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FM3

*Public Opinion Research
& Strategy*

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: David Metz and Miranda Everitt
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RE: California Voters' Views on the Reallocation of Bond Authority to Water Storage Initiative

DATE: March 1, 2016

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a telephone survey of 601 California voters likely to cast a vote in the November 2016 general election to assess support for an initiative that would reallocate existing state bond authority to water projects, proposed for inclusion on the November ballot.¹ The survey shows that the measure has weak support from California voters and very little prospect for winning approval. Only two in five voters express support for the measure, and fewer than one in five are “definite” in their backing. For measures with organized, funded opposition such a weak start is a marker of almost certain defeat.

The survey read voters the full language of the official State title and summary, the most objective way of gauging support for a ballot measure. Just 42 percent back the potential measure, which would shift funding from high-speed rail to water infrastructure projects in the state (as illustrated in **Figure 1** on the next page).

Support for the measure is also quite soft, with just 16 percent saying they would “definitely” vote “yes” – fewer than the 18 percent who say they would “definitely” vote “no.” In addition,

¹ **Methodology:** From February 25-28, 2016, FM3 completed 601 telephone interviews on landlines and cell phones with randomly selected California voters who are likely to cast a ballot in the November 2016 election. The margin of sampling error is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within each sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

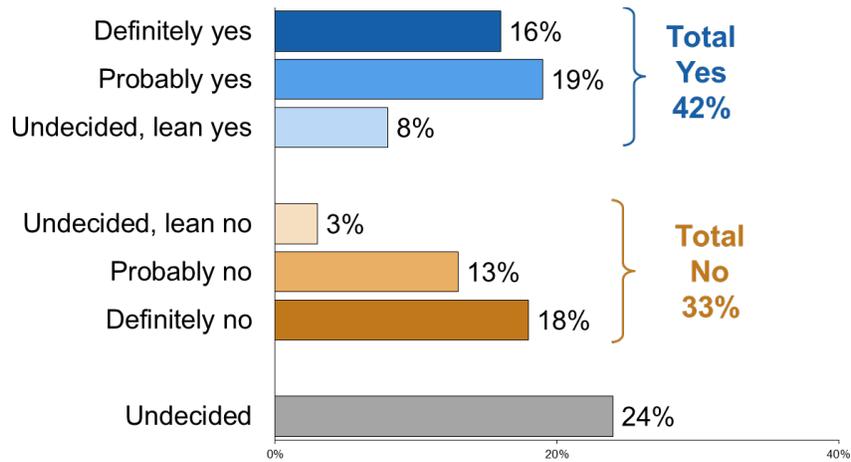
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this measure would attract a strong opposition campaign – and with one-quarter (24%) of voters currently undecided, the “no” campaign would have a heavy advantage; undecided voters typically break heavily toward opposition as a contested campaign progresses.

Figure 1:
Voter Support for Bond Reallocation Initiative

WATER BOND. REALLOCATION OF BOND AUTHORITY TO WATER STORAGE. PROJECTS. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND STATUTE. *Prioritizes water uses in California, with domestic uses first and irrigation uses second, over environmental, recreational, and other beneficial uses. Reallocates up to ten point seven billion dollars in unused bond authority from existing high-speed rail (eight billion dollars) and water storage purposes (two point seven billion dollars), to fund water storage projects for domestic and irrigation uses. Removes requirement that water storage projects funded by the two point seven billion dollar amount also benefit the environment. Creates new State Water and Groundwater Storage Facilities Authority to choose the projects to be funded by reallocated bond amounts. Summary of estimate by Legislative Analyst and Director of Finance of fiscal impact on state and local government: No significant increase or decrease in the state’s anticipated debt payments from the redirection of up to ten point seven billion dollars in bonds from previously approved measures, assuming these bonds would have been sold in the future absent this measure. Unknown net fiscal effects on state and local governments due to measure’s changes to how water is prioritized in the State Constitution, as well as potential changes to funding levels available for capital projects.*



In short, **an early look at the statewide bond reallocation measure shows that it faces a steep uphill climb at the ballot box**, and that opponents of the measure have a clear opportunity to defeat it.