



**Paul Simon  
Public Policy Institute**

Southern Illinois University Carbondale



**Simon Institute Poll**

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute

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### **SIMON POLL: TIRED OF BUSINESS AS USUAL, ILLINOIS VOTERS WANT REFORMS**

The people of Illinois are overwhelmingly ready for reform in their state government, including a proposal on the November ballot to recall governors, according to a new poll of likely voters conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Significant majorities endorsed a whole range of potential reforms including: recall of the Governor and other statewide elected officials, an open primary, term limits and term limits for the leaders of the General Assembly.

They also favor changing the way redistricting is done in Illinois, limits on campaign contributions for judicial elections, public funding for judicial elections, and limits on the campaign contributions that the leaders of the General Assembly can make to the rank and file members.

“The public is generally willing to try virtually any and all of the reforms suggested for changing the way state government does business” said John Jackson, visiting professor at the Institute, and one of the designers of the poll.

David Yepsen, the director of the Institute, said the results “should give heart to reformers seeking to make changes in the way Illinois governs itself. The numbers also say something to political leaders about the depths of their unpopularity.”

The poll found 81.3 percent of likely voters think the state is on the wrong track. Only 11 percent think it’s headed in the right direction. There are 62.4 percent who say the country is on the wrong track and 29 percent who think it’s headed in the right direction.

“It says something when people say their state is in worse shape than the country,” Yepsen said.

The survey of 758 likely voters in November’s election was taken Sept. 30 to Oct 10 and has a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points.

According to the poll:

- Likely voters overwhelmingly supported the proposition that the voters should be able to vote to remove a sitting Governor from office before his term expires. This measure was supported by 65.6% of the respondents who said they would vote for this proposal on the ballot. Only 27 percent opposed it. “It appears this ballot proposition will pass handily in November” said Jackson.
- While it’s not on the ballot, 66.7 percent of likely voters also said they favor having the ability to recall other statewide elected officials. Only 27.4 percent opposed it.
- Voters favored instituting an open primary in Illinois (that is, one where no disclosure of party identification is required) by over a three to one margin, with 74.3 percent who strongly or somewhat favored, and 18.9 percent somewhat or strongly opposed.

“This result is not too surprising,” said Jackson. “The proposal has been around for years in Illinois, and generally people say that they do not like to have to declare their party in order to vote in the primaries.” He said the reason the state has a closed primary is because “it is supported by the party organizations since it keeps the opposition party from meddling with their party primaries and influences who their nominee will be in the general election. It also helps the parties identify their supporters.”

- Term limits for all legislators (i.e. five terms for the House and three terms for the Senate) and term limits for the legislative leadership positions garnered widespread support. The results indicated that the people of Illinois favor term limits for all state legislators by a margin of 81.7 percent in favor to 14.0 percent in opposition. They favored term limits for state legislative leaders like the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate by a margin of 82.1 percent in favor to 12.0 percent opposed.
- Likely voters also wanted limits on campaign contributions and the conditions under which the office seekers solicit them. They endorsed limits on the amount of money legislative leaders can give to their members by a margin of 66.6 percent to 24.7 percent.

Jackson said “this transfer of campaign funds is one way the leaders of both parties maintain tight control over their followers. People understand this dynamic and want it changed. We are famous for the so called ‘pay to play’ culture. It was that culture which brought down former Governor George Ryan and which now threatens to send former Governor Rod Blagojevich to prison.”

- The public funding of judicial campaigns won backing from a majority of the respondents. There were 54.1percent who strongly favored or somewhat favored this measure and 24.5 percent who were opposed.

- Voters endorsed putting limits on the amounts that an individual can contribute to a judicial campaign by a margin of 75.9 percent who strongly favored or somewhat favored this idea compared to 17.8 percent opposed.
- Voters also favor changing the way legislative district lines are drawn in Illinois. Currently, the parties control the redistricting process in Illinois. When there is a partisan deadlock the name of one of the parties is drawn out of a hat and that party gets to draw the congressional and legislative district map for the next ten years. Only 10.3 percent approved of that plan while 76.6 percent disapproved.
- The voters also favored a plan that would have the Illinois Supreme Court add a neutral person to the redistricting panel in case of a partisan tie. There were 67.8 percent who favored or strongly favored this plan and only 20.7 percent who opposed or strongly opposed it. Another plan which has been advanced by some reformers provides for an independent commission taking charge of the redistricting process. This plan was favored by a margin of 54.5 percent who favored it to 26.3 percent who were opposed or strongly opposed.

The mission of the non-partisan Paul Simon Public Policy Institute polling is to provide citizens, policy-makers and academic researchers with objective information about trends and issues facing society.

Telephone interviews were conducted by Issues & Answers Global Media Research of Virginia Beach, VA. It reports no Illinois political clients and was paid with non-tax dollars from the Institute's endowment fund.

Political scientist Dr. Charles Leonard directs the poll for the Institute. He is assisted by Drs. John Jackson and J. Tobin Grant, also political scientists.

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**Paul Simon Public Policy Institute  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale**

**Poll Results of Likely Voters in Illinois  
Conducted September 30-October 10, 2010  
*Released October 14, 2010***

1. Currently, when the political parties can't agree on a legislative redistricting plan, they end the stalemate by pulling a party's name out of a hat. The winning political party gets to draw the new legislative district map. Do you approve/disapprove of the current redistricting process?

Strongly approve	1.8%
Approve	8.4%
Disapprove	40.2%
Strongly disapprove	36.4%
Other/Don't know	13.1%

2. One proposal for improving the state legislative redistricting process would have the Illinois Supreme Court add a neutral person to the redistricting panel in case of a partisan tie. Would you favor/oppose this proposal?

Strongly favor	18.9%
Favor	48.9%
Oppose	12.4%
Strongly oppose	8.3%
Other/Don't know	11.5%

3. Other people have proposed a constitutional amendment that would have legislative district maps created by a commission that is independent of the elected representatives. The legislature would then vote up or down on the independent commission's redistricting plan. Would you favor/oppose this proposal?

Strongly favor	14.2%
Favor	40.2%
Oppose	18.6%
Strongly oppose	7.7%
Other/Don't know	19.3%

We are interested in your opinions on political reform in Illinois. I'm going to read you some proposals that some people have offered. For each, I'd like you to tell me if you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose that idea.

4. First is a proposal to 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. For this proposal, would you...

Strongly favor	61.2%
Somewhat favor	20.4%
Somewhat oppose	6.9%
Strongly oppose	7.1%
Other/Don't know	4.4%

5. A proposal to limit how long legislators could serve in leadership positions-such as Speaker of the House, or President of the Senate-before they stepped down to let other legislators lead. For this proposal, would you...

Strongly favor	59.6%
Somewhat favor	22.4%
Somewhat oppose	6.6%
Strongly oppose	5.4%
Other/Don't know	5.9%

6. A proposal to place limits on the amount that people could contribute to judicial campaigns, such as those for the Illinois Supreme Court. For this proposal, would you...

Strongly favor	55.8%
Somewhat favor	20.1%
Somewhat oppose	8.2%
Strongly oppose	9.6%
Other/Don't know	6.3%

7. A proposal to eliminate contributions to judicial races by providing public funding for all candidates who qualify for it. For this proposal, would you...

Strongly favor	31.9%
Somewhat favor	22.2%
Somewhat oppose	15.3%
Strongly oppose	20.3%
Other/Don't know	10.3%

8. A proposal to limit the amount of campaign money that party leaders can redistribute to other candidates in the general election. For this proposal, would you...

Strongly favor	47.1%
Somewhat favor	19.5%
Somewhat oppose	11.9%
Strongly oppose	12.8%
Other/Don't know	8.7%

9. A proposal to change the primary-election process in Illinois so that voters do not have to publicly declare which party's ballot they have chosen. For this proposal, would you...

Strongly favor	61.6%
Somewhat favor	12.7%
Somewhat oppose	7.4%
Strongly oppose	11.5%
Other/Don't know	6.9%

10. There will also be a proposal on the November ballot to amend the state constitution to allow for so-called "recall" elections, in which voters could remove the governor from office before the governor's term was up. If the election were held today, would you vote for/against the recall election amendment?

Vote for	65.6%
Vote against	27.0%
Other/Don't know	7.4%

11. Would you vote for or against the recall amendment for all statewide office holders?

Vote for	66.7%
Vote against	27.4%
Other/Don't know	5.9%

*\*Some columns do not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.*

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