

**A Summary of the Findings from a
Statewide Survey of California Voters
About Proposition Elections**

– conducted for the –
California HealthCare Foundation

by
Field Research Corporation

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Findings in brief

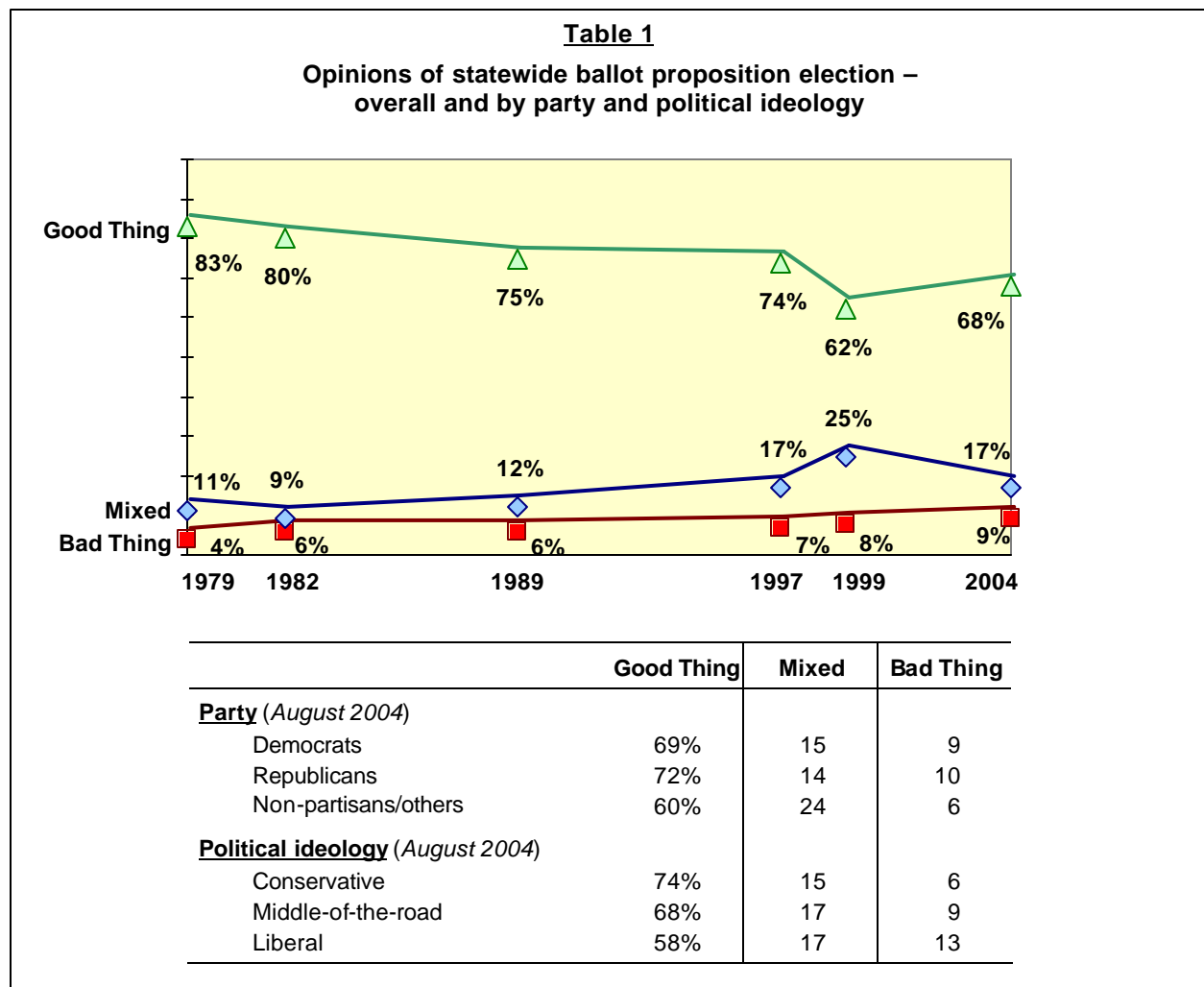
- Greater than two in three voters (68%) feel that statewide propositions elections are a good thing for California. While opinions about proposition elections remain highly positive, voters' current assessments are somewhat less ebullient than they were in the late 1970s and early 1980s, shortly after the passage of Proposition 13, the Jarvis-Gann property tax reduction initiative. At that time, eight in ten or more viewed statewide ballot proposition elections as a good thing for the state.
- Pluralities of voters believe their elected representatives rather than the voting public are better suited to decide upon highly technical or legal policy matters (56% vs. 34%) and give a more thorough review to each particular aspect of a proposed law (49% vs. 38%).
- On the other hand, voters see themselves as more likely than their elected representatives to consider the broad public interest in making public policy decisions (65% to 24%). Voters also feel that the voting public can be trusted more often than their elected representatives to do what is right on important government issues (63% to 22%) and are better suited to decide upon large-scale government programs or projects (56% to 35%). The public is about evenly divided over who, the voting public or elected representatives, generally enacts more coherent and well thought-out government policies.
- Over the past five years voters have a growing sense that organized special interests have a great deal of influence in determining the outcomes of proposition elections. At present, 48% feel most proposition elections come out the way special interests want, while 33% hold to the view that they come out the way most people want. Democrats and liberals are more likely than other voter subgroups to believe proposition elections are more influenced by special interests.
- Voters report that three information sources are most important to them when they are deciding how to vote on statewide ballot propositions – the official voter information pamphlet (38%), newspapers (37%) and television (36%). Two other sources – radio (18%) and the Internet (17%) – are also cited frequently. Younger voters under age 30 are just as likely to cite the Internet as television or the official voter information guide as their most important information source on proposition elections. Younger voters are also considerably less likely than older voters to say they rely on newspapers.
- About one in three California voters (33%) reports that they often or sometimes go online to the Web site of an interest group, government agency or news organization to learn more about statewide ballot propositions. Voters who go online to learn more about ballot propositions tend to be younger and include more males than females.

Californians continue to view statewide ballot proposition elections favorably

Greater than two in three voters (68%) feel that statewide ballot propositions elections are a good thing for California. This compares to just 9% who think they are a bad thing, 17% who hold mixed views and 6% with no opinion.

While opinions remain an extremely positive, voters' current assessments are somewhat lower than those found in the late 1970s and early 1980s, shortly after the passage of Proposition 13, the Jarvis-Gann property tax reduction initiative. At that time, eight in ten or more of the public viewed statewide ballot proposition elections as a good thing for the state.

Although majorities of voters across all political subgroups believe statewide ballot proposition elections are a good thing, conservatives as well as both registered Democrats and Republicans are somewhat more positive in their assessments than are non-partisans and liberals.



Note: Differences between the sum of each year's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.

Elected representatives better equipped to decide some policy matters, while voters see themselves better able to deal with others

Voters in the current survey were asked a series of questions first posed by *The Field Poll* in 1982, and repeated in 1999, about who is better suited – elected representatives or the voting public – to decide on various types of public policy issues in California. The results indicate that pluralities of voters believe two types of issues are more applicable to their elected representatives than the voting public, three apply more to the voting public and are about evenly divided on one other.

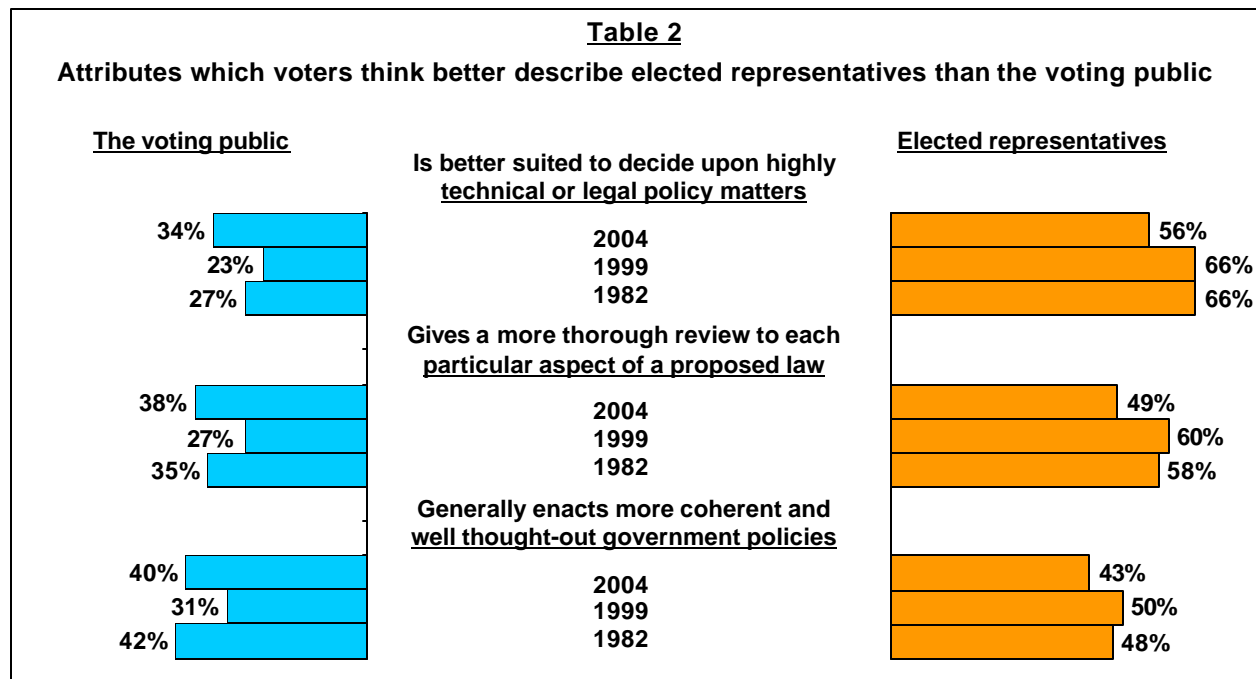
The two areas deemed more applicable to the elected representatives than the voting public are:

- making decisions about highly technical or legal policy matters (56% to 34%).
- giving a more thorough review to each particular aspect of a proposed law (49% to 38%).

One other statement draws a fairly even distribution of response from the public. It is:

- enacting more coherent and well thought-out government policies (43% to 40%).

When comparing results from the current survey to prior measures in 1982 and 1999, it reveals that a somewhat smaller majority now believes elected representatives rather than the voting public are better suited to decide upon highly technical or legal policy matters or give a more thorough review to proposed laws.

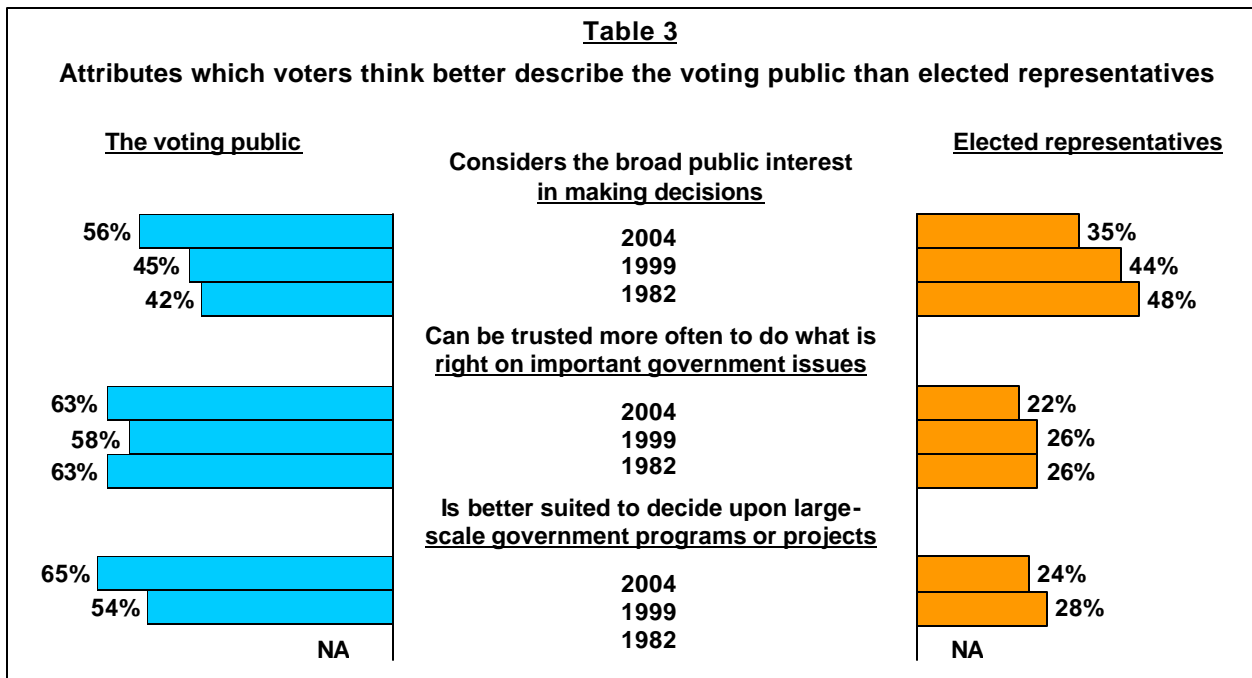


Note: Differences between the sum of each year's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.

On the other hand, voters believe the voting public rather than their elected representatives are better able:

- to consider the broad public interest in making decisions (65% the voting public vs. 24% elected representatives).
- to be trusted more often to do what is right on important government issues (63% to 22%).
- to decide upon large-scale government programs or projects (56% to 35%).

These results are generally similar to those found in prior years, although this year a somewhat larger proportion of voters believes the voting public is better suited to decide upon large- scale government projects.



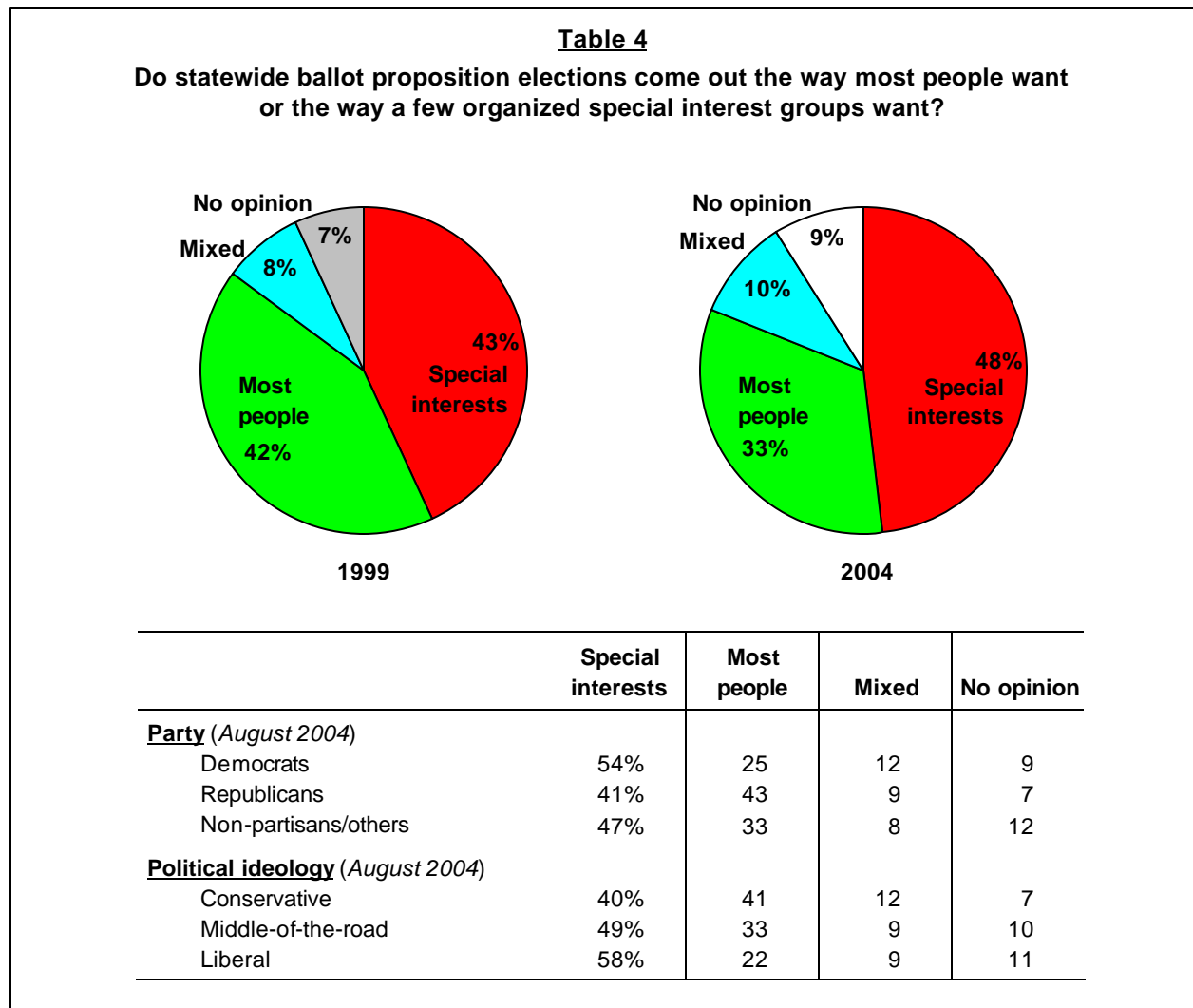
Note: Differences between the sum of each year's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.

NA = Not asked.

Growing sense that special interests greatly influence proposition election outcomes

Five years ago Californians had mixed views about whether proposition elections tend to come out the way most people want or the way a few organized special interests want. Now, voters have grown more cynical, with 48% feeling such elections come out the way special interests want and just 33% holding that they come out the way most people want.

Democrats and liberals are more likely than other voters to believe that proposition elections come out the way special interests want by a greater than two to one margin.



Elected representatives seen as being more influenced by special interests than the voting public

By a nearly three to one margin (67% to 24%), Californians believe that their elected representatives are more easily influenced or manipulated by special interest groups than the voting public.

This view has persisted in each of two previous measures conducted in 1999 and 1982, and includes large majorities of the voters in each party and political ideology.

Table 5			
Which group, elected representatives or the voting public, is more easily influenced and manipulated by special interest groups?			
	<u>Elected representatives</u>	<u>The voting public</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<u>Statewide</u> – August 2004	67%	24	9
1999	70%	19	11
1982	64%	29	7
<u>Party</u> (August 2004)			
Democrats	60%	29	11
Republicans	71%	22	7
Non-partisans/others	76%	19	5
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	65%	26	9
Middle-of-the-road	70%	23	7
Liberal	64%	26	10

Voter information guides, newspapers and TV are the most important information sources to voters on proposition elections

Voters report that three information sources as being most important to them when they are deciding how to vote on statewide ballot propositions. They include the official voter information pamphlet (38%), newspapers (37%) and television (36%). Two other sources are cited frequently – radio (18%) and the Internet (17%).

There are a number of variations across subgroups of the voting population with regard to each of the various information sources. For example:

- Newspapers and television are reported more frequently as important information sources by voters in the Central Valley than in other areas of the state.
- Age is also a significant factor. Younger voters under age 30 are as likely to cite the Internet as an important information source about proposition elections as they are to cite television or the official voter information guide. Younger voters are also considerably less likely than older voters to rely on newspapers.
- Larger proportions of white non-Hispanics than voters from other racial and ethnic groups reports that the official voter information guide and newspapers are their most important information sources. Television is cited as being a bigger influence by Latinos and other non-white racial/ethnic voting subgroups.
- College graduates are more likely to say that the voter information guide and newspapers are important to them, while voters with a high school education or less and those who have attended some college or trade school are more likely to cite TV as their most important information source.
- Political conservatives are more likely than liberals to say TV is their most important information source, while moderates are more apt to use the official voter information guide and newspapers.

Table 6					
Most important information sources when considering statewide ballot propositions – overall and by voter subgroup					
	<u>Voter info guide</u>	<u>News- papers</u>	<u>TV</u>	<u>Radio</u>	<u>Internet</u>
<u>Statewide – August 2004</u>	38%	37	36	18	17
<u>Region</u>					
Los Angeles County	41%	37	38	17	12
Other Southern California	31%	37	41	12	14
Central Valley	41%	53	48	20	15
San Francisco Bay Area	41%	31	33	23	20
Other Northern California*	35%	25	25	18	13
<u>Age</u>					
18-29*	28%	16	29	13	28
30-39*	36%	29	32	21	20
40-49	42%	37	31	20	15
50-64	45%	47	36	17	15
65 or older	37%	51	53	16	6
<u>Gender</u>					
Male	37%	36	33	22	18
Female	40%	39	39	13	15
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>					
White non-Hispanic	42%	43	31	19	17
Latino	33%	28	44	14	17
Black/Asian/other*	34%	24	48	18	15
<u>Education</u>					
High school or less	28%	28	47	17	14
Some college/trade school	37%	35	42	16	16
College graduate	45%	43	26	19	18
<u>Political ideology</u>					
Conservative	33%	32	41	21	19
Middle-of-the-road	44%	44	38	16	14
Liberal	34%	34	25	16	19

Note: All other sources cited by 15% or less. Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions.

* *Small sample size.*

Who's using the Internet to learn more about statewide ballot propositions

About one in three California voters (33%) reports that they often or sometimes go online to the web site of an interest group, government agency or news organization to learn more about statewide ballot propositions, with 22% saying they do this often and 11% doing it sometimes. Voters who often turn to the Internet include larger proportions of younger voters than older voters, and more men than women. Blacks/Asians and other non-white or non-Latino voters are somewhat less likely than whites or Latinos to use the Internet as an information source about statewide ballot propositions.

Table 7				
Frequency of going online to learn about statewide ballot propositions				
– overall and by subgroup				
	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>
<u>Statewide – August 2004</u>	22%	11	23	44
<u>Age</u>				
18-29*	32%	3	29	35
30-39*	24%	11	27	38
40-49	19%	18	26	37
50-64	22%	9	18	51
65 or older	11%	15	20	54
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	25%	12	24	38
Female	18%	10	23	49
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	21%	11	24	44
Latino	24%	14	24	38
Black/Asian/other*	22%	7	21	52

* *Small sample size.*

Sample Details

This survey was conducted by Field Research Corporation on behalf of the California HealthCare Foundation. The findings are based on interviews conducted among a random sample of 575 registered voters in California. Interviews were conducted by telephone in English and Spanish July 30 – August 8, 2004. Sampling was carried out using random digit dial methodology which gives all voters, including those whose phone number is listed and unlisted, an equal chance of being contacted. Up to five attempts were made to reach a randomly selected voter at each number dialed. After the completion of interviewing the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the state's total registered voter population.

According to statistical theory, the overall results in this report have a sampling error of +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. These are other possible sources of error in any survey in addition to sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sequencing or through omissions or errors in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Overall, do you think that statewide ballot proposition elections are a good thing for California, a bad thing, or don't you think they make much difference?

In general, do you think statewide ballot proposition elections come out the way most people want or the way a few organized special interest groups want?

What is your most important source of information about statewide ballot propositions – television, radio, newspapers, the official voter information guide, the Internet, campaign mailings sent to you, friends and family or some other source?

How frequently do you go online to the web pages of any group, government agency or news organization to learn about statewide ballot propositions – often, sometimes, rarely or never?

Think for a moment about the two ways that state government policies and laws are enacted in California – through elected representatives in the state legislature and directly by citizens voting on ballot propositions... (SEE RELEASE FOR ITEMS ASKED) Which do you feel – elected representatives or the voting public?