

Poll: Twenty-Eight Percent of Sacramento City Residents Would Vote to Re-elect Heather Fargo as Mayor

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First elected to the Sacramento City Council in 1989, Heather Fargo was re-elected to the Council in 1994 and 1998. Following a hard-fought campaign, Fargo was elected as Mayor of Sacramento in November 2000. With the passage of Measure S in November 2002, she became the city's first full-time Mayor. In the 2004 primary mayoral race, she ran against Ross W. Relles, Jr. and several other opponents, and won almost 60 percent of the votes. Throughout her political career, Heather Fargo has played essential roles in numerous local and state organizations, including the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, the Sacramento Flood Control Agency, the Sacramento Transportation Agency, the Waterfront Advisory Committee, and the League of California Cities.

The next primary election for Mayor of Sacramento will take place June 3, 2008, and Mayor Fargo plans to seek a third term. By the time we conducted our interviews from February 16 to March 2, former NBA star Kevin Johnson had publicly expressed interest in challenging her in this race. If that election were to take place, who would city residents vote for -- Heather Fargo or Kevin Johnson? Which issue would be foremost in the minds of city residents when they cast their vote? How many people currently approve of Heather Fargo's performance as Mayor of Sacramento?

According to a random survey of 380 residents in the City of Sacramento, 36 percent approve of the way Heather Fargo is performing in the capacity of Mayor. The remaining residents (64%) either disapprove (35%) or say they don't know (29%). If the election for Mayor of Sacramento had taken place at the time of our interviews, 28 percent would vote to re-elect Fargo, and twenty-nine percent would choose Kevin Johnson in a contest between the two.

When city residents were asked which issue they considered most critical in casting their ballots, no single issue emerged, but the economy (12%) and budget and taxes (9%) lead the choices. Housing (6%) and development (5%), and concerns over public safety like flood control (6%) and law enforcement (5%), and the candidate's character and leadership qualities like vision (6%) and integrity (3%) were also among the most frequently mentioned factors.

The data suggest that June's mayoral race in Sacramento is wide open. Many city residents (41%) are not yet committed to either Fargo or Johnson. This provides an opportunity for candidates to engage in a spirited debate over Sacramento's future and how to best lead the city in that direction. They can present their vision and directly compete for votes. Hopefully, the campaign for Mayor will allow residents to gain a clearer picture of where each candidate wants to lead the city in the 21st century.

What follows are more detailed results for the city survey, one segment of *The 2008 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*, conducted from February 16 to March 2, 2008, by the Institute for Social Research (ISR), California State University, Sacramento.

Mayor Fargo does not enjoy high job approval rating

When residents in Sacramento City were interviewed from February 16 to March 2, they were divided in their opinion of Mayor Fargo’s overall job performance: 36 percent approved of the way Heather Fargo was handling her job, and 35 percent disapproved. Twenty-nine percent are unsure of whether they approve or disapprove.

Fargo’s approval rating varies depending on gender, class, and political party affiliation. Men are more likely than women to rate her job performance negatively (40% men vs. 32% women disapprove). Women are split: 34 percent approve, 32 percent disapprove, and 34 percent don’t know. Upper class and upper middle class residents tend to criticize her job performance (35% approve, 45% disapprove, and 20% don’t know), middle class residents are more likely to think she does a good job (42% approve, 31% disapprove, and 27% don’t know), while almost 40 percent of working class and lower class residents say they don’t know how well she is doing her job (27% approve, 35% disapprove, and 38% don’t know). Republicans (49%) are much less likely than Democrats (29%) and other voters (32%) to report positive job performance for Mayor Fargo. Race does not seem to have a significant impact here; only 36 percent of white residents and 35 percent of people from other racial groups speak favorably of her job performance.

Heather Fargo has been a full-time mayor in the City of Sacramento for many years, yet less than 30 percent (29%) of residents still don’t know how well she is performing as Mayor, thus it will be critical for her to increase her positive visibility in the city.

“Overall do you approve of the way that Heather Fargo is handling her job as Mayor of Sacramento?”

Comparison between Men and Women

	Sacramento City	Males	Females
Approve	36%	38%	34%
Disapprove	35	40	32
Don’t know	29	22	34

Comparison among People with Different Socioeconomic Status

	Upper Class/ Upper Middle Class	Middle Class	Working Class/ Lower Class
Approve	35%	42%	27%
Disapprove	45	31	35
Don’t know	20	27	38

Comparison among Registered Voters

	Republicans	Democrats	Other Voters
Approve	26%	43%	36%
Disapprove	49	29	32
Don't know	25	28	32

Comparison between Whites and Other Racial Groups

	Whites	Other Racial Groups
Approve	36%	35%
Disapprove	37	33
Don't know	27	32

Less than thirty percent would vote to re-elect Mayor Fargo

If the election for Mayor of Sacramento would have taken place at the same time we conducted our interviews (mid-February to early March), the results of a head-to-head contest between Fargo and Johnson reveal that 28 percent would vote to re-elect Mayor Fargo, while 29 percent would choose Kevin Johnson and two percent would cast votes for others.

Gender, race, class, and political party affect residents' choices with men being more likely to vote for Johnson (35% Johnson vs. 27% Fargo) and women more likely to select Fargo (30% Fargo vs. 25% Johnson). White residents prefer Fargo (33% Fargo vs. 25% Johnson), whereas people from other racial groups are more likely to vote for Johnson (33% Johnson vs. 25% Fargo). Middle class residents favor Fargo (37% Fargo vs. 29% Johnson), and working class and lower class are more likely to pick Johnson (32% Johnson vs. 20% Fargo). The upper and upper middle class are divided: 25 percent are likely to vote for Fargo and 23 percent are likely to elect Johnson. Among the registered voters, Republicans are more likely to choose Johnson (36% for Johnson vs. 20% for Fargo), and other voters are more likely to select Fargo (30% Fargo vs. 20% Johnson). Democrats, however, are divided: 31 percent are for Fargo and 30 percent support Johnson.

However, this race is still wide open. Forty-one percent of the city residents are not yet committed to either candidate. Approximately half of the upper class and upper middle class residents (52%) and other voters (48%) say they don't know who to choose, and more than 40 percent of the working class (45%), females (44%), Republicans (42%), and people from other racial groups (41%) are also undecided. Almost 40 percent of Democrats (38%) and white residents (39%) have not yet made up their mind.

**“If the election for Mayor of Sacramento were being held today,
and Heather Fargo and Kevin Johnson were the candidates,
who would you vote for – Heather Fargo or Kevin Johnson?”**

Residents in Sacramento City	
Heather Fargo	28%
Kevin Johnson	29
Any other candidate	2
Don't know/undecided	41

Comparison between Males and Females

	Males	Females
Heather Fargo	27%	30%
Kevin Johnson	35	25
Any other candidate	4	1
Don't know/undecided	34	44

Comparison between Whites and Other Racial Groups

	Whites	Other Racial Groups
Heather Fargo	33%	25%
Kevin Johnson	25	33
Any other candidate	3	1
Don't know/undecided	39	41

Comparison among People with Socioeconomic Status

	Upper Class/ Upper Middle Class	Middle Class	Working Class/ Lower class
Heather Fargo	25%	37%	20%
Kevin Johnson	23	29	32
Any other candidate	0	3	3
Don't know/undecided	52	31	45

Comparison among Registered Voters

	Republicans	Democrats	Other Voters
Heather Fargo	20%	31%	30%
Kevin Johnson	36	30	20
Any other candidate	2	1	2
Don't know/undecided	42	38	48

No single issue dominates voter concern in the June mayoral race

When we asked respondents to name the MOST important issue they will take into account when deciding for whom to vote in the June mayoral race, no single subject appeared predominant in the minds of voters. Twenty-one percent of residents mentioned that the economy (12%) and budget related issues (9%) are among the most important consideration in casting their votes. Housing (6%) and development (5%), public safety such as flood control (6%) and law enforcement (5%), and candidate’s vision (6%) and integrity (3%) are also significant to many voters. Other frequently noted concerns range from education (8%), healthcare (6%), to traffic, transportation, and transit (5%). The Kings, parks, and entertainment (1%), environment, pollution, and global warming (1%), the war in Iraq (1%), and immigration and borders (1%) do not count as critical issues to many residents in the coming mayoral race.

“Looking ahead to the mayoral election in Sacramento in June, what will be the most important issue that you will take into account when you decide whom to vote for?”

Categories	Percentage Mentioned
Economy	
Economy/Jobs/Employment	12
Budget	
Budget/taxes/spending	9
Housing and Development	
Housing/affordable housing	6
Development/population growth	5
Public Safety	
Flooding/flood control	6
Law enforcement	5
Candidate’s Vision and Integrity	
Leadership/vision of candidate	6
Honesty/integrity of candidate	3
Other More Frequently Mentioned Issues	
Education/school	8
Healthcare/healthcare insurance	6
Traffic/Transportation/Transit	5
Other Less Frequently Mentioned Issues	
Kings/Parks/Entertainment	1
Environment/Pollution	1
War in Iraq	1
Immigration/Border Control	1
Other Issues	
Others	9
Don’t Know	
No Issues	2
Don’t know/refused	16

Survey methods

The above results are based on a random sample of 380 residents living in the City of Sacramento. This study is part of the seventh annual survey, *The 2008 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*¹. This annual survey is a computer-assisted telephone interview of 1,200 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 the perception of the quality of life and public opinion in the Sacramento region on a wide range of important local and national issues.

More than 40 students conducted phone interviews in English and Spanish from February 16 to March 2, 2008, at the Institute for Social Research, California State University, Sacramento. The sample is quite representative of the four counties in the Sacramento region when compared with the 2000 U.S. Census (9% in the Census vs. 10% in the sample in Yolo County; 9% in the Census vs. 9% in the sample in El Dorado County, 14% in the Census vs. 16% in the sample in Placer County, and 68% residents in the Census vs. 65% in the sample in Sacramento County). The small differences may reflect the changes in the population of the region. The margin of error for the survey in the region is approximately ± 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The error for the survey of the City of Sacramento is ± 5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

This survey has compared the Sacramento regional findings with those from other California regions, as well as those from 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), the Department of Sociology, the Office of Public Affairs, and the Community Engagement Center at California State University, Sacramento, sponsored this project.

This research is directed by Amy 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 ten years, including:

- 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2007 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region
- Survey of Iowa Business about Eldercare and Eldercare Needs
- Story County Conservation Board Survey
- Grundy County Youth Needs Assessment

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¹ This study was called Annual Survey of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region before 2006.

summaries and full reports for the 2006, 2005, 2004, 2003, and 2002 annual surveys in the Sacramento region.

Appendix I: The 2008 Annual Survey Research Team Members and Sponsors

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