

OpinionWorks

Finding Insights That Bring Results

**To: Vincent DeMarco, President
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative**

**From: Steve Raabe, President
OpinionWorks**

Date: September 10, 2007

Subject: Maryland Voters Strongly Support Tobacco Tax for Health Care

Overview

Our most recent Maryland voter survey found strong and committed support for a proposed one-dollar increase in the state's tobacco tax which is dedicated to reducing tobacco use and providing better access to health care for the uninsured. More than two-thirds (69%) of likely general election voters in Maryland favor the tobacco tax proposal, while only one-quarter (25%) oppose it. In fact, a solid majority of likely voters statewide - 56% - said they support this measure "strongly."

Furthermore, even when voters were told that Congress may increase the Federal tobacco tax by as much as 61 cents, support for the one dollar Maryland increase held firm. In fact, if anything strong support *strengthened* from 56% to 61% of likely voters with 70% overall saying they favor of the increase. Increasing the Maryland tobacco tax to reduce tobacco use and give better access to health care is supported in all regions of the state and by voters of both major political parties, making it one of the few cross-cutting issues in today's politics.

OpinionWorks interviewed a total of 622 likely Maryland general election voters by telephone August 24 - 26, 2007. This survey has a maximum potential sampling error of $\pm 3.9\%$ at a 95% confidence level. A more detailed methodology statement and background on OpinionWorks are found at the conclusion of this memorandum.

The Tobacco Tax Proposal Enjoys Strong Support

Support for the tobacco tax proposal is rock solid at more than two-thirds of voters in Maryland, and has in fact experienced a slight increase since we last measured it in the Spring of 2006.

While two-thirds of likely voters support the proposed tobacco tax, it is particularly noteworthy that the support is also extremely *firm*, with 82% of the voters who support the proposal saying they hold that view "strongly." This amounts to an outright majority (56%) who *strongly support* the tobacco tax legislation.

Support for One Dollar Maryland Tobacco Tax Increase

	April 2006	August 2007
Strongly favor	55%	56%
Favor, not so strongly	11%	12%
Total Favor	66%	69%
Strongly oppose	23%	19%
Oppose, not so strongly	4%	6%
Total Oppose	28%	25%
Not Sure	6%	7%

Note: Numbers may not appear to add correctly due to rounding.

*"Would you favor or oppose a one dollar per pack increase in the state tobacco tax to help fund a program to reduce tobacco use, particularly among children, and to give uninsured Maryland residents better access to health care?"
 (If Favor/Oppose): "Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?"*

A Federal Tobacco Tax Increase Would Not Dent Support for the State Proposal

Support for a tobacco tax increase in Maryland does not decline when voters are told that Congress is considering an increase in the Federal tobacco tax, as well. In fact, the percentage of voters who "strongly favor" the state proposal grows significantly with this new information.

**Support for Maryland Tobacco Tax Increase
 after being told of Proposed Federal Increase**

	August 2007	Change
Strongly favor	61%	+ 5%
Favor, not so strongly	8%	- 4%
Total Favor	70%	+ 1%
Strongly oppose	21%	+ 2%
Oppose, not so strongly	4%	- 2%
Total Oppose	25%	---
Not Sure	6%	- 1%

*"There is a proposal in Congress that would increase the federal tobacco tax by as much as 61 cents per pack. Knowing this, let me ask you again would you favor or oppose a one dollar per pack increase in the state tobacco tax to reduce tobacco use and give better access to health care?"
 (If Favor/Oppose): "Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?"*

Support for the Tobacco Tax in Maryland Cuts Across All Lines

Significantly, this issue enjoys broad voter support across gender, racial, and even partisan lines as illustrated in the table below:

- ◆ Support among African-American voters is profound and extremely solid. Support for the proposal among Whites is nearly as strong.
- ◆ Not always a voter group to support a proposed tax, about six in ten registered Republicans favor the tobacco tax for health care, with a near-majority doing so strongly.
- ◆ Support is near 70% across all age groups.
- ◆ Men and women exhibit nearly equal levels of support for this proposal.
- ◆ An overwhelming 80% of voters who view Governor O'Malley favorably support this proposal.
- ◆ Even one-third of active smokers support it, as do almost half of those who smoke at least occasionally.

Cross-Cutting Support for Tobacco Tax Increase

	Total in Favor	Strongly Favor
African-Americans	74%	69%
Whites	70%	60%
All Others	62%	62%
Democrats	73%	62%
Republicans	59%	46%
Independents/Others	70%	55%
Under 35	71%	61%
35 - 49	71%	64%
50 - 64	70%	58%
65 or over	69%	63%
Men	68%	61%
Women	71%	62%
O'Malley Favorable	80%	69%
Active Smokers	36%	20%
Smoke at least occasionally	48%	32%

Support by Region of the State

The proposed tobacco tax is supported by voters in every region of the state. While support reaches into the 70s in some of the more metropolitan jurisdictions of the state, it even reaches a solid majority in Maryland's 14 more rural counties:

Tobacco Tax Support by Major Jurisdiction/Region

	Favor	Strongly Favor	Oppose
Prince George's	77%	67%	17%
Greater Washington ¹	73%	61%	20%
Baltimore City	72%	59%	28%
Montgomery	72%	59%	19%
Howard	71%	55%	22%
Baltimore County	69%	54%	27%
Greater Baltimore ²	68%	55%	27%
Southern Maryland ³	65%	59%	30%
Anne Arundel	64%	54%	24%
Western Maryland ⁴	62%	48%	30%
Rural Counties ⁵	59%	46%	32%
Eastern Shore ⁶	56%	45%	32%

¹ Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's

² Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll, Harford, Howard

³ Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's

⁴ Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, Washington

⁵ 14 smallest counties: Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico, Worcester

⁶ Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, Worcester

How This Survey Was Conducted

OpinionWorks interviewed 622 likely Maryland voters by telephone August 24 – 26, 2007. This likely voter sample carries a potential margin of sampling error of no more than $\pm 3.9\%$ at a 95% confidence level. That means that, 95% of the time, the survey results would differ from the actual views of likely voters statewide by no more than 3.9% if every likely voter in Maryland had been interviewed.

Interviewees were drawn from a current database of registered voters, provided by the local boards of elections across the state and matched with telephone numbers by a commercial vendor. Voters were selected randomly to be interviewed if they had voted in either of the last two general elections, or had registered to vote since then. Voters were then screened to ensure they intend to vote next November. Weights were applied to bring the voter sample into strict compliance with normal turnout patterns within seven regions of the state based on gender, partisanship, and race or ethnicity.

Brief Background on OpinionWorks

OpinionWorks' principal, Steve Raabe, has been writing and conducting surveys of Maryland voters dating back to 1992 on numerous issues, as well as conducting surveys in several neighboring states and nationally. OpinionWorks currently is the polling organization for *The* (Baltimore) *Sun*; the identical methodology has been applied to this voter survey.

OpinionWorks' clients include Lutheran World Relief, The Wilderness Society, the New York Office of the Mayor, Bassett Healthcare, The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Administration, The American Air Museum in Britain, and the American Society of Interior Designers, among others.