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NEWS

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L.A. County Latino voters poised to be defining force in general election, new poll finds

If Los Angeles County Latino votes have their way, Measure M for public transportation will pass on Tuesday with its required two thirds majority.

A super-majority of Latino voters in Los Angeles County support a closely watched ballot measure that would raise the sales tax to fund major improvements to the county's public transportation system, according to the findings of a new poll.

The poll was conducted for the Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA by the nationally recognized firm Latino Decisions, which surveyed 1,501 registered voters in Los Angeles County on a range of local and national issues. The results were presented at a November 3 news conference at Cal State LA Downtown.

The findings provide key insights about Latino voters, who are expected to turn out in large numbers and wield considerable influence in the November 8 general election. Of the approximately 5.1 million voters in Los Angeles County, an estimated 32 percent are Latinos.

"Latinos are indeed positioned to be a defining force in our elections," said Cal State LA Vice President Jose A. Gomez, who welcomed guests to the event. "More and more in Los Angeles, the Latino vote is the deciding vote."

The poll found that 71 percent of Latino voters favor Measure M, which requires a two-thirds vote to raise the sales tax by a half-cent to fund tens of billions of dollars in transportation projects during the next several decades. The measure, which would fund projects including new rail lines, improved bus routes and bike paths, would also indefinitely extend an existing half-cent tax that was set to expire in 2039. Support for Measure M is even stronger among those Latino voters who were foreign born, chose to be interviewed in Spanish, or closely follow the news in Spanish-language media.

The survey found that Latinos are engaged in their communities and schools and active in the political process. Seventy-one percent said they were "absolutely certain" they would cast ballots

in the general election. Fifty percent said they had attended a community meeting, and another 47 percent had attended a PTA meeting or signed a petition.

“Latino voters are clearly engaged this year’s presidential election and that intense interest will filter down to state and local measures with a resounding impact,” said Raphael Sonenshein, executive director of the Pat Brown Institute and director of the PBI-Cal State LA Poll.

On other statewide ballot measures, the poll shows that 53 percent favor Proposition 64, which would legalize marijuana for recreational use. Sixty-two percent favor Proposition 58, which would lift restrictions on bilingual education and mandated English-only instruction for English-language learners in public schools.

In the presidential race, 73 percent favor Democrat Hillary Clinton, while just 16 percent support Republican Donald Trump. Regarding views on the candidates, 67.2 percent viewed Clinton favorably, and only 22.6 percent held a favorable view of Trump. The poll found strong support for immigration reform. Eighty-one percent said undocumented immigrants should have a chance to remain in the United States and become citizens.

The poll also surveyed voters on such polarizing social issues as same-sex marriage, abortion and immigration reform. Sixty-six percent of those polled said they supported same-sex marriage. Regarding abortion, 29 percent said it should always be legal, while 33 percent said it should be illegal, except for cases of rape, incest or to save a mother's life.

While Latino voters are in broad agreement on issues like immigration reform and presidential choice, there is a significant diversity on social issues if voters are native-born, if they chose to be interviewed in English, or are younger. On these issues, such voters were more likely to pick the more liberal position.

“This poll, released at a key moment in the election season, indicates once again that Latinos are at the center of the evolving politics of Southern California, and their impact on public policy will continue to grow,” Sonenshein said. “The attitudes of Latino voters need to be at the forefront of our attention in the years to come.”

The poll interviewed a total of 1,500 Latino registered voters across Los Angeles County and carries an overall margin of error of +/- 2.5%. The survey includes 600 Latino voters within the city of Los Angeles (+/- 4.0%) and 900 Latinos outside the city but within L.A. County (+/- 3.3%). All surveys were available in English or Spanish at point of first contact and respondents were contacted by cell phone, landline or via email. The data are weighted to match the Census American Community Survey estimates of the L.A. County Latino voter population for age, nativity, education, and gender to ensure that all results are accurately reflective of the L.A. County Latino registered voter population.

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been recognized as an engine of economic and social mobility. Led by an award-winning faculty, the University offers nationally recognized programs in science, the arts, business, criminal justice, engineering, nursing, education and the humanities.

Cal State LA is home to the critically-acclaimed Luckman Fine Arts Complex, Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs, Hertzberg-Davis Forensic Science Center, Hydrogen Research and Fueling Facility, Billie Jean King Sports Complex, TV, Film and Media Center and the Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good. For more information, visit www.CalStateLA.edu.