

Voters Initially Inclined to Accept Levy Swap

School directors, administrators and teachers across the state are staying up nights trying to figure out the implications for their districts of the new school funding plan passed by the legislature last week. It seems far from clear. Most voters meanwhile, are inclined to find the broad outlines of the plan acceptable — at least initially.

With a caveat that this is a complicated, substantial change in state policy—so opinions are subject to change as experts and voters work through the implications—this survey of Washington voters indicates cautious acceptance, if not enthusiasm, for the provisions of the “levy swap” put in place by lawmakers.

Survey respondents were read descriptions of 5 school funding changes contained in the budget. The descriptions were mostly taken from media stories to replicate the information circulating in the public about the measures. For each change, respondents were asked whether they support it, find it acceptable, oppose it or find it unacceptable. The structure of the question was intended to measure initial inclination and allow respondents to hedge their answer, rather than force a premature “up or down” opinion.

For all 5 changes a slim majority or plurality was inclined to find it at least acceptable. But no change had more than 31% who “favored” it. And only 24% favored all 5 changes. For the 4 most controversial changes at the heart of the plan, there were 4 people inclined to oppose it for every 5 inclined to support it.

Voters were much less accepting of the way the budget was arrived at. They were split 48-44% on whether tapping the state Rainy-Day fund was a good idea. And Reminded that the budget was negotiated by eight legislators from both parties and was not made public until the day before it was voted on by the house and senate:

68% said there should have been more public input and hearings, while

27% said “realistically, this was the only way the parties were going to come together to produce a budget.”

Public opinion must be considered fluid on this issue. As details are discussed at the district level, public and expert thinking will continue to develop before it settles. Still, after a long and contentious session, it is encouraging to proponents that voters are mostly inclined toward accepting the outcome.

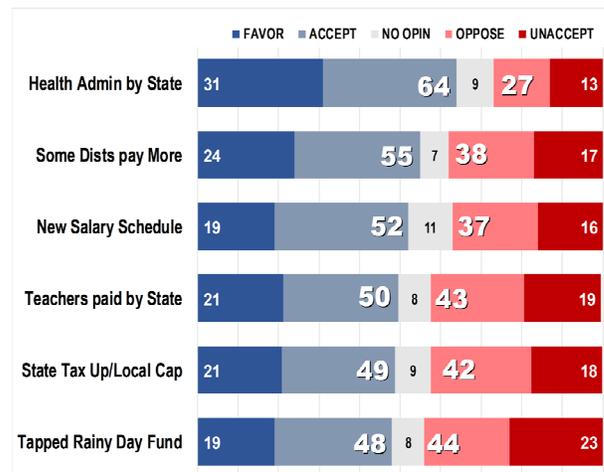
QUESTION WORDING AND RESULTS

As you may know, the legislature passed a budget which is intended to pay for public education. The State Supreme Court had declared that the state was not meeting its obligation to fully fund public education. As one result, there was too much inequity in school funding from district to district across the state. The court said the state must pay for basic education.

The new budget is intended to fully fund basic education with state funds and even out the funding differences between school districts in different parts of the state ,

- A. Health benefits for all school employees will be administered by the state instead of by each school district.
- B. As a result of this change, property taxes will go up in communities with high property values – such as Seattle, Mercer Island, Kirkland and Bellevue – while taxes would stay the same or go down in communities with lower property values.
- C. The existing statewide teacher salary schedule – which pays teachers according to their seniority and education level – will be replaced. Instead, the state will give each district a fixed pool of money for teacher salaries, based on the number of teachers in their district, plus local cost of living. Each district will negotiate its own individual teacher salaries, but cannot spend more than the total amount provided by the state.
- D. To balance salaries across the state, teachers’ salaries and other basic education costs will be paid out of the state property tax instead of local school levies. Local levies can no longer be used to increase basic teacher salaries—except for extra-curriculars and special programs.
- E. To pay for basic education, the state property tax will increase, while local school levies will be capped, limiting the amount of property tax that a school district can ask of its voters.
- F. In addition to the property tax changes, the legislature used about \$900 million dollars from the state’s rainy-day fund to fund education.

SUPPORT FOR LEVY SWAP PROVISIONS



Support, Opposition to School Funding Changes

Analysis of support and opposition to the changes appears below. The text in bold is wording of the change as it was presented to survey respondents. The order of presentation was rotated.

Health benefits for all school employees will be administered by the state instead of by each school district.

- This feature was the most popular of those tested, with 64% of respondents inclined to favor it. It was favored by sizable majorities in every area and demographic category in the survey. The most support came from Democrats (73%) and the least from Republicans (51%).

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- 55% of respondents statewide tended to support this change, including—surprisingly— 55% of voters in King County outside Seattle. However, it was least popular in Seattle, where 55% opposed it or found it unacceptable. It was supported by only 49% in Pierce/Kitsap.
- Republicans gave it only 47% support (44% opposed);
- It had majority support in every other demographic category.
- Support went up with income, from 50% of those earning \$50,000 or less to 61% of those over \$100,000.

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- 52% of respondents were inclined to support this change, including majorities in all but 4 demographic categories. The exceptions: those with graduate educations (41%); women (46%); those earning \$75-100,000 per year (48%) and those age 51-64 (49%). In each case except those with graduate degrees, there was a plurality inclined to favor.

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- Support was broad, but not deep: 50% inclined to support and 43% inclined to oppose this change. It had majority support in 11 of the 23 demographic categories in this survey, and plurality support in another 7.
- It was most popular among: Voters under 35 (59%); Democrats (58%); Voters making more than \$100,000 (58%).
- It was least popular among: Republicans (54% opposed); Eastern Washington voters (48% opposed, 43% supported); voters making under \$50,000 (49% opposed, 45% supported).

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- This was the only one of the 5 changes without majority support: 49% were inclined to support, while 42% were inclined to oppose this part of the plan.
- Its strongest support came from: Democrats (58%); Voters under age 35 (54%); Those with incomes over \$75,000 (55%); Central Puget Sound—King, Pierce, Kitsap (52%); Those with college degrees (52%).
- Strongest opposition came from: Republicans (51%); Those with some college (47%); Those making \$50-75,000 a year (48%).

In addition to the property tax changes, the legislature used about \$900 million dollars from the state's rainy-day fund to fund education.

- Respondents were not sure about tapping the reserve fund: 48% were supportive; 44% opposed.
- It was most popular among: Democrats (61%); Voters under 50 (58%); Those with graduate degrees (57%); Those with incomes under \$50,000 (56%); Women (52%).

Sample Profile

516 registered voters, selected at random from registered voter lists in Washington state, were interviewed July 25-27 by live, professional interviewers. 35% of the interviews were conducted on cell phones. The margin of sampling error is ±4.5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means, in theory, had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within ±4.5% of the results reported here at least 95 times.

REGION

King County	30%
Pierce + Kitsap.....	15%
North Sound (Snohomish to Whatcom).....	17%
Western Washington (Clallam to Clark)	17%
Eastern Washington.....	20%

GENDER

Male	49%
Female	51%

AGE

18-35	11%
36-50	23%
51-64	36%
65+	29%

PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Democrat	32%
Republican	27%
Independent	41%

EDUCATION

High School.....	15%
Some College	25%
College Graduate.....	38%
Post Graduate.....	20%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

<\$50,000	21%
\$50 - 74,000.....	20%
\$75 - 99,000.....	12%
\$100,000+	28%
No Answer	19%

The Elway Poll

The Elway Poll is an independent, non-partisan analysis of public opinion in Washington and the Northwest.

PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS: Each quarter, space is reserved in the questionnaire to allow for proprietary questions. The fee for proprietary questions is \$1000 per question. You will receive the results of your question(s) with full crosstabulations within two days after the interviews are completed.

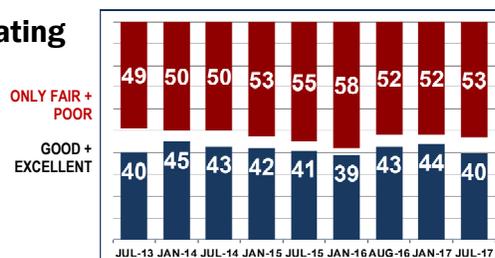
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Inslee Job Ratings Sag

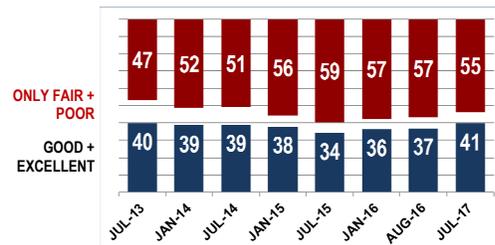
Governor Jay Inslee’s overall job rating dropped over the course of the legislative session: 40% of *Elway Poll* respondents said last week that he was doing an “excellent” (10%) or “good” (30%) job vs. 53% who said “only fair” (27%) or “poor” (26%). This is a net shift of -5 points since December.

Interestingly, Inslee’s marks for 4 aspects of the job have gone up from one year ago (they were not asked in December), including Managing state government; Providing leadership to the legislature; Articulating a vision for the future of the state; and Representing Washington to the rest of the country.

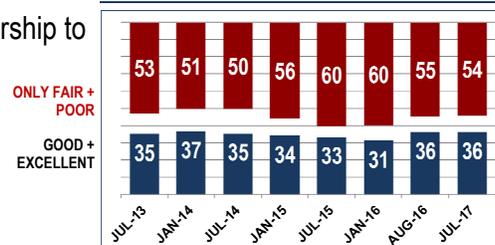
Overall Job Rating



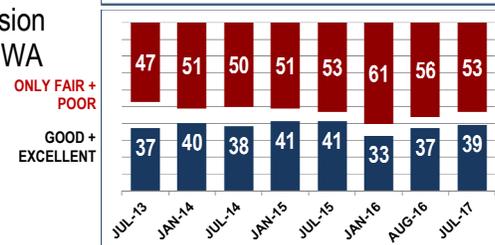
Managing State Government



Providing Leadership to the Legislature



Articulating a Vision of the Future of WA



Representing WA to the Country and World

