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More Californians See Childhood Obesity as Major Health Problem

Californians increasingly consider obesity to be a "very serious" problem for children, and many believe the state should pursue policy changes to address the issue, according to a **recent Field Poll survey**, the **Los Angeles Times** (Hennessy-Fiske, *Los Angeles Times*, 2/8).

For the survey, which was funded by the California Endowment, Field Poll researchers interviewed 1,005 registered California voters in October 2010 (Lin, *California Watch*, 2/8). The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points (Weintraub, *HealthyCal*, 2/8).

Key Findings

Nearly 60% of those polled called childhood obesity a "very serious" problem, up from 46% in 2003.

One in three respondents said unhealthy eating habits pose the greatest health risk to California children, more than violence and illegal drug use.

In addition, three-quarters of survey respondents said governments and businesses should promote healthier behavior (*Los Angeles Times*, 2/8).

Additional Findings

Researchers asked voters about possible policy changes to address childhood obesity and found that:

- 89% of voters supported requiring physical education classes for four years in high school, up from the two years currently required;
- 61% said all drinks with added sugars should be banned from schools (*California Watch*, 2/8); and
- 56% said they would support a soda tax to raise funds for efforts to combat childhood obesity.

In addition, researchers asked voters how children today compare with children five years ago and found that:

- 60% said the average child in the state today is less active than the average child five years ago; and
- 47% said the foods eaten by the average child today are less healthy than the foods eaten by the average child five years ago (*HealthyCal*, 2/8).

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