

Californians strongly back vaccine law in new statewide poll

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Californians strongly support a state law creating new oversight of vaccine medical exemptions for schoolchildren in a statewide poll released Monday, with backing across a spectrum of political affiliations, income and education levels, and geography.

The UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies [poll](#), conducted for the Los Angeles Times, found that 90% of Democrats, 82% of those with no party preference and 73% of Republicans supported the effort to increase immunization rates at schools and daycare facilities by allowing the California Department of Public Health to review and possibly reject a doctor's determination that a child should skip all or some of their shots.

Overall, 8 out of every 10 voters surveyed said they supported the new law, with 61% saying they favored it strongly. Just 16% said they opposed it. The strongest dissent came from participants in the poll who described themselves as very politically conservative—1 out of every 3 of those voters said they opposed it.

Still, 67% of conservative voters who participated overwhelmingly supported the vaccination law, said Mark DiCamillo, director of the Berkeley IGS Poll.

"This is not just causal support; there is very strong support among a large segment of voters," DiCamillo said. "The most likely to be on board are liberals and those who say they are concerned about the measles outbreak."

Senate Bill 276 by state Sen. Richard Pan (D-Sacramento) will establish state review of vaccine exemptions issued by doctors in an effort to weed out those given for nonmedical reasons. Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the bill on Sept. 9 after weeks of protests against the contentious bill, which drew hundreds to the state Capitol this year.

Beginning in 2020, the state will review medical exemptions written by doctors who have given five or more waivers and at schools with an immunization rate below 95%. The new law allows the state to reject only those medical exemptions issued after Dec. 31, except in cases in

which a doctor has been disciplined by the state medical board. In those cases, the state can invalidate all past medical exemptions written by the doctor.

Opponents of SB 276 filed a referendum to block the new law in hopes of gathering the 623,212 valid signatures from registered voters needed to qualify it for the 2020 ballot.

Supporters of SB 276 say the newly released poll demonstrates what they've known since introducing the bill—that Californians support strong vaccination laws.

"To those who heard the loud voices and vitriol from opposition inside the Capitol the last few months, it may have seemed like Californians disagree on vaccines," said Shannan Velayas, a spokeswoman for Pan. "Fortunately, the people of our state believe in science and want our communities to be protected."

Support for the law was strongest among voters who said they were concerned that the recent measles outbreak in California would become more widespread. Overall, 71% of voters said they were worried about the outbreak, of which 33% said they were extremely concerned. Nearly 9 out of 10 voters who said they were extremely concerned about the recent outbreak were in support of the new vaccination law.

Though studies have found that parents who are skeptical of vaccines tend to be affluent, the Berkeley IGS Poll showed the highest levels of opposition were among voters earning between \$20,000 and \$100,000, with fewer than 2 in 10 of voters surveyed saying they disagreed with the law. Among those making \$200,000 or more, 89% of voters said they supported the immunization law, compared with 11% who said they opposed it.

Among voters who graduated from college or had a postgraduate degree, 88% of those surveyed said they supported the law, versus 12% of those who said they opposed it.

Regionally, the lowest support for SB 276 was in Northern California areas outside the San Francisco Bay Area, where a quarter of voters said they opposed the new vaccine restrictions.

Support dipped slightly when comparing voters who are parents of a young child or teenager with those who are not. Among parents with minor children, 79% said they support the law, while 85% of voters who are not parents of children younger than 18 said they favored the law.

"Still, that's marginal in terms of anything statistically significant," DiCamillo said.

The poll surveyed 4,527 registered voters online in English and Spanish between Sept. 13 and 18. The overall margin of error was 2 percentage points.

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