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California Voters Show Strong Bipartisan Support for Government Transparency Reforms

Searchable documents, government spending transparency and publishing bills 72 hours before the final vote received highest level of public support in statewide poll released by Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom and former Sen. Sam Blakeslee

SAN LUIS OBISPO — The Institute for Advanced Technology and Public Policy (IATPP) at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, today released a statewide poll of 800 likely voters that tested the public's appetite for reforms that advance transparency in California.

Five reform proposals were tested by IATPP, led by director and former state senator Sam Blakeslee. Republican polling firm SmithJohnson Research, together with Democratic polling firm Tulchin Research, conducted the poll and found 90 percent of California Republicans, Democrats and Independents support reforms that make state government more transparent and accountable.

"It is clear that the public wants information, and they want it presented in a way that is quick and easy to find, understand and act upon," said Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, an IATPP advisory board member and author of the book "Citizenville" that explores civic participation in the digital age. "And with the array of political reforms introduced and supported by the Legislature last year, I believe there's appetite for change in Sacramento too."

Even with record-breaking lows in voter turnout during the November 2014 election, voters' support for each of the proposed reforms was strong, ranging between 82 percent and 90 percent.

"We've seen a dramatic shift in individual empowerment fueled by the emergence of technology resources like Google, Web MD and Wikipedia. Government continues to lag behind this information revolution," said IATPP's Blakeslee. "This package of reforms is strongly supported by the public and would significantly empower citizens to better understand and engage in the legislative process."

The following five reform proposals received strong bipartisan support:

- **Searchable Documents:** Massive volumes of government documents exist online, but most are stored in a format that does not permit keyword search to easily locate specific information important to the public. When asked about requiring all documents, including the state budget, to be available online with their content easily searchable with a search engine similar to Google, California voter support reached 91 percent.
- **Legislative Spending**
In a March 2015, U.S. PIRG Report grading each state on government spending transparency, California was last and received a grade of F. When asked about requiring a detailed quarterly report of all legislative spending, including travel, staff, perks, mailings and committees to be made available online, California voter support reached 90 percent.
- **72-Hour Wait Period:**
Bills are sometimes changed at the last minute leaving little or no time for the press,

the public, and even other legislators to review what the bill says. Some argue that this weakens the ability of interest groups to influence the bill, while others argue that it strengthens the influence of interest groups. Others argue that the flexibility is necessary in times of crisis and that it prevented California from defaulting on its debts during the 2010 budget impasse. When asked about requiring proposed new laws be made available to the public in writing at least 72 hours before the final vote, California voter support reached 89 percent.

• Video Recording:

Currently many legislative hearings are not video recorded. Compounding the problem, no minutes, transcripts nor list of participants are produced for the public to review. When asked about requiring all public hearings in the Legislature to be video recorded and made available to the public on the Internet within 24 hours after the hearing, California voter support reached 86 percent.

• LAO Analysis:

LAO analyses are very powerful in shaping the dialogue and public debate on issues before the Legislature. When asked about requiring that the official analyses of proposed new laws be done by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office, instead of legislative staff and without citing costs, California voter support reached 82 percent.

"One hypothesis going into this survey was that support for reforms would be high when considered in isolation, but that support would substantially erode when respondents were read opposing arguments. To test that hypothesis opposing arguments were matched with each of the reforms," said Val Smith, Ph.D., research director of the Republican polling firm SmithJohnson Research. "To our surprise, all of the reforms continued to enjoy strong bipartisan support."

"The data shows remarkably uniform approval independent of party, age, geography or ethnicity. Even after forceful arguments were made against the reforms, approval remains high at two-thirds, which is rare," said Ben Tulchin, president of the Democrat polling firm Tulchin Research.

More Online

Additional poll results and methodology: [http://www.iatpp.calpoly.edu/polling/Certified Statewide Results Show Record Low Turnout for Regular General Elections in California](http://www.iatpp.calpoly.edu/polling/Certified%20Statewide%20Results%20Show%20Record%20Low%20Turnout%20for%20Regular%20General%20Elections%20in%20California): <http://www.sos.ca.gov/administration/news-releases-and-advisories/2014-news-releases-and-advisories/db14-094/>

California Receives 'F' in Annual Report on Transparency of Government Spending: [http://calpirgedfund.org/news/caf/new-report-california-receives-f-annual-report-transparency-government-spending?](http://calpirgedfund.org/news/caf/new-report-california-receives-f-annual-report-transparency-government-spending?_utma=1.851829209.1427475018.1430243893.1430274776.3&_utmb=1.4.10.1430274776&_utmc=1&_utmx=-&_utmz=1.1430274776.3.3._utmcsrc=google%257Cutmccn=%28organic%29%257Cutmcmd=organic%257Cutmctr=%28not%20provided%29&_utmv=-&_utmk=3712816)

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Survey Methodology

From March 29 to April 2, 2015, Tulchin Research and SmithJohnson Research conducted a telephone survey among 800 likely November 2016 general election voters statewide in California, using live professional interviewers calling both landlines and cell phones. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.46 percentage points.

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About the Institute for Advanced Technology and Public Policy

Under the guidance of founding director and former state senator Sam Blakeslee, Ph.D., the non-partisan, interdisciplinary organization's mission is to develop practical solutions to societal issues by informing and driving public policy through advanced technology. Teams of Cal Poly faculty and students, together with public policy leaders and industry experts, build technology solutions to pressing real world problems. <http://www.iatpp.calpoly.edu/>

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