

## [Poll shows opposition to Brown's plan to cut First 5](#)

By Steven Harmon

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Gov. Jerry Brown's proposal to raid \$1 billion this year and \$300 million every year thereafter from First 5, the state's early childhood program, appears to be running into some serious opposition.

A poll showing that 62 percent of voters oppose the move is a first step in what could be a costly and damaging battle for Brown, who is seeking to place a measure on the ballot to extend income, sales and auto taxes as part of his budget plan to close a \$25.4 billion deficit.

Brown wants to redirect First 5's \$1 billion reserve into the general fund, but must get voter signoff with a separate ballot measure since it is constitutionally protected.

Approved by voters in November 1998, Proposition 10 added a 50 cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes and a comparable tax on other tobacco products. It generates about \$590 million annually, and has a \$1 billion reserve fund.

The poll, conducted by Democratic polling firm Tulchin Research, just came out of the field Thursday and could spur deep-pocketed liberals to go all in to save the popular program, which focuses on the first five years of development for underprivileged children.

"We are very concerned about the fact that what has been proposed so far disproportionately hurts kids," said Los Angeles-based political strategist Chad Griffin, who managed the campaign to pass Prop 10.

"We hope that this current proposal never makes it to the ballot but if it does we will do whatever it takes to defeat the measure in order to protect funding for California's children, just as we did with every other attempt to cut Prop 10 funding."

A battle over the Proposition 10 dollars could be a reprise of 2009, when voters turned back six ballot measures, including one to extend by two years taxes that the Legislature approved.

They voted two to one — 66 percent to 34 percent — against Proposition 1D, which would have siphoned \$550 million from First 5 funding.

A costly ballot fight over early childhood funding could complicate Brown's chances to get voter approval of tax extensions — if they make it to the ballot.

Donors have approached the team that defeated Proposition 1D — Griffin, Mark Armour (Barbara Boxer's media consultant) and pollster Ben Tulchin — and commissioned them to do a poll to gauge public attitudes about the proposals.

Brown had hoped to avoid a well-funded opposition campaign, sidelining corporate interests, oil and tobacco companies by keeping corporate taxes out of the mix.

Those are the entities voters want taxed, according to the Tulchin poll. Nearly two thirds — 65 percent — said they would prefer to “raise taxes on those who can afford it, such as oil companies, tobacco companies, and the wealthy.”

In a polling memo, Tulchin research said the poll “clearly shows that California voters overwhelmingly support First 5 and want elected officials to pursue alternatives to cutting funding for early childhood development.”

The poll was conducted from Feb. 8-10 among 600 likely voters and has a margin of error of plus or minus four points.