



MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: GLEN BOLGER

RE: NEBRASKA STATEWIDE SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

DATE: JANUARY 11, 2011

Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies is pleased to present the key findings from a survey of 500 likely voters in Nebraska. The survey was conducted December 14-16, 2010 and has a margin of error of +4.38% in 95 out of 100 cases.

Key Findings

- Voters strongly favor increasing the state’s tobacco tax to make sure important state priorities have adequate funding. Every other idea tested is much more controversial.***

An increase in the state tobacco tax is the only proposal tested that is supported by a majority of the electorate. Fully 73% of voters favor increasing the tobacco tax, with more than half (56%) strongly favoring it. None of the other proposals tested, which include alternate tax increases and cuts to specified state services, are favored by more than 30% of voters.

Proposal	Total Favor	Total Oppose
Increase the state tobacco tax	73%	26%
Reduce funding for state health care services for low income residents	30%	66%
Increase the state sales tax	30%	69%
Reduce funding for roads and highway construction	29%	68%
Reduce funding for state health care programs, like Medicaid	26%	72%
Increase the state income tax	20%	77%
Increase the state gasoline tax	19%	79%
Reduce funding for K-12 Education	18%	80%

2. *There is overwhelming support for a one dollar and thirty-five cents per pack increase in the tobacco tax to address the budget deficit and fund health care programs.*

Seventy-three percent (73%) of Nebraska voters favor the proposal to increase the state tobacco tax by one dollar and thirty-five cents. Intensity is very strong, with 53% of voters strongly favoring the proposal. There is broad, bipartisan support for the tobacco tax increase – 74% of Republicans, 75% of Independents, and 72% of Democrats back the proposal. A large majority of voters in all of Nebraska’s media markets, in every age group, and across the ideological spectrum favor the proposal as well. Notably, there is virtually no difference in overall support between a one dollar and thirty-five cents tobacco tax increase and a one dollar increase. Seventy-one percent (71%) favor the smaller tax increase, compared to 73% who favor the larger increase.

3. *Voters consider a tobacco tax increase fair and are more likely to support a political candidate who supports it.*

Voters were asked whether a tobacco tax increase is “unfair to smokers because it forces one small group of people to pay for government programs we all use” or “fair because it helps cover the health care costs we all pay through higher taxes and higher insurance premiums to treat diseases caused by smoking.” Fully 63% consider it fair. Additionally, 57% say they are more likely to support a candidate who favors a tobacco tax increase, while only 22% are less likely. A majority (58%) of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats are more likely to support such a candidate as well.

4. *There is also broad based support for taxing tobacco products such as cigars and smokeless tobacco at a rate comparable to cigarettes.*

Regardless of whether the cigarette tax is increased, 82% of Nebraska voters favor taxing other tobacco products at the same rate as cigarettes. Intensity is also quite strong, with 69% saying they strongly favor the change.

The Bottom Line

Nebraska voters overwhelmingly support increasing the state tobacco tax to address the budget deficit and fund health care programs. It is far more popular than other proposed tax increases and state funding cuts. This high level of support cuts across partisan, age, and regional lines. Voters also consider a tobacco tax increase fair and support political candidates who favor the increase.