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Swiss vote to help the government out of red



SWISS voters have given overwhelming support to a complex new constitutional provision which will allow the government to increase sales turnover taxes and reduce massive federal deficits.

The November 29 nationwide poll resulted in approval of the government plan by a total of 818,324 votes to 368,636 – a majority of almost seven to three.

The new provision will mean an increase in the turnover tax, linked with a slight reduction in direct federal taxes levied on income and property. As a result, federal revenue will be increased by more than Sfr 300 million and the annual deficit reduced.

In a pre-poll statement the government said that public approval of the new scheme was vital if the campaign to combat ever-mounting budgetary deficits was to be effective.

In 1977 and 1979 Swiss voters rejected government proposals for the introduction of a value added tax. Even the acceptance of the latest plan will mean little more than an initial step towards financial recovery, say political observers.

One disappointing feature of the November vote was the low turnout at the polls. Voter participation was 29.8 per cent – only the fourth time ever that a nationwide vote has attracted a turnout below 30 per cent.

Canton Schaffhausen (where abstaining voters are fined) recorded the highest turnout of 66.9 per cent. The lowest – 21 per cent – was in Canton Vaud.

The *Bündner Zeitung* commented: "For most of the Swiss electorate it was too much to ask that they spend a few minutes marking a ballot form. The result reveals how distant government financial policies have become from the public."

And the *Journal de Genève* headlined its report: "Out of every 10 citizens, one said no, two said yes, and seven stayed at home."

How the cantons voted

| | For | Percentage | Against | Percentage | Turnout |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Zurich | 205,468 | 74.0 | 72,180 | 26.0 | 39.9 |
| Berne | 118,004 | 69.3 | 52,358 | 30.7 | 28.0 |
| Lucerne | 47,783 | 67.2 | 23,281 | 32.8 | 39.0 |
| Uri | 5,513 | 64.4 | 3,050 | 35.6 | 40.0 |
| Schwyz | 11,638 | 59.1 | 8,052 | 40.9 | 32.8 |
| Obwalden | 2,853 | 56.6 | 2,187 | 43.4 | 31.0 |
| Nidwalden | 4,215 | 69.3 | 1,868 | 30.7 | 31.6 |
| Glarus | 4,817 | 66.6 | 2,420 | 33.4 | 32.0 |
| Zug | 13,359 | 67.7 | 6,388 | 32.3 | 43.6 |
| Fribourg | 20,806 | 70.4 | 8,758 | 29.6 | 25.2 |
| Solothurn | 30,907 | 63.7 | 17,616 | 36.3 | 35.1 |
| Basle City | 22,034 | 70.6 | 9,161 | 29.4 | 22.5 |
| Basle Land | 24,225 | 66.4 | 12,247 | 33.6 | 26.7 |
| Schaffhausen | 18,213 | 68.5 | 8,381 | 31.5 | 66.9 |
| Appenzell AR | 7,219 | 63.4 | 4,175 | 37.4 | 37.4 |
| Appenzell IR | 1,639 | 65.2 | 875 | 34.8 | 30.0 |
| St. Gallen | 45,221 | 67.1 | 22,182 | 32.9 | 29.3 |
| Grisons | 21,167 | 73.8 | 7,509 | 26.2 | 28.0 |
| Aargau | 45,458 | 65.2 | 24,234 | 34.8 | 25.3 |
| Thurgau | 26,574 | 67.3 | 12,888 | 32.7 | 37.0 |
| Ticino | 29,154 | 72.1 | 11,306 | 27.9 | 27.9 |
| Vaud | 45,271 | 69.3 | 20,059 | 30.7 | 21.0 |
| Valais | 16,573 | 57.5 | 12,231 | 42.5 | 20.8 |
| Neuchâtel | 14,563 | 64.0 | 8,192 | 36.0 | 23.7 |
| Geneva | 30,312 | 69.5 | 13,325 | 30.5 | 24.1 |
| Jura | 5,338 | 59.0 | 3,713 | 41.0 | 22.2 |
| Nationwide | 818,324 | 68.9 | 368,636 | 31.1 | 29.8 |