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Latest Findings, CSUF – OCBC Quarterly Survey:

**County Residents Increase Opposition to International Airport at El Toro
Shift Toward Opposition Stronger in Northern Orange County**

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**County Residents Slip in Percentage Who Think Orange County,
and California, are “going in the right direction”**

County Opposition to El Toro Airport Grows

Opposition to a proposed international airport at the closed Marine Corps base at El Toro has increased since February 2002, according to the latest survey of Orange County residents undertaken by Cal State Fullerton’s Center for Public Policy and the Orange County Business Council.

Dates for interviews were June 20 through July 11, 2002.

Orange County residents reached in the June-July survey were asked:

At the present time, do you support or oppose building an international airport at the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station? Would you say that you... Strongly support building the airport, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose building an international airport at the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station?

This same wording has been used in previous CSUF-OCBC surveys. Results over time are shown in Table One. As will be seen, about two-thirds of residents contacted said that they either “strongly oppose” (52.2%) or “somewhat oppose” (15.0%) building an international airport at El Toro.

Table One.

Level of Support for Proposed El Toro Airport

	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
July 2002	17.4%	15.3%	15.0%	52.2%
February 2002	22.9%	21.7%	18.9%	36.5%
November 2001	21.8%	18.1%	16.0%	44.1%
June 2001	28.9%	17.9%	15.4%	37.8%
March 2001	20.8%	19.6%	13.3%	46.3%
November 2000	19.0%	17.5%	15.7%	47.8%
July 2000	22.1%	19.2%	11.7%	47.0%
February 2000	23.8%	20.5%	13.0%	42.7%
November 1999	23.9%	22.9%	12.5%	40.7%

All numbers from Center for Public Policy / OCBC Surveys.

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As will be seen in Table One, levels of support for an airport fell, and levels of opposition to an airport rose, in the July results when compared to the February 2002 survey. Changes of the magnitude indicated between February and July fall within conventional levels of statistical significance. In other words, considering a two-way breakdown (either *support* or *oppose*), there is a 95 per cent or better chance that the shift toward more opposition to an airport is “real,” and not a random artifact of sampling error.

The survey had no direct, internal set of questions with which to probe the reasons for the shift away from airport support and toward opposition.

“We may note the obvious, however. Measure W, the proposal to re-zone the El Toro for an urban park and other uses, passed with 58% of the votes cast in March 2002,” commented Keith Boyum, Center for Public Policy director and CSUF political science professor. “Although previous to the election there was an active pro-airport, anti-Measure W campaign, since March there has been little in the way of publicity favoring an airport, and considerable generally favorable news about park, private development, higher education, and other uses.”

“It looks like only the most hard-core, pro-airport supporters believe an airport will be built at El Toro,” said Stan Oftelie, President and CEO of the Orange County Business Council. “The average North County voter has deserted the airport concept.”

The Effect of Region: North versus South Orange County

Previous Cal State Fullerton – OCBC surveys have found more opposition, and more intense opposition, to the proposed airport at El Toro from residents in southern Orange County than from northern County residents.

Data from the latest July 2002 survey, shown below in Table Two, demonstrate the same pattern. While eight out of ten south county residents either somewhat oppose or strongly oppose an airport at El Toro, about six out of ten north county residents report the same view.

Table Two.

Level of Support for Proposed El Toro Airport, by Region

	South County	North County
Strongly Support	10.2%	21.0%
Somewhat Support	8.7%	18.5%
Somewhat Oppose	11.0%	17.3%
Strongly Oppose	70.1%	43.1%

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There is little change in the numbers shown in Table Two for residents of southern Orange County, compared to previous surveys. However, the northern Orange County numbers changed considerably. The trends are shown in Table Three.

Table Three
**Level of Support for Proposed El Toro Airport,
by Region, Over Time**

	Strongly Support + Somewhat Support		Somewhat Oppose + Strongly Oppose	
	<u>North County</u>	<u>South County</u>	<u>North County</u>	<u>South County</u>
July 2002	39.5%	18.9%	60.4%	81.1%
February 2002	53.8%	18.5%	46.2%	81.5%
November 2001	47.7%	22.6%	52.2%	77.3%

All numbers from Center for Public Policy / OCBC Surveys.

As will be seen, residents of northern Orange County now report opposition at a rate higher than were found in November 2001, before the essential beginning of the campaign concerning the Measure W proposal on the March 2002 ballot. However, roughly eight out of ten residents of southern Orange County have opposed (either “strongly” or “somewhat”) the proposed airport consistently over time.

“We did not ask respondents for their views about the unfolding of plans this spring for non-airport development at El Toro,” commented Phillip Gianos, CSUF Professor of Political Science. “We can’t say directly, then, whether residents have liked or disliked these development plans. On the other hand, we certainly know that support for an airport has waned; and this would be consistent with some level of welcome for the non-aviation plans discussed in local media since the March election.”

The Orange County Business Council has a formal position in favor of the plan to build an international airport at El Toro. Neither Cal State Fullerton nor the CSUF Center for Public Policy takes any position on the airport plan or the “Great Park” initiative that was adopted by voters in March.

Right Direction versus Wrong Track

For the sixth time, the OCBC-Center for Public Policy (CSUF) survey asked residents of Orange County: *Do you think that things in Orange County are generally going in the right direction, or are they generally off on the wrong track?*

The question is meant as a very general gauge of the satisfaction of ordinary people with the social, economic, cultural, and political state of affairs. It may be a barometer, of sorts, of the “mood” of citizens, evidently of interest to county or state leadership. The question, as noted below, is also used by other state-wide and national surveys, permitting some interesting comparisons.

As Table Four indicates, Orange County residents remain a satisfied group – but their level of satisfaction has declined to 67% in the latest survey.

“A decline to 2/3 approval of anything is pretty amazing,” Oftelie said. “Signing Darin Erstad to a long-term contract probably tops the 2/3 public approval level, but I can’t think of anything else that would score at the 84 percent level the County received in February. These continue to be very high approval ratings.”

In six measurements over twenty months, an average of 79% of residents of Orange County had rated things as *going in the right direction*. The first notable deviation from this appears to be the finding in the latest survey, with the number falling from about eight out of ten, to about two-thirds.

We note that the comparable number for California has also fallen. Orange County residents rate the state as *going in the right direction* at a 56% rate, compared to the mean of 61% found over four surveys.

“For this one, we may speculate about specific causes,” commented Keith Boyum, Director of the Center for Public Policy and CSUF political science professor. “At the time of this survey, stock market averages were plunging, and the press and other media reflected concerns about the nation’s financial future. In addition, trust in business was taking a hit, with accounting controversies, bankruptcies, and more. In turn, Orange County being a strong participant in the national economy, and a very business-friendly place, would feel those blows.”

By way of comparison, in The New York Times / CBS News Poll published July 18, 2002, just 42% of Americans thought the nation was “going in the right direction,” and 48% thought it was “pretty seriously off on the wrong track.”

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Table Four
**Percentage Who Respond that
[California, Orange County] is “Going in the Right Direction”**

<u>Date</u>	<u>California</u>	<u>Orange County</u>	<u>Survey</u>
July 2002	56%	67%	<i>Center for Public Policy/OCBC: Orange County residents</i>
February 2002	64%	84%	<i>Center for Public Policy/OCBC: Orange County residents</i>
November 2001	61%	74%	<i>Center for Public Policy/OCBC: Orange County residents</i>
June 2001	50%	80%	<i>Center for Public Policy/OCBC: Orange County residents</i>
March 2001	68%	78%	<i>Center for Public Policy/OCBC: Orange County residents</i>
October 2000		80%	<i>Center for Public Policy/OCBC: Orange County registered voters</i>
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June 1999	52%		<i>Los Angeles Times: Calif. Residents</i>
1999	59%		<i>Field Poll: California residents</i>
1998	67%		<i>Field Poll: California residents</i>
1997	43%		<i>Field Poll: California residents</i>
1996	34%		<i>Field Poll: California residents</i>

Dr. Phillip Gianos, CSUF Professor of Political Science, remarked, “So the finding is that the evaluations of Orange County residents have slipped, for both the county and the state of California.

“At the same time, as we’ve seen consistently in our surveys in the past year and a half, Orange County residents are pleased with things in general when compared to other Californians, and indeed other Americans. Over the last year and a half we have gone from good economic times to a time of economic worries. Orange County residents seem to have reacted to that. However, we still find substantial support among Orange County residents for the general state of affairs in the county.”

“Now, there is also a ‘rooting for the home team’ or a ‘Lake Wobegon effect’ to consider,” continued Gianos. “We don’t have data that compare the ratings of Orange County by local residents to the ratings of ‘X’ County by residents of ‘X’ county. My hunch, though,

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is that people in many or most places would rate their local circumstances more highly than they'd rate either their state, or the nation.

“Thus, while we know that Orange County residents rate Orange County more highly than they do the state of California, we don't know that their satisfaction with local circumstances is particularly higher than would be the satisfaction of other folks to *their* own local circumstances.”

“All in all, our data continue to show a *relatively* contented local citizenry, albeit one that reacts to the same issues to which other Americans react,” said Keith Boyum. “The problems that Orange County faces notwithstanding – such as those associated with growth and the need for infrastructure, for example – we find that county residents generally like the way things are going.”

Previous results of CSUF/OCBC quarterly surveys are conveniently accessible on the OCBC web site. See: <http://www.ocbc.org/resourcesf.htm>

The current survey was conducted for the CSUF Center for Public Policy / Orange County Business Council team by the Social Science Research Center at California State University, Fullerton (SSRC). The SSRC Director is Dr. Gregory Robinson.

Telephone interviews were conducted utilizing Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) equipment and software. The CATI system is a sophisticated information gathering protocol that contributes to the accuracy of data and to preserving the random nature of the sample.

A draft survey instrument was provided by the Center for Public Policy and refined by the Social Science Research Center for comprehensiveness, flow, length and factors that influence respondent cooperation and interest.

The sample design was provided by the SSRC, as was technical assistance with data analysis.

The survey of Orange County residents took place between June 20 and July 11, 2002. Some 466 randomly selected households are represented in the data. Interviews were in English. Calculated conservatively, the confidence interval for findings noted is plus / minus 4.85 per cent.

North / South County Note. Consistent with all previous Center for Public Policy / Orange County Business Council surveys, in North / South County breakdowns, these cities were included in the “North:” Anaheim, Brea, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, La Habra, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Midway City, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, (Tustin Foothills/Tustin Ranch), Westminster, and Yorba Linda.

The following cities were included in the “South”: Aliso Viejo, Corona Del Mar, Dana Point, Irvine, Laguna Beach, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Clemente, and San Juan Capistrano.