

# **Poll finds offshore oil drilling support erodes among California voters**

**Susan Ferriss, Sacramento Bee, 7-23-10**

In the midst of the worst oil-spill disaster in U.S. history, California voters' opinion of allowing new drilling off their coast took a nose dive from two years ago, according to a Field Poll released today.

Voter support for drilling in state water began to slide 30 years ago, but the poll shows it plunged from 43 percent two years ago to only 31 percent today.

Sixty-one percent now oppose it, nearly a 2-1 ratio of opposition.

The last year that voter opinion for offshore oil drilling was as low as today was in 1990 – the year after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill disaster in Alaska.

"Events seem to matter on this issue," said Field Poll Director Mark DiCamillo. "We're seeing a similar decline now after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill."

The poll found a partisan divide, however.

Three-fourths of Democrats are against new drilling, but a majority of Republicans – 52 percent – said they favored more.

More oil drilling was also supported by 59 percent of those who said they planned to vote this November for GOP candidates Meg Whitman for governor and Carly Fiorina for U.S. senator.

As the November election approaches, oil drilling "could become a big deal if the candidates are on different sides on this issue," DiCamillo said.

He noted that Fiorina has said she would support more drilling off California, while her opponent, Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer, opposes it.

Last year, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and legislators trying to fill a budget deficit proposed allowing slant drilling in state waters off existing oil platforms in federal waters – if those platforms were later removed. Schwarzenegger withdrew support after the recent gulf spill.

Whitman, who once thought slant drilling viable, has said she wouldn't support drilling off California without technological advances to prevent spills.

During a June special election to fill a state Senate seat, Democrat John Laird hammered GOP opponent Sam Blakeslee as "Oil Man Sam" because Blakeslee had worked for Exxon and pushed for slant drilling off California.

Blakeslee received more votes, but not enough to avoid an Aug. 17 runoff.

The poll also found 48 percent favored building more nuclear power plants, while 44 percent were opposed.