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-- A "UIS/SRO FYI" --

**ATTITUDES ON CITIZENS' GUBERNATORIAL RECALL POWER:
"OLD" (FALL, 2003) BUT TOPICAL ILLINOIS RESULTS**

60% SUPPORTED PROCESS TO RECALL GOVERNOR

- Topic:** Attitudes toward ability of the public to recall a governor
- Survey:** Illinois statewide telephone survey of randomly-selected Illinois public;
Conducted in Fall, 2003 (October/November; note – just after California's successful recall vote);
477 respondents; sampling error of +/- 4.5% error at 95% confidence level;
Conducted by Survey Research Office, a unit of the Center for State Policy and Leadership, University of Illinois at Springfield
- Date:** August 30, 2007
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Recently, the topic of the ability of the public to "recall" – or remove and replace – public officials before their next election surfaced in Illinois politics. This topic was raised by Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, some state legislators, and was even endorsed by Governor Rod Blagojevich.

According to the website of the National Conference of State Legislatures, 18 states currently allow for the possibility of recalling state officials before the next election. In October of 2003, California became only the second state in the history of the United States to successfully "recall" their Governor, Democrat Gray Davis. In the same election, California voters replaced him with Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican. This election was the focus of major national publicity, both because of the historical significance of this election in the country's most populous state, and perhaps even more so, because of the celebrity status of several "replacement" candidates -- most notably the successful candidate Schwarzenegger, who actually announced his candidacy on NBC's *Tonight Show*.

Only a couple weeks after the California 2003 recall and replacement election, UIS/SRO began an Illinois statewide telephone survey of 477 randomly-selected respondents. The recall issue was one of the topics addressed. (Interviewing was conducted from mid-October through mid-November, 2003.)

In this survey, the Illinois public reported widespread awareness of California's recent recall election (88%) and the result that the California governor was successfully recalled (75%). After being informed that there was a replacement election, 87 percent reported awareness that the winner was Arnold Scharzenegger.

Respondents were then asked, "*Generally speaking, do you think there should be a process in Illinois where citizens have the ability to remove a governor from office before the next election?*" Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents said "yes," just over one-third (34%) said "no," and 6 percent either said "don't know" or did not answer.

Support for the recall process of the governor garnered a majority in every major region of the state – and, in fact, did not differ all that much across these statewide regions. Support ranged from a low of 55 percent in north/central Illinois to a high of 63 percent in the Chicago suburbs. It stood at 62 percent in southern Illinois and 59 percent in the City of Chicago.

Females were somewhat more supportive than males (63% vs. 57%); and those with up to a high school diploma and some post high school education were more supportive than those with a college degree (64% and 66% vs. 50%, respectively). (Data is not currently available either by age or by race/ethnicity.)

At the time of this survey – in October/November of 2003, majorities in all party groups were supportive of the gubernatorial recall, but Republicans (66%) were somewhat more supportive than were independents (60%) or Democrats (58%). Interestingly, support for the ability to recall was virtually the same for those who approved and for those who disapproved of Governor Blagojevich's performance in office (62% and 61%, respectively). Support for the ability to recall was somewhat lower for those who had mixed opinions of the governor's performance or did not express an opinion (55%).

For further context regarding political attitudes here, it should be noted that Governor Rod Blagojevich's approval level in this October/November 2003 survey was at 51 percent, while 24 percent disapproved, 10 percent offered mixed opinions, and 15 percent either did not know or did not answer. Virtually equal percentages in this survey identified themselves as independents (36%) and Democrats (35%) while somewhat fewer identified as Republicans (29%). And, not surprisingly, there were significant differences across party identification groups in their approval of the Democratic Governor's performance in office (Democrats at 72%; independents at 47%; and Republicans at 34%).