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## **2014 Bay Area Council Poll Finds Cost of Living and Housing Costs Among Region's Most Critical Issues, with Residents Generally Upbeat about Economy**

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA** – The Bay Area's notoriously high cost of living tops the list of the region's most serious problems, according to the *2014 Bay Area Council Poll*, with the cost of housing, crime and traffic following closely behind. Homelessness also ranked in the top five. The poll found 60 percent of Bay Area residents rank cost of living among the top three issues, with 45 percent putting housing cost in the same bucket followed by traffic and crime, both at 29 percent.

At the same time, the survey found 57 percent of residents think the Bay Area is heading in the right direction, while 27 percent said the region is off course and 16 percent didn't know. The region scored higher than California, with 51 percent of Bay Area residents saying the Golden State is headed in the right direction and 31 percent saying it's headed in the wrong direction.

When it comes to the economy overall, 88 percent said the Bay Area is doing the same or better than six months ago, with 35 percent saying it's unchanged, 44 percent saying it's somewhat better and 9 percent saying it's much better. Residents are a little bit more cautious about the future, with 42 percent saying the economy will do somewhat better in six months, 35 percent saying it will be about the same and 8 percent saying it will be much better.

"Bay Area residents are feeling generally upbeat about the region and the economy, but there are serious issues lurking that we can't ignore," said Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council. "Housing and cost of living are closely linked, and we can do something about housing costs if we can summon the will to build what we need to support both economic and population growth."

More detailed results about residents' attitudes towards housing and transportation issues will be released tomorrow.

As far as the issues that residents think government leaders should be focused on, the results diverge considerably from what residents rank as the region's top problems. The poll found that 76 percent of residents think government leaders should be most focused public safety and crime prevention. Improving the quality of public schools ranked second and making government more efficient third. Controlling the cost of living came in fourth at 70 percent while building more housing ranked last with 58 percent of residents saying it should be a priority for government leaders.

Interesting distinctions about the region's problems also surface based on where residents live, their age and income level. The findings appear to echo concerns about the nation's growing wealth divide, with 65 percent of residents who say they make \$75,000 or less ranking the cost of living highest among the region's problems and 55 percent of residents making \$125,000 or more putting cost of living at the top of concerns.

Among counties, San Mateo appears to be the happiest, with 54 percent of residents saying the county is heading in the right direction and only 13 percent saying it's going the other way. San Francisco is the most polarized, with 52 percent saying the city by the bay is heading in the right direction but 26 percent saying it's on the wrong track. In Contra Costa County, which suffered some of the worst effects of the recession, 44 percent say it's on the right track.

Bay Area residents cherish the region's good weather, ranking it the main reason for living here. Diversity ranked second and the strong economy and job market came in third.

The 2014 Bay Area Council Poll, which was conducted by Oakland-based public opinion research firm EMC Research, surveyed more than 1,000 residents in an online poll about a range of issues related to economic growth, housing and transportation, early childhood education, energy and communications, and healthcare. The results are being released over several days beginning May 26.

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### **About the Bay Area Council**

*The Bay Area Council is a business-sponsored, public-policy advocacy organization for the nine-county Bay Area. The Council proactively advocates for a strong economy, a vital business environment, and a better quality of life for everyone who lives here. Founded in 1945, the Bay Area Council is widely respected by elected officials, policy makers and other civic leaders as the voice of Bay Area business. Today, approximately 275 of the largest employers in the region support the Bay Area Council and offer their CEO or top executive as a member. Our members employ more than 4.43 million workers and have revenues of \$1.94 trillion, worldwide.*