



**League of Conservation Voters
Education Fund**

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**Clean air and water rate among top concerns for voters,
Pro-Environment Candidates favored by diverse sets of voters**

*Analysis from 23 polls debunks common misconceptions
about voter attitudes toward environmental issues*

WASHINGTON—Contrary to some commonly held assumptions, environmental issues, specifically clean air and water, are prominent concerns for voters and their voting decisions. That was the conclusion from a yearlong public opinion research project sponsored by the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund. After completing over 14,600 interviews through 23 polls, leading pollsters debunked common environmental myths, concluding that clean air and water are salient issues heading into the November elections.

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“Historically, the media, elected officials and political professionals have operated under the misconception that environmental issues don’t influence the choices voters make on Election Day,” said Teresa Purcell, LCVEF senior projects director, who led the research. “After a year of researching public opinion, it’s clear that voters across the country care deeply about clean water and clean air and will factor these issues into their voting decisions.”

At a Washington, D.C. news briefing, LCVEF was joined by the polling firms of Garin-Hart-Yang, The Tarrance Group, Beth Schapiro and Associates and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin and Associates to debunk five common myths about the environment.

MYTH: Environmental issues (clean air and water) are not top-tier concerns for voters.

TRUTH: Clean air and water rank as top tier concerns that are important to voting decisions. Voters rate clean air and water on par with other top tier political concerns like education, crime and drugs and health care, and generally above taxes and Medicare and Social Security. In addition, in every state polled, a strong majority of voters responded that clean air, clean water and open space were important factors in their voting decision. In all states but one, over 80 percent of voters said that clean air, clean water and open space are “very” or “somewhat” important to their voting decision, most notably the New England region (92 percent), New York and Michigan (91 percent) and Ohio and Wisconsin (90 percent).

“Voters continue to be concerned about the environment, especially clean air and water,” said Beth Schapiro, president of Beth Schapiro and Associates. “Voters rank clean air and water in the top tier with education and health care.”

MYTH: The public thinks that environmental laws go too far.

TRUTH: Voters overwhelmingly support stricter enforcement of environmental laws or stronger laws. Very few voters believe environmental laws should be weakened.

In every state polled, at least 40 percent of voters called for stronger enforcement of existing laws. States giving the strongest mandate for stricter enforcement included Connecticut (63 percent), Ohio and Michigan (60 percent), and Tennessee, Minnesota and Texas (59 percent). On the national poll, 53 percent of likely voters called for stricter enforcement of environmental laws.

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“Voters know that laws exist to protect them and a plurality (usually a strong majority) in each of these states support strong enforcement of existing environmental laws,” said Brian Tringali, partner with The Tarrance Group, a Republican polling firm.

MYTH: Voters believe we must choose between a clean environment and a strong economy.

TRUTH: A strong majority of voters overwhelmingly reject the notion that we must choose between the environment and the economy. Voters recognize compatibility between a clean environment and a strong economy, understanding that the two are not mutually exclusive. In every state polled, over two-thirds of voters believe we can have both a clean environment and healthy economy at the same time without having to choose one over the other. Voters in Alaska (82 percent), Idaho (80 percent), Minnesota (79 percent), Tennessee and Connecticut (both at 78 percent) felt most strongly that a choice does not have to be made.

“Voters strongly reject the notion that we must choose between a strong economy and a clean environment,” said Fred Yang, partner with Garin-Hart-Yang. “This is a false choice for most voters.”

MYTH: In a choice between a pro-environment candidate and a pro-business candidate, the pro-business candidate always wins.

TRUTH: Votes overwhelmingly prefer a pro-environment candidate to a candidate who supports less government regulation on business.

A majority of voters in every state polled except Alaska are more likely to support pro-environment candidates over those who would reduce government regulation on business. In Alaska, a plurality of those polled agreed. Polls on which over three-quarters of voters support the pro-environment candidate include: Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Maryland (82 percent), New York and New England (81 percent), Tennessee (79 percent), the national poll (78 percent), Wisconsin (77 percent) and Ohio (76 percent).

“Lifestyle issues dominate when we have a strong economy,” Tringali said. “The environment is the ultimate lifestyle issue.”

MYTH: Concern about environmental issues is limited to white collar, well-educated voters.

TRUTH: Clean air and clean water are important to a vast majority of voters—period. Young and old, well-educated and uneducated, white, African-American, and Hispanic, white collar and blue collar—voters of all socio-economic backgrounds and of all political stripes are concerned about the quality of their air and water and prefer candidates who vow to protect the environment.

“Clean water and clean air are seen as critical health issues to all segments of the American electorate,” said John Fairbank, president of the Democratic polling firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates. “Our research shows that regardless of their age, gender, race, income or educational attainment, voters consider protecting air, land and water a primary factor in how they vote.”

The League of Conservation Voters Education Fund is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to raising awareness about environmental issues, increasing the capacity and effectiveness of state and local environmental groups, and encouraging citizens to participate in the democratic process. For more information and detailed analysis of the state and national polls, visit the LCV Education Fund Web site at www.VoteEnvironment.org.