

The Social Research Laboratory

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For Immediate Release
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ARIZONA SUPPORTS PROPOSITION 187; OPPOSITION INCREASES WITH INFORMATION

Half of all Arizonans would support a California-style Proposition 187 if it were on the ballot in Arizona today. This measure would require the Arizona government to deny nonemergency health care and social services to undocumented immigrants. About a quarter of Arizonans oppose such a measure, according to findings from a recent Arizona Poll. Opposition to this measure increases as people learn that Arizona already denies most of these benefits to undocumented immigrants in the state. This news comes as some citizens are organizing a petition drive to put a California-style Proposition 187 on the 1996 election ballot.

Results from the Arizona Poll, a statewide telephone survey conducted by the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University, indicate that more than eight out of ten Arizona residents are familiar with California's Proposition 187. Thirty-seven percent of the public say they are very familiar with the Proposition and 47 percent say they are somewhat familiar with it. Few (15%) are not at all familiar with the proposition.

When asked if they would support a measure similar to California's Proposition 187 in Arizona, half of the public (49%) say they would. Twenty-six percent of the public say they would oppose such a measure and another one-in-four residents (25%) are undecided on the issue.

After being informed that Arizona has previously enacted most Proposition 187 provisions through the legislative process, opposition to such a ballot provision changes. Upon knowing this information, opposition to a Proposition 187-type measure increases to a third of the public (34%), while support stays steady at 48 percent. More men support this type of measure often than women (53% versus 43% support, respectively). A strong majority of older residents (59%) support the measure compared to only 43 percent support among younger residents. Republicans are much more supportive of the measure (63%) than Democrats (38%). Sixty-one percent of Conservatives support the measure, while only one-in-three liberals support the measure (33%).

According to Elaine Rodriguez, Senior Researcher with the Arizona Poll, 'When provided with the information that Arizona law denies many of the benefits covered under

California's Proposition 187, opposition to a similar proposition in Arizona expands. Over time, this information may defuse some of the energy of the pro-Proposition 187 forces in Arizona."

NATURE OF CONCERN ABOUT IMMIGRATION

Three quarters of Arizona residents (78 percent) stated that they were concerned about the issue of immigration. One in five residents (22%) stated that they were either not too concerned or not at all concerned about immigration issues. While a large number of Arizonans are concerned about immigration issues, immigration ranks fourth in level of concern among a list of four issues. Ninety-five percent of Arizonans are either extremely concerned or somewhat concerned about crime, 92 percent are concerned about education issues, and 87 percent say they are concerned about the environment.

While immigration is an important issue in Arizona, attitudes are not very critical of new immigrants coming to this country. Critical attitudes are confined to a small group of people. Only 17 percent of Arizonans believe that immigrants take jobs away from American citizens. A large majority of people (61%) believe that immigrants coming to this country mostly take jobs American citizens do not want.

In terms of a broader impact on society, 41 percent of Arizona residents believe that American culture is mostly improved by the diversity that immigrants bring to this country. This figure compares to the one third of Arizona residents (33%) who believe that American culture is threatened by immigrants. Eleven percent of residents believe culture is neither improved nor threatened by immigrants and 10 percent have no opinion on the issue.

"Despite the fact that Arizonans are concerned with immigration issues, they do not perceive immigrants to personally threaten their own lifestyles," said Rodriguez.

ACCESS FOR IMMIGRANTS?

The Arizona Poll asked people to state their preferences about how the United States should respond to immigration issues. The vast majority of Arizonans (67%) believe that the United States should limit the number of immigrants coming into the United States. This involves no change from current U.S. policies. Less than one quarter of respondents (23 percent) support keeping United States doors open to immigrants. Only three percent of people believe the United States should close the nation's doors to immigrants. Seven percent of the public say they haven't really thought about the issue or have no opinion on the topic.

Fred Solop, Director of the Arizona Poll, had this to say about the data. "We probed several dimensions of attitudes toward immigrants in the Arizona Poll. While anti-immigrant attitudes exist among some people in Arizona, levels of support for anti-immigrant sentiment do not come close to the levels of support we are seeing for a Proposition 187 in Arizona. This suggests that support for Proposition 187 is multi-

dimensional. Other factors such as economic conditions and the broad political environment may contribute to pro-Proposition 187 support in Arizona.”

The Arizona Poll was conducted by the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University between February 27 and March 6, 1995 with 619 adult Arizona residents. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 4%.

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