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Local

Voters change tune, say city is headed off track

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In a major reverse from last year, San Francisco voters feel The City is headed in the wrong direction — especially when it comes to Muni service and public education — according to a poll released today by the Chamber of Commerce.

Among the 500 voters surveyed in February, 51 percent said The City is headed in the wrong direction, compared to 34 percent last year; and 29 percent say things are going in the right direction, compared to 47 percent last year. Those who “don’t know” are 20 percent in 2010 and 19 percent in 2009.

Voters seemed most dissatisfied with Muni service, as 57 percent said it has become worse since last year. In 2009, only 26 percent said it had gotten worse while 23 percent said it was better.

“I try not to ride it as much because rates are going up and they are cutting down routes,” said Chris Stanley, a San Francisco resident.

Public schools fared no better. Roughly 55 percent of voters surveyed said San Francisco’s public education system has deteriorated in the past few years. Ellie Rossiter, executive director of Parents for Public Schools, said the results are not surprising considering San Francisco schools are, for the first time in a while, having to make serious cuts in light of a \$113 million budget deficit.

“It feels like an avalanche,” she said of the imminent cuts.

Local economists say the polling results, which will be released at the chamber’s annual CityBeat Breakfast this morning, reflect voters’ frustration with the combination of service cuts, fee increases and job losses during the past two years.

“It has more to do with the economy than anything else,” said Jon Haveman, founding principal for Beacon Economics, a consulting firm. “It makes passing measures to raise revenues more difficult.”

According to the poll, 60 percent said they were against raising The City’s sales tax by one-half percent. But when it comes to supporting business and job growth, voters were more tolerant.

Roughly 49 percent said they would support a business tax credit for new hires, which is good news for Mayor Gavin Newsom's pending legislation meant to stimulate as many as 2,000 new jobs over two years. At the same time, 50 percent of voters opposed a new fee on downtown businesses to supplement Muni.

"I would characterize this as a call to action for our elected leaders to focus their efforts on creating jobs and stimulating business activity," said Steve Falk, president and CEO of the chamber.

The poll is conducted annually by the chamber. This year, 47 percent said the overall quality of life in San Francisco is worse today compared to the past few years, 9 percent said it was better and 42 percent said it was the same. In 2009, 31 percent said things were worse, 17 percent said better and 48 percent said the same.

The Committee on Jobs and the Building Owners and Management Association helped the chamber with the poll.

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Views on state of The City

Voters want jobs, oppose more taxes, and are worried about government efficiency and the budget in an annual poll of 500 voters conducted last month for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, the Committee on Jobs and the Building Owners and Management Association.

Direction of San Francisco 2009 2010


In the right direction	47%	29%
In the wrong direction	34%	51%
Don't know	19%	20%

Major issues 2009 2010

Jobs and economy	26%	29%
Homelessness and panhandling	35%	28%
The City's budget	16%	26%
Muni, public transit	13%	26%
Education	22%	25%
Crime, drugs, gangs	20%	15%
Homeownership, cost of home	21%	14%
Cleanliness of streets, parks	9%	14%

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