

**April 4, 2011**

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Ben Tulchin and Ben Krompak, Tulchin Research  
**Re:** **Statewide Poll Finds California Voters Support Public Employees**

With public sector workers under assault nationally by right-wing politicians and major battles raging over union rights in states like Wisconsin and Ohio, **a recent poll in California finds a solid majority of likely voters in California have a favorable opinion of public employees and support their right to engage in collective bargaining.**

In fact, most Californians oppose what the Governor of Wisconsin is trying to do and support the protesters in their efforts to stop the Wisconsin Governor's efforts. Additionally, when it comes to addressing state government's financial challenges, **the poll finds that Californians overwhelmingly feel that the wealthy and corporate interests not paying their fair share in taxes is a bigger budget problem than public employees.**

**Public Employees Viewed Favorably by Voters by a Better-Than 4-to-1 Margin.** When we asked voters whether they had a generally favorable, neutral, or generally unfavorable opinion of public employees, more than half (56%) responded that they viewed public employees favorably compared to only 13% who viewed them unfavorably. Another 30% of voters had a neutral opinion, with the remainder undecided.

<b>Californians View Public Employees Favorably</b>	
<i>"Do you have a generally favorable, neutral, or generally unfavorable opinion of public employees?"</i>	
<b>Favorable</b>	<b>56%</b>
Neutral	30%
Unfavorable	13%
Don't Know / No Answer	2%

*\*Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

Public employees were viewed favorably across the political spectrum.

- Democrats hold public employees in the highest esteem, with nearly two-thirds (63%) perceiving them in a positive light and only one out of ten (10%) in a negative light.
- Among decline-to-state and third party voters, six times as many voters hold a favorable opinion of public employees as holds an unfavorable opinion (54% favorable to only 9% unfavorable), with 33 percent neutral and the remaining unsure.
- Republicans also view public employees favorably by a margin of better than 2-to-1, with nearly half of GOP voters (46%) saying they had a favorable opinion to slightly less than one out of five (19%) who viewed public employees unfavorably.

<b>Opinion Of Public Employees – By Party</b>				
<i>“Do you have a generally favorable, neutral, or generally unfavorable opinion of public employees?”</i>				
	<b>All Voters</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>DTS/Other</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<b>Favorable</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>
Neutral	30%	26%	33%	33%
Unfavorable	13%	10%	9%	19%
Don’t Know / No Answer	2%	1%	4%	2%

**Solid Majority Supports Collective Bargaining Rights for Public Employees.** When it comes to the right of public employees to engage in collective bargaining for wages and benefits, our poll finds Californians favor collective bargaining rights for government workers by a nearly 2-to-1 margin of 61% in support to 32% opposed.

- Democrats lead the way in supporting collective bargaining rights for public employees at 73% who support them to just 20% opposed.
- Independents also support public sector collective bargaining by a wide margin of 65% support to 30% oppose.
- Republicans are more closely divided on this issue than voters of other parties. A majority (52%) of Republicans oppose collective bargaining rights for public employees while two out of five GOP voters (40%) say they support them.

<b>Voters Support Collective Bargaining Rights for Public Employees</b>				
<i>“Do you support or oppose the right of public employees to engage in collective bargaining for wages and benefits?”</i>				
	<b>All Voters</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>DTS/Other</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<b>Support</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>40%</b>
Oppose	32%	20%	30%	52%
Undecided	7%	7%	5%	8%

With the battle over union rights for government workers in Wisconsin attracting considerable national attention, we asked California voters whether they sided with the Governor of Wisconsin in his efforts to eliminate collective bargaining rights for public sector workers or with the public employees and the protests to protect their rights to collective bargaining. By a nearly 20-point margin, California voters side with Wisconsin’s public employees (56%) over Wisconsin’s Governor (37%) on the issue of collective bargaining rights for public employees.

**Voters Blame State Budget Woes on Wealthy and Corporations Not Paying Their Fair Share – Not On Public Employees.** When it comes to California’s fiscal challenges, our poll finds that most voters feel that the wealthy and corporations not paying enough in taxes is a much bigger problem facing the state budget than public employee salaries and benefits. Specifically, more than half of likely voters (52%) say the wealthy and corporate interests not paying their fair share was the bigger problem affecting the state’s budget woes, while less than one-third (32%) thought the bigger issue was public employee compensation.

<b>Voters See Tax Disparity As Bigger Budget Problem Than Employee Compensation</b>	
<i>“Which is a bigger problem facing California’s budget right now?”</i>	
Public employee salaries, pensions and benefits	32%
<b>The wealthy and corporate interests not paying their fair share in taxes</b>	<b>52%</b>
Both	8%
Neither	5%
Don’t Know / No Answer	4%

*\*Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

In conclusion, **this poll clearly demonstrates that California voters support collective bargaining for public employees and reject the right-wing’s finger-pointing at government workers on the state budget.** Voters across the political spectrum have a favorable opinion of public employees and they overwhelmingly feel that the state’s budget deficit has more to do with the wealthy and corporations not paying their fair share in taxes than it does with the compensation afforded schoolteachers, police officers, firefighters, and other public workers.

**Survey Methodology:** From March 13 – March 16, 2011, Tulchin Research conducted a statewide telephone survey in California among 800 likely November 2012 voters. Interviews were conducted by live professional callers and the sample included both landline and cell phone numbers. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.5 percentage points.