



**Paul Simon
Public Policy Institute**

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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**ILLINOIS VOTERS SHOW STRONG AND STEADY SUPPORT FOR
A VARIETY OF REFORM MEASURES**

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Illinois voters continue to favor a variety of political reforms to state government, according to the latest poll from the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

They support changing the way the state handles redistricting after each Census, term limits, campaign finance reforms and limits on contributions to candidates for judgeships.

“The depth of support for reform in Illinois is amazing,” said David Yepsen, the director of the Institute. “These results should give hope to reformers and pause to politicians who resist changing the way the state does business.”

The Institute surveyed 1,000 registered voters October 11 through 16 as part of its fourth annual poll of Illinois voters.

“Given that only about one in seven voters (14.9 percent) thinks the State of Illinois is headed in the right direction, sustained support for political reform in the state is not surprising,” said Charles Leonard, an Institute visiting professor and director of the poll.

The survey found:

- Exactly three-fourths (75.0 percent) of the voters favored term limits for legislators. They support five consecutive two-year terms for state representatives and three consecutive four-year terms for state senators. Only 19.4 percent opposed the term limits proposal.

In the October 2010 poll, 80 percent favored term limits for state legislators while 14.8 percent opposed or strongly opposed. “That 2010 was an election year, and that there was much dissatisfaction and talk of term limits, may have accounted for the slightly higher support last year compared to this year,” said Institute Visiting Professor John Jackson. “This year the enthusiasm for term limits has declined marginally, but it is still quite strong.” (*See Table 1 attached*)

- Recent high-dollar, high-profile judicial races may be driving the sustained support for judicial reform. More than \$3 million was spent in Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Kilbride’s retention election last year. And in 2004 more than \$9 million was spent

in the contested state Supreme Court race in which Republican Justice Lloyd Karmeier beat Democrat Gordon Maag.

Seven in ten (71.4 percent) favored or strongly favored a proposal to put limits on the amount that people could contribute to judicial campaigns, while 21.2 percent either opposed or strongly opposed the idea.

The 2010 poll results showed that 74.9 percent of the respondents favored or strongly favored the campaign finance limits and 18.8 percent opposed or strongly opposed the concept.

A more extensive reform proposal, public funding for judicial elections, was not quite so popular, but still garnered majority support.

Voters were asked whether they favored or opposed eliminating contributions to judicial races by providing public funding for all candidates who qualify for it. More than half (53.6 percent) of voters surveyed either favored or strongly favored this proposal, while 34.4 percent either opposed or strongly opposed public financing for judicial races. In 2010, 53.5 percent favored or strongly favored while 35.6 percent opposed or strongly opposed public financing for judicial elections. (*See Table 1 attached*)

- Support for an “open” primary system in Illinois, which would allow people to vote in primaries without having to declare a party preference at the polling place..

In 2010 Governor Pat Quinn tried to change the Illinois “closed” primary to the open primary system in which no party declaration is required. He did this by amendatory veto, and the state legislature overruled his veto, leaving Illinois with the “closed” system.

A total of 71.8 percent of the voters supported the change to an open primary while only 19.9 percent opposed it. In 2010, voters favored the open primary plan by similar margins: 75.4 percent favored or strongly favored the open primary system and only 17.7 percent opposed it. (*See Table 1 attached*)

- Voters overwhelmingly favor a proposal to have legislative district maps created and recommended by a commission that is independent of the elected representatives. In the last year, when the statewide redistricting process has played out in a very public way, support has increased and opposition has decreased for this system.

This proposal was favored by a total of 65.1 percent and opposed by a total of 19.1 percent of the respondents. In the 2010 poll a total of 53.5 percent approved or strongly approved this plan while 27.1 percent opposed or strongly opposed it. (*See Table 2 attached*)

- Voters also strongly support a second proposal, which would provide that the Illinois Supreme Court add a neutral person to the legislative redistricting panel in case of a partisan tie. The survey showed that a total of 70.1 percent of the respondents said they favored or strongly favored this change while 16.6 percent either opposed or strongly opposed it.

In 2010 a total of 67.3 percent of the voters favored or strongly favored this reform and 19.9 percent opposed it. So, here too the change, though modest, was in the direction of the voters being more favorable toward reform. (*See Table 3 attached*)

- Voters also backed a third reform – limiting what party leaders can give to other candidates for the Legislature in a general election. Illinois voters favored this proposal to limit the power of their party leaders by a margin of 61.4 percent in favor compared to 28.3 percent who opposed.

Last year 65.0 percent of the voters either favored or strongly favored this plan and 25.4 percent opposed or strongly opposed it.

“When it comes to reform, this state is a tinder box,” Yepsen said. “Voters are angry, and the mood is ripe for interest groups to try to pass constitutional amendments to make these reforms if the Legislature doesn’t – or won’t – act first.”

The 2011 Simon Poll interviewed 1,000 registered voters across Illinois. It has a margin for error of plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that if we were to conduct the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances the results would vary by no more than plus or minus 3 points from the results obtained here. The margin for error will be larger for demographic, geographic and response subgroups.

Live telephone interviews were conducted by Issues + Answers Global Media Research of Virginia Beach, VA. Cell phone interviews were included as well as land-line interviews. Issues + Answers reports no Illinois political clients. The survey was paid for with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund.

Note: The “Paul Simon Public Policy Institute Poll,” the “Simon Poll” and the “Southern Illinois Poll” are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Use and publication of these polls is encouraged – but only with credit to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIUC.

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Table 1
Illinois Reform Proposals 2009 - 2011

Would you favor or oppose a proposal to:	2009	2010	2011
Limit how long state legislators could serve. It would limit state representatives to five consecutive two-year terms and state senators to three consecutive four-year terms:			
Strongly Favor	NA	57.3%	54.4%
Favor	NA	22.7%	20.6%
Oppose	NA	7.7%	8.5%
Strongly Oppose	NA	7.1%	10.9%
Other/Don't know	NA	5.2%	5.6%
Limit the amount of money that party leaders can redistribute to other candidates:			
Strongly Favor	31.5%	43.6%	40.5%
Favor	33.9%	21.4%	20.9%
Oppose	18.6%	12.4%	11.2%
Strongly Oppose	5.3%	13.0%	17.1%
Other/Don't know	10.8%	9.6%	10.3%
Place limits on the amount that people could contribute to judicial campaigns, such as those for the Illinois Supreme Court:			
Strongly Favor	NA	53.2%	52.0%
Favor	NA	21.7%	19.4%
Oppose	NA	8.9%	10.5%
Strongly Oppose	NA	9.9%	10.7%
Other/Don't know	NA	6.3%	7.4%
Eliminate contributions to judicial races by providing public funding for all candidates who qualify for it:			
Strongly Favor	NA	30.2%	29.2%
Favor	NA	23.3%	24.4%
Oppose	NA	15.9%	14.3%
Strongly Oppose	NA	19.7%	20.1%
Other/Don't know	NA	10.9%	12.0%
Change the primary-election process in Illinois so that voters do not have to publicly declare which party's ballot they have chosen:			
Strongly Favor	NA	62.2%	58.3%
Favor	NA	13.2%	13.5%
Oppose	NA	7.6%	6.8%
Strongly Oppose	NA	10.1%	13.1%
Other/Don't know	NA	6.9%	8.3%

Table 2
Constitutional Amendment for Independent Remap Panel

	2010	2011
Would you favor or oppose a constitutional amendment that would have legislative district maps created and recommended by a commission that is independent of the elected representatives?		
Strongly Favor	13.3%	31.8%
Favor	40.2%	33.2%
Oppose	19.5%	11.7%
Strongly Oppose	7.6%	7.4%
Other/Don't know	19.4%	15.9%

Table 3
Redistricting Panel Reform

	2009	2010	2011
One proposal for improving the state legislative redistricting process would have the Supreme Court add a neutral person to the redistricting panel in case of a partisan tie:			
Strongly Favor	19.3%	19.0%	35.8%
Favor	53.6%	48.3%	34.3%
Oppose	13.0%	12.6%	9.5%
Strongly Oppose	4.8%	7.3%	7.1%
Other/Don't know	9.4%	12.8%	13.3%