

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND  
**FROM:** GARIN-HART-YANG RESEARCH GROUP  
**DATE:** AUGUST 1, 2000  
**RE:** ATTITUDES TOWARD CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

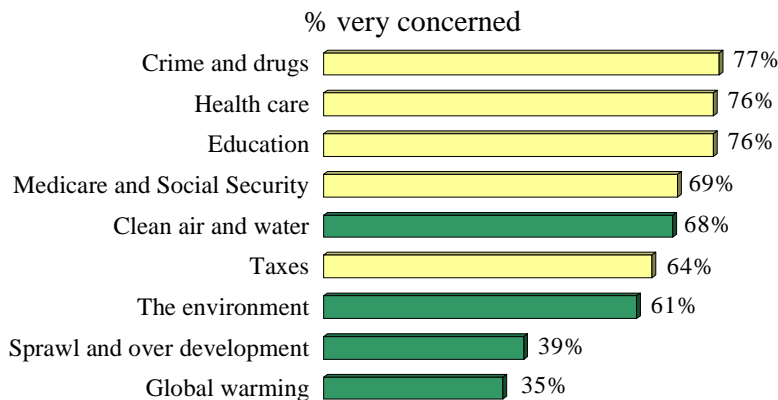
*From May 6 to 11, 2000, Garin-Hart-Yang Research conducted a telephone survey for the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund among a representative sample of 801 voters in Pennsylvania. The statistical margin of error for a survey with this sample size is  $\pm 3.5\%$  and higher for specific subgroups.*

The results of the early-May survey for the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund provide interesting news about Pennsylvanians' attitudes toward the environment and conservation issues. Concern about and support for protecting the environment is extensive. In addition, Pennsylvanians are very willing to make the environment a prime consideration when they enter the voting booth. While Pennsylvanians support many environmental reforms, the polling shows that a majority of voters would prefer that current laws be better enforced, rather than new ones enacted. Sprawl and overdevelopment are a serious concern among voters in more suburban parts of the state, and suburban voters are willing to limit growth in order to protect their quality of life. Finally, Pennsylvanians react positively to a wide variety of pro-conservation messages. The following is a strategic summary of the survey findings.

**Environmental issues are important to Pennsylvania voters, and although the environment is not at the top of Pennsylvanians' issue agenda, a majority of voters in all subgroups are concerned about the environment.**

A strong majority of Pennsylvanians are very concerned about clean air and water (68%) and the environment (61%). In Pennsylvania, this concern reaches across all groups—contrary to popular belief, the environment is not an important issue among just young and affluent voters. In fact, in Pennsylvania, although voters of all ages are concerned about clean air and water, older voters are more concerned about the issue than are younger voters. Also surprising, blue-collar workers are nearly as concerned about the environment as are white-collar workers. A majority of Democrats, independents, and Republicans, and voters from all areas of the state are very concerned about clean air and water. In addition to having broader environmental concerns, more one-third of Pennsylvania voters are concerned about sprawl and overdevelopment (39%) and global warming (35%).

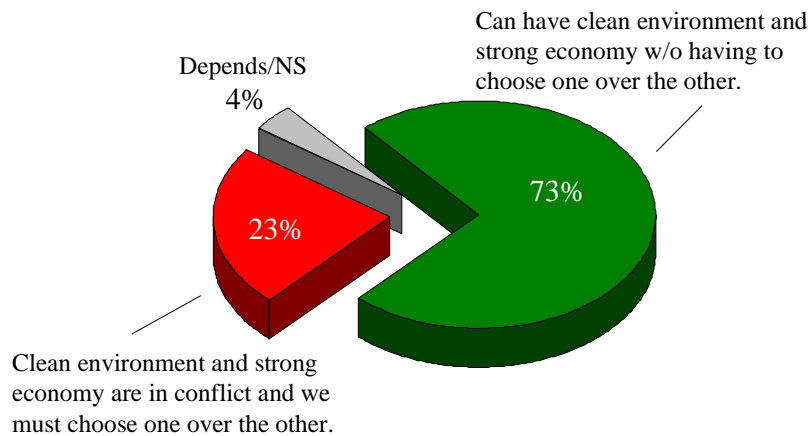
## Environment Important Part of Issue Agenda



By far, Pennsylvanians' top environmental concern is water quality: 45% name water quality as their top environmental concern, 24% say air quality, 14% say sprawl and uncontrolled growth, and 13% say open space and wilderness protection. Water quality is the top concern among voters of all political persuasions.

Pennsylvania voters strongly reject the notion that we must choose between a strong economy and a clean environment, as nearly three-quarters (73%) believe that we can have both at the same time. Voters of all partisan stripes reject this false choice—72% of Democrats, 71% of independents, and 76% of Republicans say that we do not have to choose. Blue-collar workers (68%) and men (69%) are somewhat less likely to believe that this is a zero-sum game. Among voters who say that we must choose, more would pick the environment (54%) than would the economy (39%). And among blue-collar workers who feel that we cannot have both, 56% would choose the environment.

## Clean Environment vs. Strong Economy

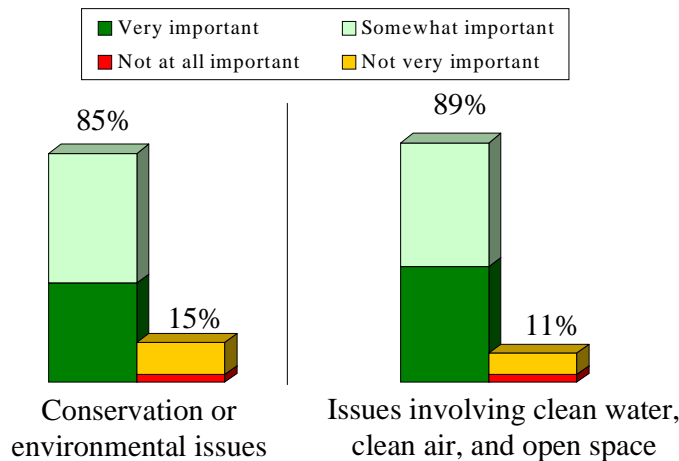


Pennsylvanians are confident that their state's environment will improve in the next five years or so. By two to one, Pennsylvanians expect the quality of the environment to improve (34%) rather than get worse (16%). Seniors are particularly optimistic about the future (40%), as are voters who say that sprawl is not a serious problem in their area (37%).

**Environmental issues are on voters’ minds when they enter the voting booth, and when the issues are described in specific terms, their power to affect voting preferences greatly increases. Likewise, when anti-environmental behavior can be tied to special-interest influence, voters are more likely to vote for the environmental candidate.**

A very strong majority (85%) of Pennsylvania voters say that “conservation or environmental” issues are very or somewhat important to them when deciding how to vote. When the issues are described as “involving clean water, clean air, and open space” the proportion saying that these issues are important increases to 89%, with 43% saying that the issues are *very* important in their voting decisions. Conservation and environmental issues are particularly important among seniors (48% very important), voters in labor union households (36%), Democrats (44%), independents (41%), and voters in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (44%) and Philadelphia (44%) areas. And regardless of the wording, a majority of voters in each party say that these issues are important to them.

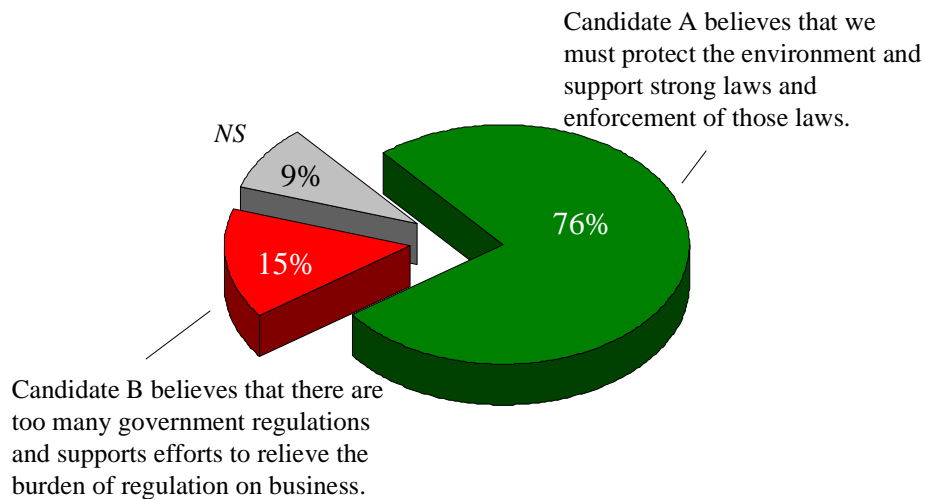
## Importance in Voting



A strong majority (77%) of voters say that campaign contributions influence how elected officials vote on environmental issues, including 63% who say that these contributions influence votes a lot. A majority of voters of all parties say that contributions have a lot of influence. Voters are more inclined to believe that these contributions influence votes against (41%) rather than in favor of (19%) environmental regulations.

A majority of Pennsylvanians strongly support a pro-environment candidate over a fewer regulations candidate: 76% would vote for an environmental candidate, including 64% who would strongly support the candidate, compared with only 15% who would support the fewer regulations candidate. A majority of voters in every political party *strongly* support an environmental candidate (77% of Democrats, 59% of independents, and 52% of Republicans). Urban voters (73%) are particularly likely to say that they strongly support a pro-environment candidate, as are women and voters in labor union households (both 70%). While young voters are slightly more likely to support a pro-environment candidate, a majority in all age groups would strongly support that candidate. When voters learn that the pro-environment candidate has been endorsed by and taken contributions from environmental groups and that the fewer regulations candidate has taken contributions from developers and polluters, support for the pro-environment candidate increases to 82%. Although this increase is only marginal, support for the pro-environment candidate increases a great deal (from 45% to 65%) among voters who generally are less supportive of the environment and environmental regulations.

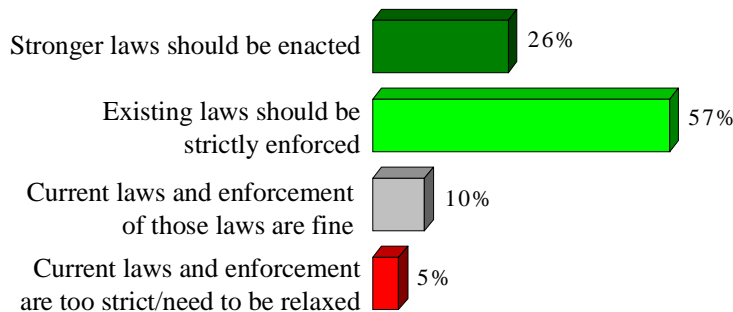
## Strong Support For Environmental Candidate



**Pennsylvania voters want government to take a more active role in protecting the environment by either enforcing current laws more vigorously (the consensus opinion), or by enacting stronger laws protecting the environment. To this end, Pennsylvania voters support a wide array of environmental policies, such as consumer choice in utilities and polluter responsibility. Most of the policies that voters support are in the mold of closing loopholes and using more aggressive enforcement. Pennsylvania voters say that state government is the most effective institution to deal with environmental problems, followed by the federal government, businesses, and individuals.**

A strong majority (83%) of Pennsylvania voters say that either stronger laws protecting the environment should be enacted (26%) or that existing laws should be more strictly enforced (57%). Pennsylvanians clearly favor enforcement of current environmental laws—a majority in each party say that existing laws are not currently enforced and that they should be done so strictly. Some groups that express strong concern for the environment in general (notably seniors and voters in labor union households) would prefer strong enforcement of existing laws to the creation of new, stronger environmental laws. To reach the maximum number of people, environmental organizations should place emphasis on enforcement of laws. At least three-quarters of voters in each area of the state think that government should take a more active role in enforcing existing laws.

### Strong Support for Tougher Laws/Enforcement



Pennsylvania voters strongly favor a variety of policies to protect the environment. The items that test well embrace two general themes: 1) they tend to be common-sense measures to close loopholes and enforce current laws more aggressively, and 2) they have a pro-consumer empowerment element, which helps among voters who are not strong environmentalists, but are motivated by empowerment messages. There is near-universal (99%) agreement that polluters should be required to pay for cleaning up the results of their pollution. Support also is strong for a variety of utility regulations improvements—two-thirds strongly favor allowing consumers to choose sources other than coal or oil for electricity, and a majority strongly favor requiring utilities to use 10% clean energy sources within the next 10 years. These consumer-choice proposals are particularly popular among women, young people, and voters in labor union households. In addition to consumer choice, a near-majority (45%) of voters strongly favor (and another 35% somewhat favor) redirecting government energy subsidies from nuclear and coal power to the development of renewable energy sources. There also is across-the-board support for a parental notification bill concerning pesticides and schools (75% strongly favor). Pennsylvania voters also are passionate about limiting the amount of garbage that is imported from other states—61% strongly favor restricting garbage imports, even though doing so would decrease state revenues.

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Favor</u> %	<u>Somewhat</u> <u>Favor</u> %	<u>Total</u> <u>Favor</u> %
Requiring polluters to pay for cleaning up the results of their pollution	92	7	99
Telling consumers where their electricity comes from and letting them choose sources other than coal or oil, such as natural gas or clean energy	66	26	92
Requiring schools to notify parents before administering pesticides in and around schools	75	15	90
Telling consumers where their electricity comes from and letting them choose sources other than coal or oil, such as natural gas or renewable energy	65	25	90
Putting stricter regulations on coal mines that are located near water sources, such as rivers, lakes, and streams	69	19	88
Providing funding to purchase undeveloped land for preservation to protect Pennsylvania's open space	67	21	88
Requiring all utilities to use ten percent clean energy sources, such as wind or solar power, within the next ten years	56	26	82
Requiring all utilities to use ten percent renewable energy sources, such as wind or solar power, within the next ten years	54	26	80
Reducing government subsidies to nuclear and coal utilities, and redirecting these to help develop renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar energy	45	35	80
Requiring real estate developers to pay for the added costs of building new schools and roads in any new developments	50	29	79
Restricting the amount of garbage that Pennsylvania imports from other states, even though it will mean a loss of revenues that the state collects for taking the garbage	61	16	77
Giving local governments more power to restrict commercial growth and development	43	34	77
Reducing government subsidies to highways, and redirecting these to help fund mass transit	25	27	52
Putting higher taxes on utilities that burn coal to produce electricity, even though some people say this could result in higher utility bills for consumers	15	27	42

Despite the Pennsylvania coal mining industry’s prominence in the state’s economy, a strong majority of voters favor stricter regulations on coal mines that are located near water sources—69% strongly favor such regulation and another 19% somewhat favor these restrictions. Even in areas in which the economy is more dependent on coal, a majority of voters still strongly favor these restrictions—60% of voters in the Pittsburgh area strongly favor these restrictions and 73% of those in the Johnstown/Altoona area strongly favor them. When asked to place the coal industry’s jobs and heritage against the damage it causes to the environment, nearly two-thirds of Pennsylvanians say that the state must look toward cleaner sources of energy. In this instance, voters in more coal-dependent areas are understandably less enthusiastic about looking toward new sources of energy in the future, nevertheless a majority in these areas (52% in Pittsburgh/Erie and 55% in Johnstown/Altoona) are willing to look beyond coal as a source of energy.

## Citizens Look Beyond Coal Industry

Coal mining, and the burning of coal for energy, is an important source of jobs for people in Pennsylvania, as well as an important part of the state’s heritage. State government should maintain support for the coal industry.

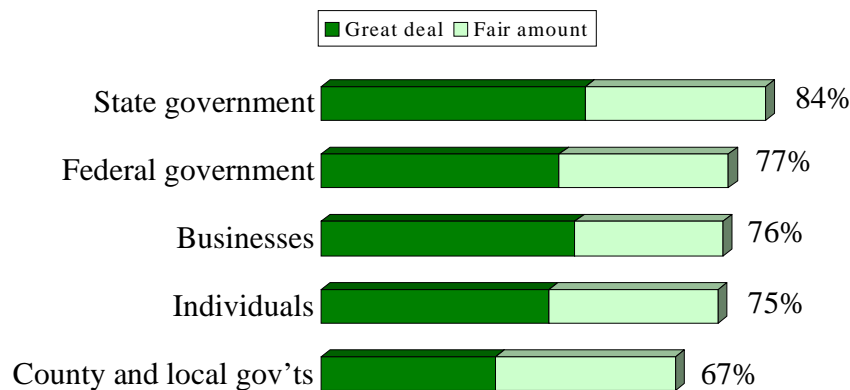


While coal was an important industry in the past, Pennsylvanians need to look toward cleaner sources of energy in the future. Coal mining and burning coal for energy cause too much damage to the environment to be viable sources of jobs and energy in the future.



Pennsylvanians say that state government is the most effective institution when it comes to dealing with environmental problems. Half of Pennsylvanians say that state government can do a great deal when it comes to environmental problems, and another 34% say that state government can do quite a bit. Voters' putting somewhat more faith in state government, however, does not mean that other levels of government are off the hook. A majority of voters believe that every level of government, as well as businesses and individuals, can do their part to improve the environment. Voters are only a little less positive that the federal government, businesses, and individuals can do their part to deal with environmental problems.

## State Government Deemed Most Effective



Pennsylvanians trust wildlife groups and hunting and fishing groups far more than any other groups when it comes to dealing with the environment—one-third of Pennsylvanians trust these groups a great deal. Women tend to put more faith in wildlife groups, whereas men trust hunting and fishing groups more. Pennsylvania and national conservation groups in general are trusted as well, however, not at the same intensity as are wildlife, hunting, and fishing groups. Specific Pennsylvania conservation groups such as Preservation Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania Environment Council, and The Sierra Club Foundation fare less well because they lack solid name identification. Pennsylvanians are less likely to trust either Democrats or Republicans in the state legislature than conservation groups, and they put very little faith in the good intentions of developers and mining companies.

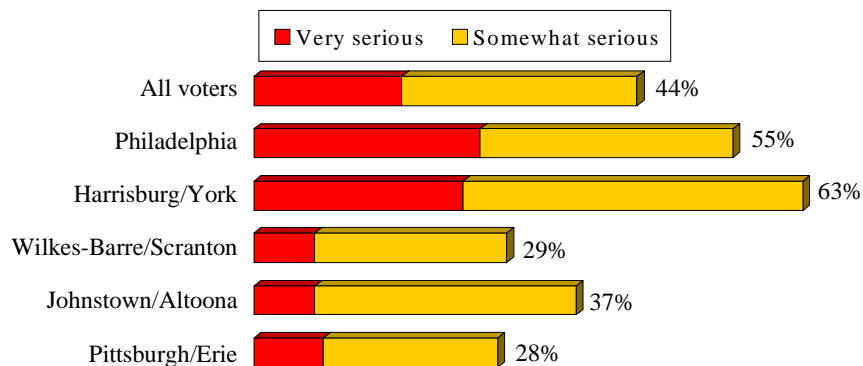
**GARINHARTYANG** RESEARCH GROUP

	Trust A Great <u>Deal</u> %	Trust A Fair <u>Amount</u> %	Total <u>Trust</u> %	Overall <u>Name ID</u> %
Wildlife groups	33	41	74	96
Hunting and fishing groups	30	35	65	96
Pennsylvania conservation groups, generally speaking	18	46	64	92
National conservation groups, generally speaking	21	39	60	96
The Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA	18	37	55	96
Democrats in the state legislature	11	33	44	91
Preservation Pennsylvania	11	28	39	63
The Pennsylvania Environmental Council	10	29	39	71
Pennsylvania Power and Light	11	26	37	88
The Sierra Club Foundation	17	18	35	65
Businesses and corporations	10	25	35	98
Republicans in the state legislature	10	23	33	91
The Chesapeake Bay Foundation	11	18	29	49
Developers	6	18	24	98
Mining companies	6	15	21	89

**Many Pennsylvanians acknowledge that suburban sprawl is a serious problem where they live, and many more favor policies that would limit the encroachment of suburbia into rural and wilderness areas. Talking about sprawl in terms of open space preservation helps environmental organizations reach the maximum number of people.**

Sprawl and overdevelopment is seen as a serious problem by nearly half (44%) of Pennsylvanians. The perception of sprawl as a problem has very little to do with age, party identification, or income—unlike air pollution, which is difficult to detect, people recognize sprawl when they see it. It is a particularly serious problem in the Harrisburg/York area (63%) and in the Philadelphia suburbs (62%). Among voters who say that they live in a suburban area, more than half (55%) say that sprawl is a serious problem where they live.

## Impact of Sprawl Varies Greatly by Area



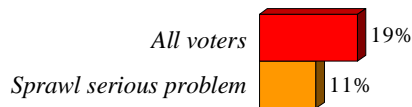
Regardless of sprawl’s current impact, protecting and preserving open space is personally important to nearly all Pennsylvanians. Whether it is phrased as “preserving” (79%) or “protecting” (76%) open space, a strong majority of voters say that this issue is important to them personally. Although Pennsylvanians may differ in their intensity of support, a strong majority in all groups say that it is important, including 78% of Democrats and Republicans, and 83% of independents. Ninety percent of voters in areas where sprawl is perceived as a serious problem say that preserving or protecting open space is important, and even in areas where sprawl is not perceived as a serious problem, more than two-thirds say that it is important. The protection and

preservation of open space is an effective argument to make in areas that have not yet felt the impact of suburban sprawl. Voters in urban areas are less enthusiastic about preserving and protecting open space, most likely because they have so little open space left to protect.

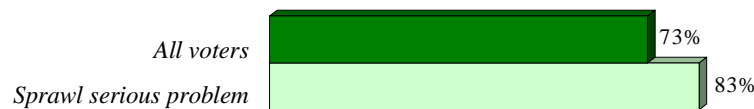
Given the support for protecting and preserving open space, it is not surprising that a substantial majority (73%) of Pennsylvania voters want strong limits on growth and development to protect Pennsylvania's quality of life from excessive sprawl. Majorities of voters in all areas of the state support limiting growth and development, but in areas where sprawl is perceived as a serious problem, support is intense (83%) for such limits. A strong majority of Democrats (79%) and two-thirds of Republicans favor such limits, which is further evidence that the sprawl issue has no regard for party lines.

## Voters Favor Limits on Growth

Growth and development is inevitable and necessary, and the economic benefits of growth more than offset any problems that growth creates.

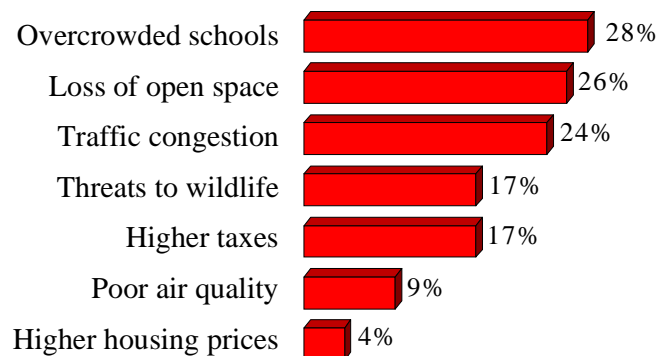


There should be strong limits on growth and development because it is necessary to protect Pennsylvania's quality of life from excessive sprawl and overdevelopment.



The top concerns about sprawl are overcrowded schools and classrooms (28%), loss of open space and farmland (26%), and increased traffic congestion (24%). Given the prominence of overcrowded classrooms as a national issue, it is not surprising that it is the number-one concern among Pennsylvania voters. The specter of overcrowded schools is particularly disturbing to women, younger voters (who are more likely to have children in school), and voters in areas where sprawl is not yet perceived as a serious problem. Loss of open space and traffic are top-of-mind concerns in areas where sprawl is currently perceived as a serious problem. Loss of open space is of particular concern in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area (32%), in the Harrisburg/York area (31%), and in the Philadelphia suburbs (31%). In suburban areas (regardless of sprawl’s current impact), traffic congestion is the number-one concern (32%). Fortunately, Pennsylvania voters are willing to take action on reducing traffic—nearly six in ten (59%) Pennsylvanians say that we should use state funds to expand mass transit, as opposed to building more roads and highways (26%). Suburban voters are particularly willing to spend funds on mass transit (67%), as are voters who live in areas where sprawl is perceived as a serious problem (65%).

## Impacts of Sprawl



Pennsylvania voters see control over sprawl as the natural territory of local city or town government. Despite earlier assessments that state government could do the most to enhance to environmental quality, voters prefer that local city, or town government have control of policies dealing with sprawl (39% for local government compared with 25% for state government). Sprawl issues clearly are seen as an area in which the federal government does not have much of a role. While Republicans strongly prefer local government’s controlling sprawl (47%), voters of all party persuasions place more faith in local government than in any other level of government. Voters of all ages and economic backgrounds agree that local government is the best choice for controlling open space and traffic.

## Sprawl Perceived as a Local Government Issue

*Which level of government should have most control over sprawl and overdevelopment?*

