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## **New USC Poll Reveals Likely California Voters' Sentiments on Homelessness Ahead of March 3 Primary Election**

*USC Price School and USC Schwarzenegger Institute Poll Finds Roughly a Third Fear that They or a Family Member Could Become Homeless*

**Los Angeles, Feb. 13, 2020** – Homelessness and housing are top of mind for likely California voters leading into the March 3 Primary Election, according to a new statewide poll conducted by the USC Price School of Public Policy and the USC Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy. In an open-ended unaided question, respondents put homelessness or housing as their top issue (22.9%), followed by climate change (14.8%) and immigration (9.2%).

Poll results also revealed that while many likely voters fear becoming homeless at a personal level and support compassionate approaches to helping those experiencing homelessness, those same voters shun visible signs of homelessness in their neighborhoods and want public funds spent on the issue monitored closely. Topline results from the poll were presented today at the “Unhoused: Addressing Homelessness in California” symposium held at USC.

“This new poll provides undisputable evidence that the homelessness crisis is impacting more people, families and communities across the state than ever before,” said Jack Knott, dean of the USC Price School. “It’s imperative that we continue to encourage innovative thinking and smart solutions that can help communities create more short- and long-term affordable housing options to address this chronic, vexing problem.”

“For too many Californians, the Golden Dream by the sea is out of reach. Learning that one in three Californians worry that they or a family member could become homeless is astounding and illustrates just how critical this issue has become,” said Arnold Schwarzenegger, founder and chairman of the USC Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy. “We can do better. It’s time to put politics aside, roll up our sleeves and put federal, state and local resources to work toward solutions that can provide immediate relief to those experiencing homelessness.”

Key findings from the USC Price/USC Schwarzenegger Institute poll on homelessness include:

### ***Personal Experiences with Homelessness***

- Of those surveyed, 37.5% said that they were afraid that they or a family member could become homeless. This number was even higher among Latinos at 47%. Further, 27.8% of those who thought

the state's economic conditions were either excellent or good (43.5%) nevertheless feared they or a family member could experience homelessness.

- More than 1 in 4 respondents also said that they personally knew someone experiencing homelessness (27.3%), with 35.8% of Latino voters polled reporting the same.

### ***Tent Encampments & Recreational Vehicle (RV) Parking***

Among those surveyed, 41.5% said that the streets and public areas where they lived had many tent encampments. These numbers were again higher among Latino voters (49.8%).

- Nearly one in three (63.5%) thought that California should restrict sleeping and tent encampments on sidewalks, in public parks and other public areas and similarly supported the policy of creating more designated parking areas for those living in their RVs (56.1%).
- Nearly 3 out of 4 respondents (74.8%) said that California should restrict people sleeping unhoused in high-risk fire areas like canyons and hills.

### ***Public Policy: Compassion vs. Enforcement***

Likely California voters appear conflicted about their compassion to help those experiencing homelessness and their desire to keep homeless encampments out of public areas

- When asked if families with children living on the streets should be removed, 50% of respondents said that these families should not be forced off the streets.
- Similarly, only 27.5% surveyed supported removing homeless encampments *before* establishing more interim housing shelters for those experiencing homelessness. However, in contrast and as noted in the section above, respondents strongly supported removing tent encampments from public and high-risk fire areas.
- Respondents were also very adamant about careful control of spending on homelessness, with 87.5% agreeing that the state should audit spending on homelessness to ensure that funds are being spent appropriately and effectively.

The USC Price/USC Schwarzenegger Institute poll on homelessness was fielded February 1-5, 2020, in both English and Spanish. Questions were designed by USC Price faculty research experts. The poll was fielded by YouGov, a global public opinion and data company based in London. YouGov interviewed 1,000 likely California voters. Interviews were administered online via a panel recruited by YouGov, which used sampling and post-stratification weights so that the 1,000 person sample was representative of the likely California voter population. Margin of error is +/- 3.3.

This survey was produced by the USC Price School of Public Policy and the USC Schwarzenegger Institute, with contributions from the USC Price Center for Social Innovation and the California Civic Engagement Project.

For the full survey, [click here](#).

The **USC Sol Price School of Public Policy's** mission is to improve the quality of life for people and their communities, here and abroad. The School achieves this mission through education and research that promote innovative solutions to the most critical issues facing society. For nearly 90 years, the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy has earned the public trust by creating path-breaking research and scholarship.

The **USC Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy** is committed to advancing post-partisanship, where state and global leaders work together to establish best practices in policymaking regardless of political party. Through research, conferences, and advocacy the Institute seeks to inform public policy and debate to confront serious challenges to our society including climate change, political reform and education.

The **USC Price Center for Social Innovation** develops ideas and illuminates strategies to improve the quality of life for people in low-income urban communities. Housed in the USC Price School of Public Policy, the Price Center examines new processes and models to deliver social impact, with a particular focus on housing and homelessness, educational attainment, and reentry for justice-involved individuals. Learn more at [socialinnovation.usc.edu](http://socialinnovation.usc.edu) and [@USCPriceCSI](https://twitter.com/USCPriceCSI).

The **California Civic Engagement Project** is part of the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy and is based in Sacramento. The CCEP conducts research to inform policy and on-the-ground efforts for a more engaged and representative democracy, improving the social and economic quality of life in communities. The CCEP is engaged in pioneering research to identify disparities in civic participation across place and population. Its research informs and empowers a wide range of policy and organizing efforts aimed at reducing disparities in state and regional patterns of well-being and opportunity. To learn about the CCEP, visit our website at <https://ccep.usc.edu>.

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