



**League of Conservation Voters  
Education Fund**

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**Environmental Issues Affect Voting Decisions in Tennessee.**

Nashville, TN--Tennessee voters rate environmental issues as important factors in making voting decisions, says a poll released today. The Beth Schapiro and Associates poll of 600 Tennesseans likely to vote in the November 2000 general election indicates a commitment to environmental protection by voters across the state. The poll was taken January 11-19 for the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, with a margin of error of +/- 4%.

§ **A majority of Tennessee voters say environmental issues are important to them when deciding how to vote.**

Eighty nine percent (89%), nearly 9 out of 10 voters, said environmental issues were important, with 35% of those saying they were a primary factor influencing their voting decisions.

"Tennesseans live in a state where they are surrounded by natural resources that stimulate our tourism, economic growth and enhance our quality of life. These results indicate that voters appreciate these resources and place a priority on their protection," said Erin Kelley, Executive Director for Tennessee Conservation Voters Education Fund.

Several Important Findings of the Poll were as follows:

§ **Voters prefer a "pro-environment" candidate over one who supports fewer government regulations by a significant margin.**

Tennessee voters favored Candidate A who believes "we must protect the environment and supports strong laws and enforcement of those laws" over Candidate B who "believes there are too many government regulations and supports efforts to relieve the burden of regulation on business" by a 50 point margin (72% to 22%).

That margin increases to 66 points (79% to 13%) when voters are given the additional

information that Candidate A "has taken campaign contributions from environmental groups" and Candidate B "has taken campaign contributions from developers and corporations that are known polluters".

§ **Voters give current Tennessee office holders low marks on their environmental performance.**

On environmental issues, most voters felt both the Governor and state Legislature deserved barely passing grades, awarding them both an average grade of "C". When asked "how they would grade the Governor for his performance just on environmental issues", almost half (47%) of those polled, gave Governor Sundquist a "C" or lower, with 9% giving Sundquist a "D."

When asked the same question of their state Legislature and its performance on just environmental issues, over half of Tennessee voters (57%) gave a C or below.

§ **Voters are very concerned about a range of environmental issues, with clean water and air quality at the top of the list.**

When asked to identify environmental issues that caused the most concern among Tennessee voters, they responded with water quality (89% concerned) and air quality (84% concerned), but they were also concerned about growth and sprawl (78%) and pollution from factory animal farms (66%).

Additionally, Tennessee voters felt that environmental issues can be protected without hurting economic growth. Voters believe in mutual existence of a clean environment and a strong economy. Seventy-eight of voters surveyed felt that they did not have to choose economic growth or a healthy environment and among the small percentage that actually see a conflict between these values at times, fifty-five percent would choose the environment over the economy.

§ **Most voters think that current environmental laws are strict enough but are not being enforced.**

Fifty-nine percent of Tennessee voters believe that current environmental laws are tough enough but they are not enforced, with 21% wanting the enactment of stronger laws to protect the environment.

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