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In reversal, Californians turn against offshore oil drilling, Times/USC poll finds

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Half of California's registered voters oppose new oil drilling off the state's coast, according to a new Los Angeles Times/USC poll.

That marks a reversal from recent years, when voters increasingly favored new drilling amidst sharp rises in the cost of gasoline.

About 50% of those surveyed opposed new drilling, while 43% supported it, according to the poll, which was conducted May 19-26.

The latest figures mark a return to Californians' traditional position on drilling in recent decades. In 2008 and 2009, as prices rose at the pump, 51% of voters supported new drilling.

Geography played a role in voters' attitudes toward seeking new sources of oil offshore, with those who live closer to the state's beaches being more likely to oppose it. About 53% of residents of coastal counties opposed new drilling while 52% of those who live inland supported it.

The polling took place amid national headlines concerning the massive oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico.

The survey was conducted for The Times and the University of Southern California's College of Letters, Arts and Sciences by the Democratic polling firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and the Republican firm American Viewpoint. The margin of error for the survey in which 1,506 registered voters were polled is plus or minus 2.6 percentage points for the overall sample and slightly larger for smaller breakdowns.

-- Seema Mehta