

Jobs Takes Poll Position Among California Voters

By **DANIEL J.B. MITCHELL**

WHEN the latest opinion poll of the Public Policy Institute of California was released May 20, the media focused on the survey's implications for this week's primary races and candidates. But the PPIC poll revealed what should have been obvious in a state with an unemployment rate above 12 percent. What really matters to Californians is *jobs*.

Over half of the respondents rated the economy and jobs as the most important problem facing the state. The state budget came in a distant second (15 percent). What about education and immigration? Ten percent and 9 percent, respectively. Health care? Three percent.

Despite clear voter anxieties about the California economy, where were jobs in the political debates? Where are they in the

TV ads various candidates have been running? Where are jobs in the political junk mail? At best, the jobs issue has been buried in rhetoric about gun rights and other issues that the PPIC poll tells you are peripheral. Especially here in Los Angeles, much effort has been spent on debating whether the city should boycott Arizona businesses due to that state's immigration policies. Yet the local unemployment rate, like the state's, is also above 12 percent.

The issues

Yes, when asked about issues one at a time, Californians will respond that, say, the state budget is a big problem. More than 80 percent said so in the PPIC poll when specifically asked about state fiscal affairs. If issues are pointed out to them item by item, Californians do have thoughts, for example, about the

merits of legalizing marijuana or supporting K-12 education. And to the extent that there are ballot propositions put before the electorate dealing with such issues, voters will make their choices known.

But the real lesson from the PPIC poll for those candidates who win in the primary June 8 is that from that day until November, they had better be addressing the issue of jobs. And advocates or opponents of the propositions that will be on the November ballot had better connect their arguments – pro or con – to the implications for jobs.

When it comes to jobs, the PPIC poll tells us, Californians are one-issue voters.

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