

Poll: Sacramento Supports Housing Control and Mandatory Flood Insurance

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Sacramento has become one of the fastest growing regions in California as people leave the Bay Area and other expensive coastal communities to search for affordable homes in the region. To meet the high demand, many new houses in the Sacramento region and the Central Valley have been built in areas likely to flood. While those homes are supposed to be protected by levees, a lot of them are at risk for a disaster similar to Hurricane Katrina. If levees break in a big storm, many areas in the Sacramento region may become submerged under deep water. On February 24th, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger inspected the levees with federal and local officials. In order to speed up needed repairs, he declared a state of emergency for the levees.

To fix and/or maintain the massive levee systems in the region may require a great deal of capital and take a long time. In his January State of the State speech, Governor Schwarzenegger called for a \$222 billion, 10-year infrastructure growth plan, including \$68 billion in bonds that would be approved by the public to upgrade the state's levees and many other public projects. However, his proposal to put these bonds on the June ballot collapsed, and his effort to ask the federal government for emergency funds to fix the levees also failed in this year's budget cycle. At the same time, our study indicates that the Sacramento region is unprepared for a big flood: many (10%) are unaware whether they live in flood prone areas or not, half of the families (50%) have no evacuation plan in case of an emergency such as a big flood, and few (19%) currently carry flood insurance (Liu, Scott, and Bowerman 2006). What does the public think local governments, developers, and residents should do as the region tries to figure out how to protect the people and their properties while waiting for state and federal governments to find out the best course of action to get those levees fixed?

According to *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*, an overwhelming majority of the public in the Sacramento region thinks local governments should restrict the construction of new homes in areas with inadequate flood protection (88%) and should encourage new homes built in those areas to have living spaces elevated above potential flood waters to limit flood damages and speed cleanup (70%). A majority of area residents (72%) endorse the proposal that would require local governments to share liability costs with the state government if flooding occurs in the housing projects that local governments have approved. Moreover, they favor the plans to require developers to pay a development fee for flood control projects if they want to build in areas likely to flood (87%) and to require all property owners protected by levees to buy flood insurance (66%).

These are some of the results from *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*, conducted from February 4 through March 5, 2006, by the Institute for Social Research (ISR), California State University, Sacramento.

Limit new housing construction in flood areas

Nearly nine out of ten (88%) residents in the Sacramento region think local governments should limit the construction of new homes in places with inadequate flood protection. Only eight percent take the opposite position, and four percent have not yet formed an opinion. Such strong support for restricting growth in flood prone areas is shared by an overwhelming majority of the general public no matter which county they live in (89% from Yolo, El Dorado, and Placer counties and 87% from Sacramento County). This proposal is also endorsed by a majority of registered voters in the region regardless of whether they are Democrats (90%), Republicans (88%), or other voters (89%). The Governor’s declaration of a state of emergency for the levees in the Central Valley on Feb. 24 hasn’t affected the level of support (88% of support restricting housing construction both before and after the declaration).

Perception of growth controls in flood prone areas, however, varies by homeownership, length of residence, race, household income, and perception of flood control as a problem in the region. Homeowners (90%), those who have lived in the areas seven or more years (90%), white residents (90%), and those whose households make \$50,000 or more a year (90%) are more likely to think local government should restrict new housing development in flood prone areas, compared to non-homeowners (80%), those who have lived in the area six years or less (81%), other racial groups (82%), and those households that make less than \$50,000 a year (84%). Those who regard flood control as a big or somewhat of a problem (89%) show more support for growth controls than those who don’t think flood control is a problem or those who don’t know if it is a problem (82%).

“Do you think local governments should limit the construction of new homes in places without adequate flood protection?”

Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region

	Sacramento Region	El Dorado County	Placer County	Sacramento County	Yolo County
Yes	88%	89%	89%	87%	89%
No	8	8	9	9	6
Don’t know	4	3	2	4	5

Comparison among Registered Voters

	Democrats	Republicans	Other Voters
Yes	90%	88%	89%
No	7	9	8
Don’t know	3	3	3

Comparison before and after the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency

	Before Declaration (Before Feb. 24)	After Declaration (After Feb. 24)
Yes	88%	88%
No	8	9
Don't know	4	3

Comparison between Homeowners and Non-Homeowners

	Homeowners	Non-Homeowners
Yes	90%	80%
No	7	14
Don't know	3	6

Comparison among People with Different Length of Residence

	6 Years or Less	7 or More Years
Yes	81%	90%
No	14	7
Don't know	5	3

Comparison between White and Other Racial Groups

	White	Other Racial Groups
Yes	90%	82%
No	7	12
Don't know	3	6

Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes

	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 or More
Yes	84%	90%
No	10	8
Don't know	6	2

Comparison among People with Different Perception of Flood Control

	A Problem (Big/Somewhat)	Not A Problem/ Don't Know
Yes	89%	82%
No	8	11
Don't know	3	7

Build elevated housing in flood areas

More than two thirds of the residents (70%) think local governments should encourage building new homes with living spaces that are elevated above potential flood levels to speed cleanup and reduce damages, 19 percent are against the idea, and 11 percent don't know. Those 65 or older (62%), those with household incomes of \$30,000 or less (69%), and those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more (68%) show less support for building this kind of housing in flood prone areas than people who are younger than 65 (73%) and those with household incomes between \$30,000 and less than \$75,000 a year (77%). Those who don't live in flood areas (72%) are much more likely to support building elevated housing than those who live in the flood areas (66%) or those who don't know whether their houses are located in the flood areas (67%). The Governor's declaration of a state of emergency for the levees on Feb. 24 has not affected residents' views on this important issue (70% before and after the declaration).

“Do you think local governments should encourage building new homes with elevated living spaces that are above potential floodwater to speed cleanup and reduce damages?”

Comparison among People with Different Age Groups

	Sacramento Region	64 or Younger	65 or Plus
Yes	70%	73%	62%
No	19	17	26%
Don't know	11	10	12%

Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes

	Less than \$30,000	\$30,000 to less than \$75,000	\$75,000 or Plus
Yes	69%	77%	68%
No	18	16	22
Don't know	13	7	10

Comparison among People Living in Different Areas

	Live in Flood Areas	Not Live in Flood Areas	Don't Know
Yes	66%	72%	67%
No	17	21	14
Don't know	17	7	19

Comparison before and after the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency

	Before Declaration (Before Feb. 24)	After Declaration (After Feb. 24)
Yes	70%	70%
No	20	18
Don't know	10	12

Require local governments to share liability costs with the state government

Several proposals have been offered to deal with flood control in California. According to the survey, more than 70 percent (72%) of residents in the Sacramento region favor the proposal that would require local governments that have approved housing projects in flood prone areas to share liability costs with the state government if flooding occurs. In contrast, only 16 percent oppose such an idea, and 12 percent haven't made up their mind on this issue yet. People in Sacramento, Yolo, and Placer counties (74%), those households that make less than \$75,000 a year (75%), and those who perceive flood control as a big or somewhat of a problem in the region (74%) show more support for the plan than residents from El Dorado County (64%), families with household incomes of \$75,000 or more (68%) and those who don't know or don't perceive flood control as a problem in the region (66%). Residents' opinions on this proposal haven't been affected by the Governor's declaration of a state of emergency for the levees on Feb. 24 (72% before and after the declaration).

**“Several proposals have been made to deal with flood control in California. Please tell me whether you favor or oppose the following proposals. If you don't know or have no opinion, it is important that you indicate this.
Require local governments that have approved housing projects in flood areas to share liability costs with the state government if flooding occurs?”**

Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region

	Sacramento Region	El Dorado County	Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties
Favor	72%	64%	74%
Oppose	16	22	15
Don't know	12	14	11

Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes

	Sacramento Region	Less than \$75,000	\$75,000 or Plus
Favor	72%	75%	68%
Oppose	16	13	21
Don't know	12	12	11

Comparison among People with Different Perception of Flood Control

	A Problem (Big/Somewhat)	Not A Problem/Don't Know
Favor	74%	66%
Oppose	16	17
Don't know	10	17

Comparison before and after the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency

	Before Declaration (Before Feb. 24)	After Declaration (After Feb. 24)
Favor	72%	72%
Oppose	16	16
Don't know	12	12

Require developers to pay development fees for flood control projects

Nearly ninety percent of the residents in the Sacramento region (87%) favor the proposal that would require developers to pay a development fee for flood control projects if they build in areas likely to flood. Only seven percent oppose the plan, and six percent have yet to form an opinion. This proposal has received strong support from the general public no matter which county they live in (90% in Yolo County, 88% in Placer County, and 86% in El Dorado and Sacramento counties). An overwhelming majority of registered voters also endorse this idea, regardless of whether they are Democrats (92%), Republicans (88%), or other voters (86%). The Governor's declaration of a state of emergency, on Feb. 24, for the levees in the Central Valley has not directly affected the support for this plan (87% of support before the declaration and 88% of support after the declaration).

Support for this proposal differs somewhat by homeownership, age, race, household income, and flood risk awareness in the region. Those who are more than 40 years or older (90%), white residents (89%), homeowners (88%), and those whose households make \$30,000 or more (88%) are more likely to show stronger support for this idea than those 40 or younger (80%), other racial groups (82%), non-homeowners (82%), and those with household incomes less than \$30,000 a year (84%). Those who regard flood control as a big problem (91%) or somewhat of a problem (87%) are more likely to favor this proposal than those who don't perceive flood control as a problem or don't know if it's a problem (79%).

“Require all developers to pay a development fee for flood control projects if they build in areas likely to flood?”

Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region

	Sacramento Region	El Dorado County	Placer County	Sacramento County	Yolo County
Favor	87%	86%	88%	86%	90%
Oppose	7	7	8	7	3
Don't know	6	7	4	7	7

Comparison among Registered Voters

	Democrats	Republicans	Other Voters
Favor	92%	88%	86%
Oppose	4	8	8
Don't know	4	4	6

Comparison before and after the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency

	Before Declaration (Before Feb. 24)	After Declaration (After Feb. 24)
Favor	87%	88%
Oppose	7	7
Don't know	6	5

Comparison among People with Different Age Groups

	40 or Younger	41 or Plus
Favor	80%	90%
Oppose	11	6
Don't know	9	4

Comparison between White and Other Racial Groups

	White	Other Racial Groups
Favor	89%	82%
Oppose	7	8
Don't know	4	10

Comparison between Homeowners and Non-Homeowners

	Homeowners	Non-Homeowners
Favor	88%	82%
Oppose	7	7
Don't know	5	11

Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes

	Less than \$30,000	\$30,000 or More
Favor	84%	88%
Oppose	6	8
Don't know	10	4

Comparison among People with Different Perception of Flood Control

	A Big Problem	Somewhat of a Problem	Not a Problem/ Don't Know
Favor	91%	87%	79%
Oppose	5	7	11
Don't know	4	6	10

Require property owners to buy flood insurance

Two-thirds of residents in the Sacramento region (66%) favor the proposal that would require all property owners protected by levees to buy flood insurance, 22 percent oppose it, and 12 percent don't know. Support for this proposal, however, varies a great deal in the region, especially depending on locations of residence and household incomes. More than two-thirds of people in El Dorado (73%), Placer (71%) and Sacramento (66%) counties support the idea. In contrast, only 45 percent in Yolo County like it. More than two-thirds of residents who don't live in flood areas (68%) favor the proposal. Sixty four percent who live in the flood areas (64%) also support it, whereas only half (51%) of those who don't know whether they live in the flood areas are for the plan. Compared to those with household incomes between \$30,000 and less than \$75,000 (67%) and those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more (70%), those whose households make less than \$30,000 a year (54%) are much less likely to support the proposal to require all property owners to buy flood insurance.

Those who regard flood control as a big problem (73%) are much more likely to favor this proposal than those who perceive flood control as somewhat of a problem (63%) and those who don't regard flood control as a problem or don't know if it is a problem (57%). Homeowners (68%), those who are 41 years or older (68%), women (68%), and white residents (67%) show stronger support for this proposal than non-homeowners (60%), those 40 or younger (61%), men (63%), and other racial groups (62%). Among registered voters, Republicans (70%) and Democrats (67%) are more likely to endorse this plan, compared to other voters (61%). The Governor's declaration of a state of emergency for the levees has not directly impacted residents' support for mandatory flood insurance (66% before and 65% after the declaration).

“Require all property owners protected by levees to buy flood insurance”

Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region

	Sacramento Region	El Dorado County	Placer County	Sacramento County	Yolo County
Favor	66%	73%	71%	66%	45%
Oppose	22	17	22	21	35
Don't know	12	10	7	13	20

Comparison among People Living in Different Areas

	Live in Flood Areas	Not Live in Flood Areas	Don't Know
Favor	64%	68%	51%
Oppose	25	21	26
Don't know	11	11	23

Comparisons among People with Different Household Incomes

	Less than \$30,000	\$30,000 to less than \$75,000	\$75,000 or Plus
Favor	54%	67%	70%
Oppose	26	22	21
Don't know	20	11	9

Comparison among People with Different Perception of Flood Control

	A Big Problem	Somewhat of a Problem	Not a Problem/Don't Know
Favor	73%	63%	57%
Oppose	18	25	26
Don't know	9	12	17

Comparison between Homeowners and Non-homeowners

	Homeowners	Non-Homeowners
Favor	68%	60%
Oppose	21	25
Don't know	11	15

Comparison among People with Different Age Groups

	40 or Younger	41 or Plus
Favor	61%	68%
Oppose	25	21
Don't know	14	11

Comparison between Men and Women

	Male	Female
Favor	63%	68%
Oppose	26	20
Don't know	11	12

Comparison between White and Other Racial Groups

	White	Other Racial Groups
Favor	67%	62%
Oppose	22	21
Don't know	11	17

Comparison among Registered Voters

	Democrats	Republicans	Other Voters
Favor	67%	70%	61%
Oppose	20	22	28
Don't know	13	8	11

Comparison before and after the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency

	Before Declaration (Before Feb. 24)	After Declaration (After Feb. 24)
Favor	66%	65%
Oppose	21	25
Don't know	13	10

Survey Methods

The above results are based on our fifth annual survey, *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*¹. This study is a computer-assisted telephone interview of 1122 adult residents age 18 and older from randomly selected households in the Sacramento region, which includes Sacramento, Yolo, Placer, and El Dorado counties. The objective of this project is to assess quality of life and public opinion regarding a wide range of important local and national issues in the Sacramento region.

¹ This study was called Annual Survey of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region.

More than 30 students conducted phone interviews in English and Spanish from February 4 to March 5, 2006, at the Institute for Social Research, California State University, Sacramento. The sample is representative of the four counties in the Sacramento region and comparable to the 2000 U.S. Census (68% residents in the Census vs. 65.4% in the sample in Sacramento County, 14% in the Census vs. 16.3% in the sample in Placer County, 9% in the Census vs. 8.2% in the sample in Yolo County; and 9% in the Census vs. 10.1% in the sample in El Dorado County). The margin of error for the survey is approximately ± 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The error for group comparisons in the Sacramento region would be higher than ± 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

This survey has compared the Sacramento region findings with those from other California regions, the state, and the nation. Data cited regarding the state and other California regions often comes from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Statewide Surveys. Nationwide data often comes from Gallup polls.

The College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies (SSIS), Department of Sociology, the Office of Public Affairs, the Office of Community Collaboration at California State University (CSU), Sacramento, and CSU, Office of Community Service Learning sponsored this project. Dr. Joseph Sheley is actively involved in this project and has made great contributions.

This research is directed by Amy Q. Liu, Ph.D., Department of Sociology and Institute for Social Research, California State University, Sacramento. Dr. Liu is an expert in public opinion polls, and has conducted over 20 surveys in the past nine years, including:

- 2005, 2004, 2003, and 2002 Annual Surveys of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region
- Survey of Iowa Business about Eldercare and Eldercare Needs
- Story County Conservation Board Survey
- Grundy County Youth Needs Assessment

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Reference

Liu, Amy, Otis Scott, and Kenneth D. Bowerman. March 10, 2006. "Sacramento Region Unprepared for Big Flood, Support for Governor's Flood Control Efforts Increased." California State University, Sacramento, Sacramento, CA.
<http://www.csus.edu/news/030906Survey.stm>

Appendix I: The 2006 Annual Survey Research Team Members and Sponsors

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