



League of Conservation Voters Education Fund

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HARRISBURG - A recent poll of 800 registered voters, conducted by The Tarrance Group, shows that Pennsylvanians are looking for better enforcement of laws; oppose oil and gas drilling proposal and support tougher standards for power plants and increasing tipping fee on waste to fund environmental protection programs. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of Pennsylvanians believe "the laws protecting the environment are either not strong enough and that we need stronger laws," or they believe "the laws are tough enough but are not enforced and that existing laws should be strictly enforced."

"Pennsylvanians have some very clear ideas about protecting their communities and quality of life - we know that our laws are supposed to make sure that the water we drink and the air we breathe is safe. If the laws are there, we want them enforced and if they aren't, we want better policies adopted." said Susan Gobreski, Pennsylvania State Director for the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, which released the poll today. "What was surprising in this is that it isn't even close - this survey reveals that Pennsylvanians are pretty well informed about the policy choices that are being made, and we care about the outcome.

Pennsylvanians are concerned about the link between environmental problems and health problems. More than eight in ten (84%) chose the viewpoint that "environmental problems such as air and water pollution and environmental exposure to toxics cause health problems like asthma, allergies and other respiratory problems, cancers and other long-term illnesses." Only 12% of respondents say their viewpoint is closer to the statement that "to think that environmental problems such as air and water pollution and environmental exposure to toxics cause health problems is an alarmist point of view and that there is no scientific evidence to prove that environmental problems cause health problems.

A majority of respondents (72%) state that it is possible to have both a clean environment and a strong economy. When asked if they must make a choice between a clean environment and a strong economy, 40% chose a clean environment, while 45% chose a strong economy, with 15% unwilling or unable to choose; this relative parity even in recent difficult economic times demonstrates the solid commitment that many have to ensuring a clean environment.

Pennsylvanians demonstrate very strong support for specific policies to protect water, air and public resources:

- Water quality is the top concern, with 29% choosing it as their number one concern. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondents said they support "tightening standards on the amount of pollution allowed to be released into bodies of water that serve as sources of drinking water" and eighty-three percent (83%) would support "stronger laws and rules protecting streams and other bodies of water that have the highest water quality" with thirteen percent opposing; seventy-three percent (73%) would support a proposal to "regulate businesses that use the largest amount of water per day in order to protect the water supply" with only 20% of people opposing such a proposal.
- Fifty-seven percent (57%) of Pennsylvanians support an increase of \$5 dollar per ton on each ton of waste disposed of in the state to fund environmental programs like land conservation, recycling and watershed restoration. Thirty-five percent (35%) are opposed, and 8% are unsure.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents (63%) say, "corporate factory farms should be regulated by the state in order to preserve water quality and reduce pollution in our waterways." Only 26% say they side more with the statement "corporate factory farms are important to the state's economy and too much regulation could harm the economy."
- On leasing rights to drill for oil and gas on public lands: A clear majority support the statement that 53% of respondents say that "the state should not lease the land for drilling rights because the effects of drilling would harm natural wildlife habitat areas and this could lead to long-term damage of our state's natural forests, while only forty percent (40%) of people support the statement that "the state should lease the land for drilling rights because the department needs to obtain more funding, and the sale of drilling rights is not a new policy, as it has always served as a way to obtain funding for the department."

Ms. Gobreski commented that "this was one of the closest issues, and there is still a 13 point difference."

- Nearly three fourths of respondents favored a proposal to require power plants to meet Clean Air Act standards, with 46% saying they would "strongly favor" newer standards. Only 19 % would oppose these standards.
- Coal mining is still seen as important to the state with a slim majority (51%) believing that coal is an important part of our heritage, but 83% of Pennsylvanians support "putting stricter regulations on coal mines that are located near water sources, such as rivers, lakes and streams" with only 13% opposed.
- Education and healthcare are top concerns (83%) this year, followed by concerns that usually increase in response to uncertain economic times (crime and drugs - 83%, economy and jobs - 82%, taxes 79%). 76% are concerned about issues of clean water and clean air.

- Eighty three percent (83%) of respondents believe that campaign contributions influence how elected officials vote on environmental issues.
- Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents say issues of clean water, clean air and open space are important to them when making a voting decision, with 39% saying they are "very important" and 44% saying they are "somewhat important."
- Respondents were given a description of the opinions of two hypothetical candidates. Candidate A is said to believe "we must protect the environment and supports strong laws and enforcement of those laws to protect our land, air and water. Candidate A has been endorsed by and has taken campaign contributions from environmental groups." Candidate B is said to believe "we must protect the environment but says that voluntary action by business and less government bureaucracy are the ways to protect our land, air and water. Candidate B has also taken campaign contributions from developers and corporations that are known polluters." Sixty-eight percent (68%) of Pennsylvanians choose the description of Candidate A and 24% choose Candidate B, while, 8% are unsure.
- After being informed that many states provide some form of public funding to help finance state elections campaigns, 52% say they feel the state of Pennsylvania should provide at least partial, public financing to campaigns to reduce the influence of private money on elections. Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents say they feel strongly about this. Another 41% does not support this concept, and 7% are unsure.

The telephone survey of N=809 likely voters was commissioned by LCVEF and conducted by The Tarrance Group, located in Alexandria, Virginia. The survey was conducted May 28 - June 2, 2002. A random sample of this type is likely to yield a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percent in 95 out of 100 cases. For more information from the Tarrance Group, contact Brian Tringali or Tammi Smith at 703-684-6688.

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