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## Warming is serious, say Californians

By Peter Hecht - Bee Capitol Bureau

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In the state where Al Gore picked up his Oscar and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger became an action figure fighting greenhouse gases, Californians overwhelmingly believe global warming is a serious problem, according to a Field Poll released Wednesday.

Eight in 10 California voters in the poll expressed concerns about global warming blamed for climate change. Some 56 percent said the problem is "very serious" and 25 percent said it is "somewhat serious."

Only one in six voters in the poll (17 percent) said they didn't believe global warming is a problem.

The poll, based on a March 20-31 telephone survey of 523 California registered voters, was released as Schwarzenegger made a keynote address at an Environment Leadership Conference at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

While the governor declared, "Global warming is real, and we have to do something about it," the Field Poll indicated Californians strongly agree.

Democratic voters overwhelmingly viewed global warming as an important concern -- with 68 percent calling it "very serious" and 22 percent calling it "somewhat serious."

While 33 percent of Republicans said they felt global warming was "not serious," a majority disagreed -- with 35 percent describing the phenomenon as "very serious" and 28 percent saying it is "somewhat serious."

Meanwhile, 55 percent of voters statewide said they strongly favored a new law -- enacted by the Legislature and signed by Schwarzenegger -- requiring California to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020.

Another 24 percent of voters expressed modest support for the plan, with 9 percent saying they were somewhat opposed and 8 percent strongly opposed.

A majority of both Democrats and Republicans favored the plan to curb emissions blamed for climate change.

"I would hazard a guess that five years ago, very few people would have rated this (global warming) very seriously," said Mark DiCamillo, director of the California Field Poll. "Certainly the Gore persona and the success of his movie ('An Inconvenient Truth') has had a big effect."

Overall, state voters were split on whether California is adequately dealing with global warming, with 43 percent approving of the state's efforts to confront the problem and an equal number disapproving.

By comparison, only one in five California voters (21 percent) said they believed the federal government is doing a good job on global warming. Two-thirds (66 percent) said they disapprove of the federal government's performance.

DiCamillo said concern over global warming may be stronger in California than the country as a whole.

He cited a 2006 ABC News-Time magazine poll that said 49 percent of respondents -- compared to the 56 percent total in California -- believed global warming poses a very serious problem.

"Certainly, Gov. Schwarzenegger has added to this," DiCamillo said. "That's one of the reasons that this is not as partisan of an issue as it could be.

"You see the Republican governor taking this on as personal issue. He's signing the global warming law with the dramatic backdrop of San Francisco Bay and (British Prime Minister) Tony Blair piped in on the television screen from London.

"It's an international issue, and the governor is getting to the head of the bandwagon."

But while Californians agree global warming is a problem, they're unsure on the best remedy, according to the Field Poll.

Nearly half of poll respondents (45 percent) said they support a trading plan that allows companies that can't reduce emissions to pay money to companies that are exceeding California's new pollution-reduction standards.

A nearly equal number, 41 percent, said they want all major companies to make a uniform 25 percent cut in emissions to meet the state standard.

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