

Poll: Voters back Calif. tax increase, crime measures

By Filipa A. Ioannou, San Francisco Chronicle

Criminal sentencing reform and an extension on tax increases for high earners are among California's November ballot propositions supported by a majority of likely voters, a Field Poll found.

Proposition 56, a \$2-per-pack tax on cigarettes, was also leading among the poll's respondents, though by narrower margins. Fifty-three percent of respondents favored the tax, 40 percent were opposed and 7 percent remained undecided.

In several past elections, tobacco tax initiatives have performed competitively in polling only to fail on election day. In 2012, a \$1 cigarette tax to fund cancer research was defeated by a margin of only 0.4 percentage points. In 2006, a proposed tax increase prompted \$66 million in tobacco industry spending, and the measure failed.

Prop. 56 would redirect the revenue from the cigarette tax – estimated between \$1 billion and \$1.4 billion – to health care for low-income Californians. Smoking-related illnesses are costly to the state; a 2015 analysis from the California Health Care Foundation found that among Medicare patients, lung cancer was the deadliest and costliest to treat of the four most common cancers.

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