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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