation.

## RELATED PPIC PUBLICATIONS

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