

The Times Poll

Bush 11 Points Ahead in State; Economy Cited

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Republican George Bush is running 11 points ahead of Democrat Michael S. Dukakis in California, largely because voters are satisfied with the economy and agree with Bush's approach to controlling the budget deficit and fighting crime, the Los Angeles Times Poll has found.

With only two weeks remaining before the election, Dukakis clearly has failed to excite voters in a state virtually everybody agrees he must carry to win the presidency, the survey showed. Two in five of Dukakis' supporters say they are voting less "for" him than they are "against" Bush.

Link to Reagan Helps

Vice President Bush's ties to Ronald Reagan are a big help to the Republican ticket in the President's home state. California voters, by roughly 3 to 2, approve of the way Reagan is "handling his job as President." And people who approve of Reagan support Bush by nearly 6 to 1.

The Times survey found Bush/Quayle leading Dukakis/Bentsen among likely voters by 53% to 42%, with only 4% undecided and 1% supporting other candidates.

The Times poll, directed by I. A. Lewis, interviewed 1,376 Californians considered likely to vote on Nov. 8. The four-day telephone survey ended Sunday. The margin of error is 4 percentage points in either direction.

Bush and Dukakis were found to be running even in Los Angeles County, which Democratic candidates traditionally must win to carry the state. Bush was leading in the rest of Southern California by roughly 2 to 1. Dukakis was comfortably ahead in the Democrat-oriented San Francisco Bay Area by 3 to 2. But Bush, conversely, was leading 3 to 2 in the remainder of Northern California.

Voters appear to be satisfied with California's economy and see no "bread-and-butter" reason to oust the party in power at the White House, the survey showed. Nearly half the voters described the state's economy as good. Fewer than one-tenth characterized it as bad. And people happy about the economy support Bush by more than 2 to 1.

'New Direction' Favored

Californians did say, by 2 to 1, that "the next President should point the country in a new direction." But most people looking for a change from Reagan Administration policies said they want to alter only "a few specific things"—primarily the Administration's performance on the budget deficit, drug control and support for education.

Similarly, the most important things a candidate for any federal office should do after being elected, the voters said, are to strive to reduce the deficit, "crack down on



of our children." The good news for Bush is that people who placed the deficit and drugs at the top of their agendas support him over Dukakis. And people especially concerned about education—traditionally a Democratic issue—are split between the two candidates.

For many voters, the candidates' approaches to crime-fighting are symbolized by their positions on the death penalty, which Bush loudly supports and Dukakis quietly opposes. Three-fourths of the voters said murderers should be executed. And Dukakis' vulnerability on this issue was illustrated by the fact that Californians who favor capital punishment support Bush by more than 2 to 1.

Gun Owners Favor Bush

Among those surveyed, 35% said they own a firearm. And the gun owners—obviously attracted by Bush's opposition to more gun control—support the vice president by more than 2 to 1.

Dukakis is supported by voters who are particularly concerned about the environment and child care. But these issues rank at the bottom of the voters' overall list of immediate concerns.

The Massachusetts governor, despite frequent campaigning in California, has not impressed voters here, interviews showed. Fewer than half of his supporters said they are more "in favor" of him than they are "against" Bush. By contrast, Bush's support is 2-1 positive.

So discouraged are Dukakis' supporters that fewer than a third expect him to win on Nov. 8. But nearly 9 in 10 of Bush's supporters forecast a Republican win. Californians, by 5 to 1 overall, predict a Bush victory.

The voters' general impression of Dukakis is ambiguous—51% favorable, 45% unfavorable. And even one-fourth of the people who have a favorable impression of Dukakis plan to vote for Bush.

On the other hand, Bush's impression rating is highly positive—61% favorable, 36% unfavorable.

The story is just the opposite with the vice presidential candidates: Texas Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, the Democrat, is highly regarded—65% favorable, 22% unfavorable. But Indiana Sen. Dan Quayle, the Republican, has a dismal rating—36% favorable, 51% unfavorable.

Even Bush's supporters, by 3 to

2, think Bentsen would be "more qualified" than Quayle "to take over the job of President" if necessary. Overall, California voters consider Bentsen to be the better qualified by 4 to 1.

Nevertheless, a fourth of the voters who have an unfavorable impression of Quayle still plan to vote for Bush.

"Reagan Democrats"—those Democrats who crossed party lines in 1984 to vote for the Republican President—are siding again with the GOP ticket by 3 to 2.

Dukakis is supported by 88% of the black voters. But Bush has the support of 58% of whites. Latinos,

who traditionally have voted Democratic in California, are statistically split this time.

Two other ethnic groups—Italians and Irish—are supporting Bush.

Suburbs Favor Bush

People who live in the suburbs heavily favor Bush, whereas those living in central cities lean toward Dukakis.

Men support Bush by 3 to 2. But women are evenly divided.

People over age 40 back Bush by 3 to 2. But those under age 40—largely "baby boomers"—are about evenly split.

Union members support Dukakis by 5 to 4, but they make up only one-fifth of the likely voters, the survey showed.

Married people back Bush. Singles support Dukakis.

Liberals back Dukakis by roughly 5 to 1, but they represent just one-fourth of the electorate. Four in 10 voters characterize themselves as conservatives, and they favor Bush by more than 6 to 1. Middle-of-the-roads are divided.

By party, three-fourths of the Democrats support Dukakis. But nearly 9 in 10 Republicans back Bush. Independents support Bush by almost 2 to 1.