HART RESEARCH

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoff Garin and London Wagner
DATE: September 18, 2026
RE: Voter Support for the California COMPETE Act

This memorandum presents the key findings from our survey with a representative cross section of 600 likely voters in California and has a margin of error of ±4.0 percentage points. The interviews were conducted August 19-23 by telephone and online through text-to-web invitations.

The Bottom Line: The COMPETE Act addresses what most voters see as a significant problem in the economy today. A large majority of voters believe that large corporations with dominant positions in the marketplace frequently take unfair advantage of their power at the expense of consumers, small businesses, and workers, and three-quarters of voters say it is important for California to have strong laws that promote fair economic competition by stopping large, dominant corporations from acting in anti-competitive ways. When voters hear about the COMPETE Act, they support it by a margin of 3 to 1. The arguments in favor of the COMPETE Act are significantly more persuasive to voters than the arguments against, and after hearing from both sides 68% support the passage of the COMPETE Act. The strength and durability of support for the COMPETE Act is seen across demographic groups and every region in the state, even receiving support from 63% of independents.

1. **The COMPETE Act addresses what most voters see as a significant problem in the economy today.**

- While 91% of voters say the economy is working very well or pretty well for large corporations today, 81% say it is not working well for average working families and 83% say it is not working well for small businesses.
- Eighty percent of voters say that large corporations have too much power in the economy today, including 88% of voters in San Francisco. Two in three voters (66%) say that the power large corporations have in the economy today is a very big or pretty big problem. Large majorities say when large corporations have a lot of power because of their dominant positions in the marketplace there is a negative impact on small businesses (81%), consumers (65%), and workers (61%).

- Voters believe that large corporations with dominant positions in the marketplace often take unfair advantage of their power at the expense of small businesses (85% often, including 53% very often), consumers (83% often, including 54% very often), and workers (80% often, including 54% very often). Voters say that the problem of dominant companies abusing their position occurs across major sectors of the economy, including technology, pharmaceuticals, and food.

2. California voters believe it is important for the state to have strong laws that promote fair economic competition by stopping large, dominant corporations from acting in anti-competitive ways.

- Three-quarters of voters say that it is either very important (56%) or fairly important (18%) for California to have strong laws to prevent dominant corporations from acting in anti-competitive ways.
- While a quarter of voters are not sure about the sufficiency of California's current laws, those with an opinion on this matter are much more likely to say that stronger laws are needed to deal with large corporations that take unfair advantage of their power (48%) than to say that the state's current laws are strong enough (27%).

3. When voters hear about the COMPETE Act, they support it by a margin of 3 to 1.

- We provided respondents with the following background information about the COMPETE Act:

California's current antitrust law, which was written in 1907, only covers anti-competitive actions that result from the dealings between two or more companies. The current law does NOT address situations where one large corporation with a dominant position in the market abuses its power to reduce competition in ways that harm consumers, small businesses, and workers.

The state legislature is considering a bill called the COMPETE Act that its supporters say would modernize California's antitrust law in order to deal with the fact that in today's economy a few large corporations now dominate the marketplace in many sectors of the economy. The COMPETE Act would allow legal actions against a single large corporation that abuses its size and dominance to harm consumers, small businesses, or workers.

Sixty-two percent of voters favor the COMPETE Act based on this description, including 45% who strongly favor it, while just 21% oppose it; 17% are not sure. Large majorities of every demographic group support the proposal, and it is supported by wide margins in every region of the state. It has its strongest regional support in San Francisco, where 69% of voters favor it and only 18% oppose it. The COMPETE Act has the backing of 86% of Democratic voters and 63% of independents. While most Republican voters express serious concerns about the power of large corporations with dominant positions in the marketplace, only 25% of Republicans voice a favorable opinion of the COMPETE Act.

- Respondents were also given information on groups that support and oppose the COMPETE Act.

The COMPETE Act is supported by major consumer organizations, labor unions, and small business groups. The COMPETE Act is opposed by the California Chamber of Commerce, and trade associations representing major technology companies.

By a lopsided margin of 57%-18%, voters say they are more likely to agree with the groups that support the COMPETE Act than those that oppose it.

- Arguments in support of the COMPETE Act are convincing to large majorities of voters. Specifically, 60% say this argument is convincing:

California's antitrust law has not been modernized or updated in almost 120 years, and is poorly suited to deal with the economic reality that a few big corporations increasingly dominate important sectors of the economy. We need to modernize the law to meet today's economic threats--not just the problems of 120 years ago.

And 59% say this argument is convincing:

The growing power of a few big companies over the economy has led to higher prices for food, groceries, and medicines, has made it harder for small businesses to compete on a level playing field, and in some industries has meant lower wages and more layoffs. It is time for the state legislature to take action to stop that.

- Arguments against the COMPETE Act are convincing to significantly fewer voters. For example, only 44% find this argument to be persuasive:

Consumers today choose to buy from Amazon and Walmart because they offer lower prices, and they choose to use Google and products from Apple because of their high quality. Cracking down on Amazon, Walmart, Google, and Apple would end up raising prices and reducing consumer choices.

- After hearing from both sides, 68% favor the COMPETE Act, while 32% oppose it.

4. A state senator's position on the COMPETE Act can be politically consequential.

- By 50% to 26%, voters say they would be <u>more</u> likely to support their state senator for reelection if she or he voted to pass the COMPETE Act.

- By 48% to 19%, voters say they would be less likely to support their state senator for reelection if she or he voted to defeat or block passage of the COMPETE Act.