



March 7, 2016

TO: Glenn Oppel

FROM: Erik Iverson

RE: Montana Chamber Power-Base Voter Survey Results: Spring 2016

*Methodology: A total of 800 telephone interviews were conducted February 20-21, 2016 among a representative sample of registered voters in Montana. Interviews were conducted using live interviewers and included landline and cell phones. The sampling error is plus or minus 3% at the 95% confidence level.*

## SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

### Perceptions of Montana Organizations

Business organizations like Montana's Chamber of Commerce are well-regarded by voters throughout the state (66% favorable/13% unfavorable). Voters are less positive about labor unions like the AFL-CIO (39/32%) and environmental groups like Montana Conservation Voters (45/30%). Voters are least familiar and least impressed with Montana trial lawyers (29/22%).

When voters are asked to describe how much influence they believe these same organizations should have over public policy decisions in the state, voters are most likely to be satisfied with the level of influence of business organizations like the Chamber have (41% right amount). Still, 21% would like to see more influence from businesses and 22% would like to see less. At the same time, voters with an opinion about how much influence labor unions, environmental groups and the trial lawyers should have on public policy decisions would prefer each have less influence.

The Chamber's positive image is also revealed when voters are asked which of three candidates they are most likely to vote for: a candidate endorsed by the Montana Chamber of Commerce is most popular (for 41%), followed by a candidate endorsed by environmental groups (20%) or a candidate endorsed by labor unions (18%).

### Perceptions of Montana Businesses

Voters hold Montana's businesses in high regard, as evidenced by the following:

- Nearly seven-in-ten (69%) say the state's business community deserves the most credit for economic growth, while just 17% would attribute economic growth to public officials.
- Majorities of voters trust that Montana businesses can be expected to do the right thing to protect the environment and treat their workers fairly when it comes to workplace benefits.
- Additionally, 53% believe "businesses can be trusted to take good care of the state's natural resources and the government should intervene only in the worst cases," but 40% say "many businesses will cut corners and damage the environment unless strong government rules and regulations are in place."

- Montanans are more than twice as likely to say they “trust businesses to follow the rules set for them” than they are to believe “businesses can’t be trusted to follow rules” (63-28%).
- Fully 77% say businesses get things done more efficiently than government.

### **Roads & Infrastructure**

The majority of voters in the state are satisfied with the condition of roads and infrastructure in the state today. When it comes to paying for potential infrastructure improvements:

- A plurality of voters (48%) say the state legislature isn’t spending enough on infrastructure in the state, compared to 38% who say the state legislature is spending the right amount.
- Increasing the state tax on gasoline and diesel to pay for roads, highways and bridges throughout the state is favored by a 52-41% margin. After hearing that the state gas tax was last raised in 1993, that fuel economy has reduced revenues and highway construction costs have gone up by 68%, 56% are more likely and 28% less likely to support increasing the state tax on gasoline and diesel.

### **Other Issues**

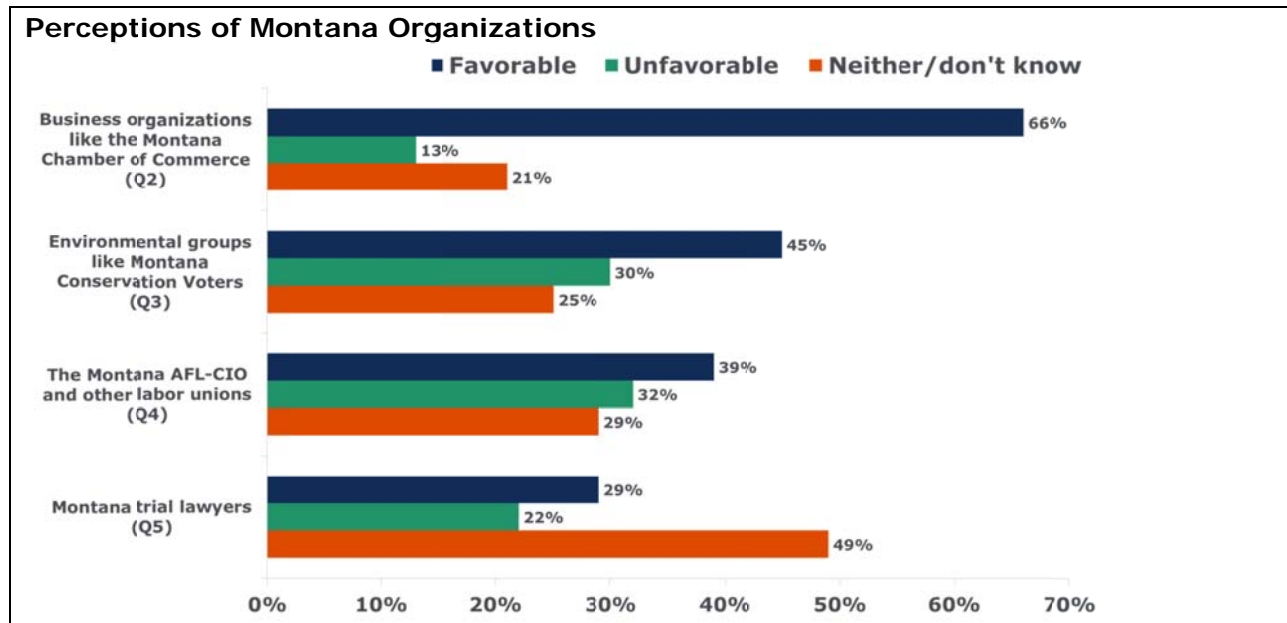
- Nearly six-in-ten voters (59%) want Governor Bullock to fight the federal government on the Clean Power Plan for making Montana pay too much for rules that will have limited impact on global climate change, while just 28% support federal government rules in order to reduce state carbon emissions, even if it means higher electricity prices and job losses.
- More than three-in-four voters (78%) say they bank at a locally-owned banking institution, while 13% bank with a financial institution located outside Montana. “Convenient locations/branches” is the most important reason for choosing an out-of-state bank.
- There is nearly universal agreement among 90% of voters that “holding Montana’s public schools to high academic standards is an essential component of ensuring that Montana children remain competitive in a global economy.” Just 6% disagree.
- 84% agree that railroads, in addition to other modes of transportation are a critical means of delivering new American crude oil production to U.S. markets; just 10% disagree and 6% have no opinion.

More details follow.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Perceptions of Organizations

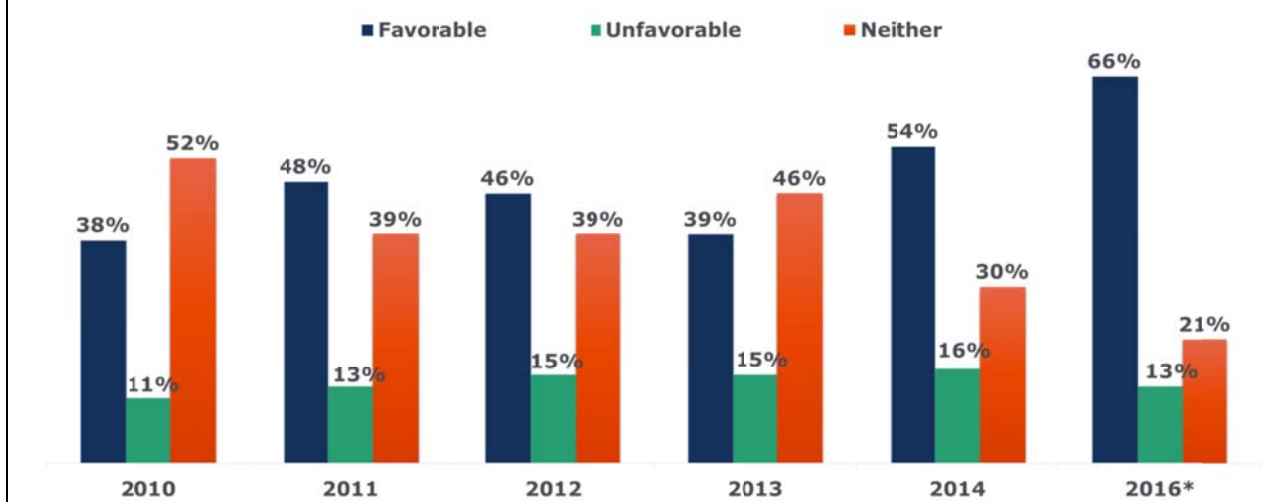
Voters hold “business organizations like the Montana Chamber of Commerce” in high regard (66% favorable/13% unfavorable) and are also positive about “environmental groups like Montana Conservation Voters,” but to a lesser degree (45% favorable/30% unfavorable). Voters are even less impressed with “the Montana AFL-CIO and other labor unions,” which garner only slightly more positive than negative ratings (39% favorable/32% unfavorable). Voters are not as likely to have an opinion of “Montana trial lawyers” and those with an opinion are narrowly positive (29% favorable/22% unfavorable).



As the following chart shows, the Montana Chamber of Commerce has consistently enjoyed a positive image in surveys conducted in 2010-2014. In our current survey, we tested voter perceptions of “Business organizations like the Montana Chamber of Commerce” so results are not directly comparable to past surveys, which specifically tested perceptions of the “Montana Chamber of Commerce.” However, it is worth noting that perceptions continue to be positive.

Looking at key subgroups, business organizations like the Montana Chamber enjoy a positive image throughout the state among men and women of all ages. Republicans are among the most impressed (73% favorable/6% unfavorable), but sentiment is positive among Democrats (60/20%) and Independents as well (64/13%).

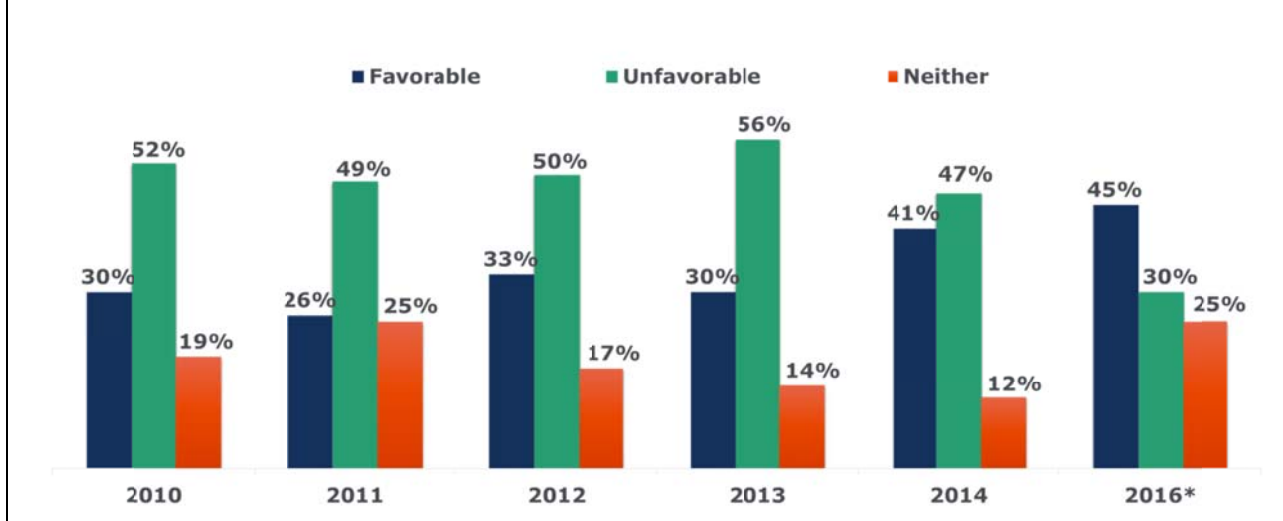
**Montana Chamber of Commerce: *Historic Image Ratings***



In our current survey, we tested voter reactions to “environmental groups like Montana Conservation Voters,” so results are not directly comparable. In the past, we have asked voters their impressions of “environmental groups,” which has yielded negative perceptions, as shown in the following table.

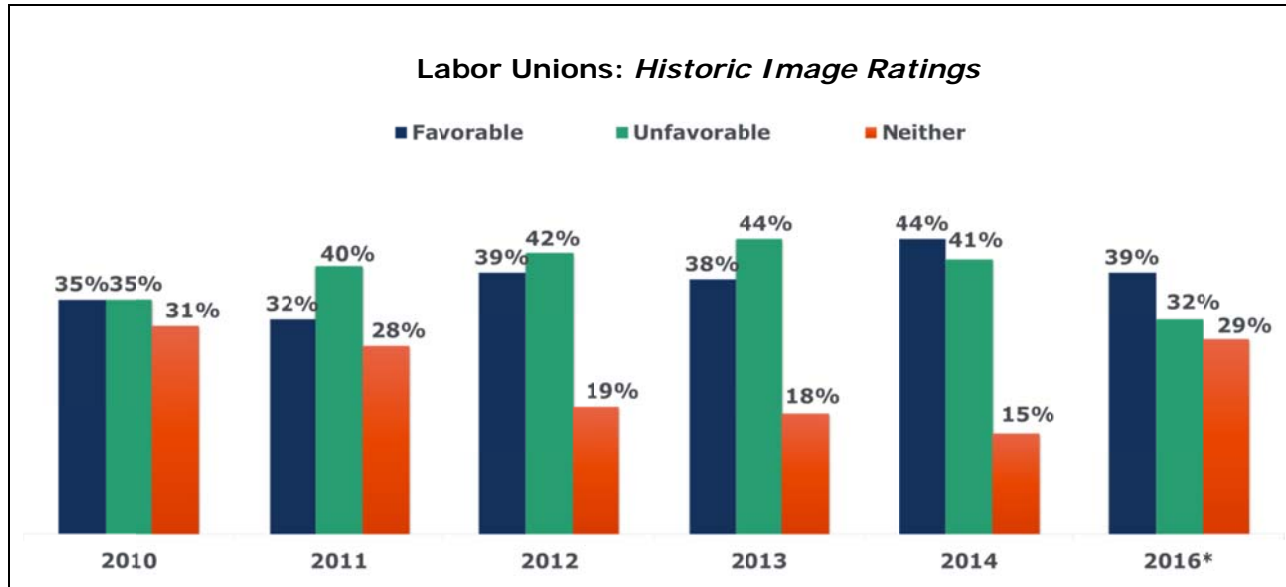
Key subgroup reactions reveal the following groups have favorable impressions of “environmental groups like Montana Conservation Voters” women, voters age 18-44, Independents and Democrats. At the same time, men and voters age 45+ are divided in their perceptions and Republicans are negative. Regionally, residents of the Missoula TV Market are most positive, but overall voters are also more positive than negative elsewhere in the state.

**Environmental Groups: *Historic Image Ratings***



Perceptions of “labor unions” have been negative or divided in each survey since 2010. In this survey when we asked voter perceptions of “labor unions like AFL-CIO” voters were narrowly positive (39% favorable/32% unfavorable), so results are not directly comparable.

The most significant differences in the current survey are by partisan vote behavior; majorities of Republicans are unimpressed with labor unions like the AFL-CIO, while wide majorities of Democrats are positive. Independents are much less likely to have an opinion, but those with an opinion are narrowly positive. Households with union members are widely favorable but non-union households are divided.

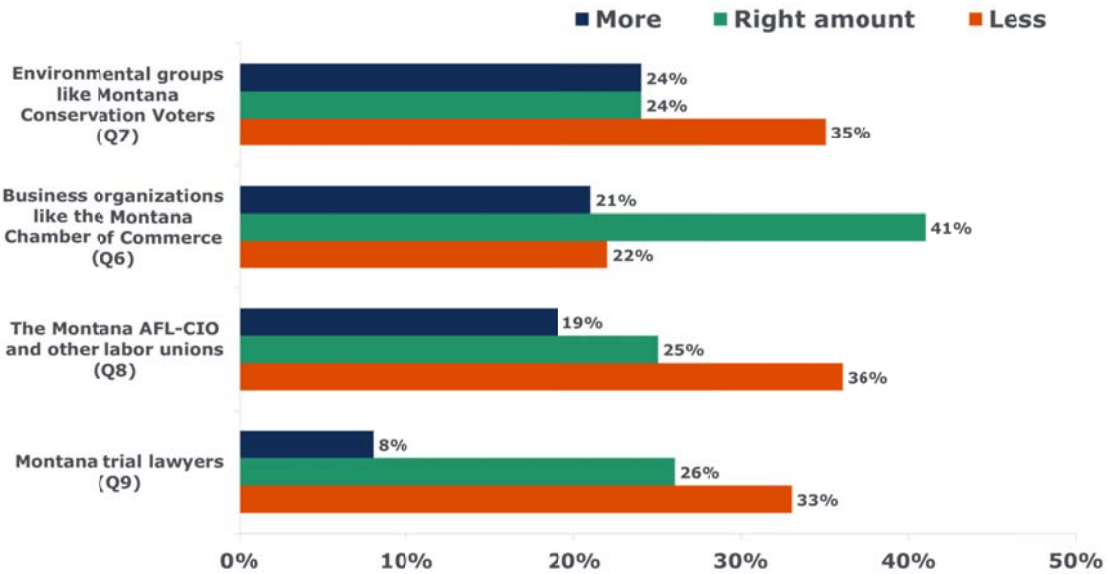


For the first time, we also measured perceptions of “trial lawyers.” Voters in the state are not as likely to have an opinion about trial lawyers as the other groups tested in the survey and those with an opinion are only lukewarm (29% favorable, 22% unfavorable, 49% don’t know). Partisan vote behavior reveals the biggest differences in sentiment; Democrats are positive, but Republicans are unimpressed and Independents are divided.

When voters are asked to describe how much influence they believe these same organizations should have over public policy decisions in the state, voters are most likely to be satisfied with the level of influence of business organizations like the Chamber (41% right amount). Still, 21% would like to see more influence from businesses and 22% would like to see less. At the same time, voters with an opinion about how much influence labor unions, environmental groups and the trial lawyers should have on public policy decisions would prefer each have less influence. Results are shown in the following chart.

### Preferred Influence of Organizations on Public Policy

"For each one – in your opinion – should the organization have less influence, more influence, or do they have about the right amount of influence over public policy decisions in Montana?"

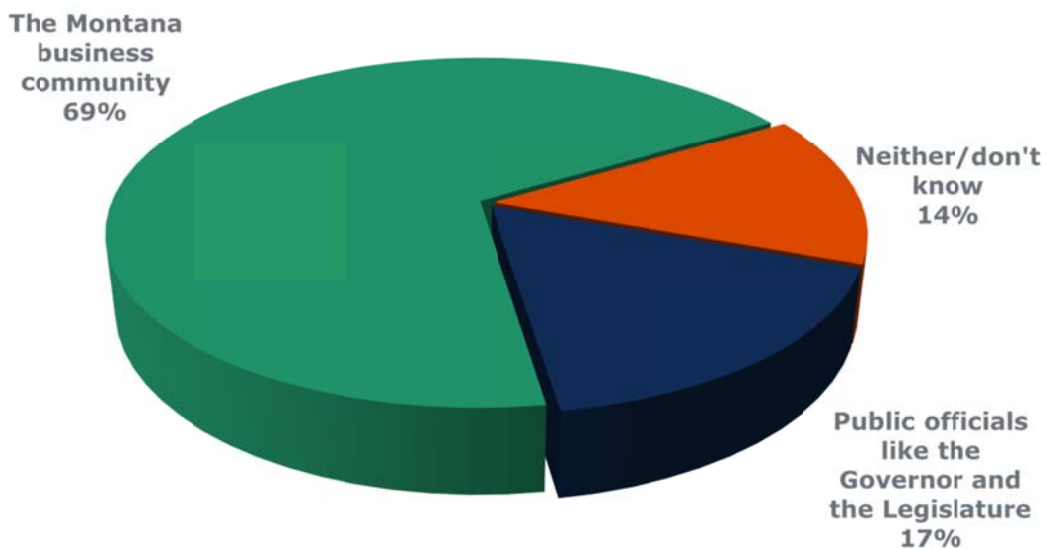


### Economic Growth

There is widespread consensus among Montanans that the state's business community deserves the most credit for economic growth (69%), while just 17% would attribute economic growth to public officials, like the Governor and State Legislature. Another 6% say neither should get the credit and 9% have no opinion. There is consensus agreement among all subgroups that the business community deserves the most credit for Montana's economic growth, but this sentiment is more widespread among Republicans (84%) than Independents (63%) or Democrats (54%).

### Who Deserves Most Credit for Economic Growth in Montana?

"Generally speaking, who do you think deserves the most credit for economic growth in Montana?"

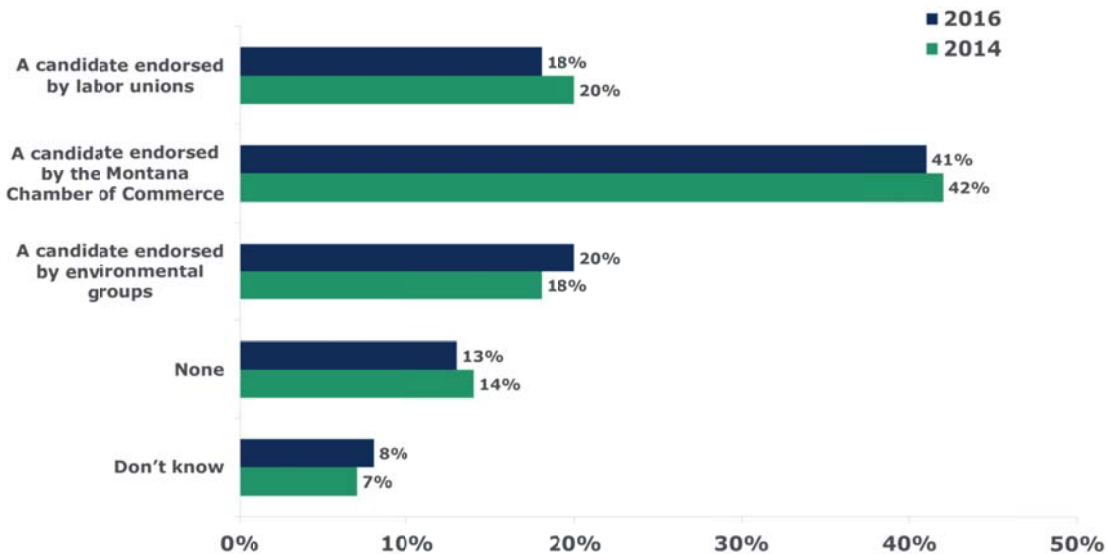


## Impact of Candidate Endorsements

When asked which of three candidates voters are more likely to support, a candidate endorsed by the Montana Chamber of Commerce is most popular (for 41%), followed by a candidate endorsed by environmental groups (20%) or by labor unions (18%). Another 13% say none and 8% don't have an opinion on the matter. Results were statistically identical on this question in the 2014 survey (42% Chamber candidate, 20% labor unions, 18% environmental groups).

### Impact of Candidate Endorsements: *Historic Trends*

"And which one of the following candidates are you most likely to vote for?"



Looking at key subgroups, among Republicans a Chamber endorsed candidate is widely preferred (by 64%) and a Chamber endorsed candidate is also preferred among Independents over a labor union or environmental group candidate. Democrats, Democrat women and Democrats age 18-54 are most likely to vote for a candidate endorsed by environmental groups, but for Democrat men and older Democrats, sentiment is divided between a candidate endorsed by labor unions or one endorsed by environmental groups.

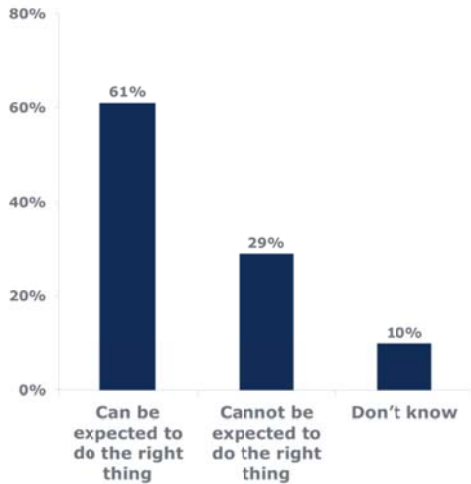
Not surprising, voters in union households are among the most likely to say they would vote for a candidate endorsed by labor unions, but still, only 34% of union households would vote for a labor union candidate, with nearly as many (28%) preferring a Chamber endorsed candidate and another 18% prefer an environmental group backed candidate.

## Perceptions of Montana Businesses

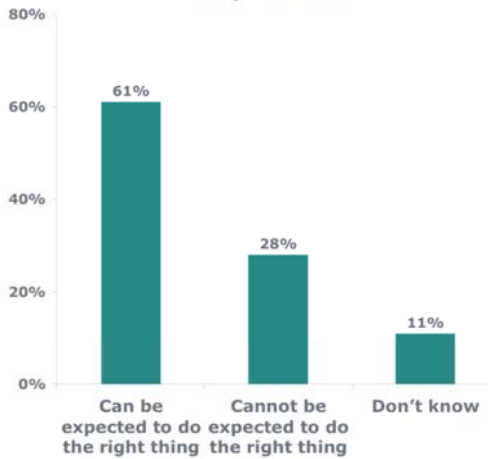
Fully 61% of voters say business and industry in Montana can be expected to do the right thing when it comes to protecting the environment, while just 29% disagree. In addition, by a 61-28% margin, voters believe Montana businesses can be expected to do the right thing when it comes to treating workers fairly when deciding on health care coverage, retirement and other workplace benefits.

## Montana Businesses Can Be Trusted to do Right Thing

"Thinking about business and industry in Montana, do you think Montana businesses can or cannot be expected to do the right thing **when it comes to protecting the environment?**"

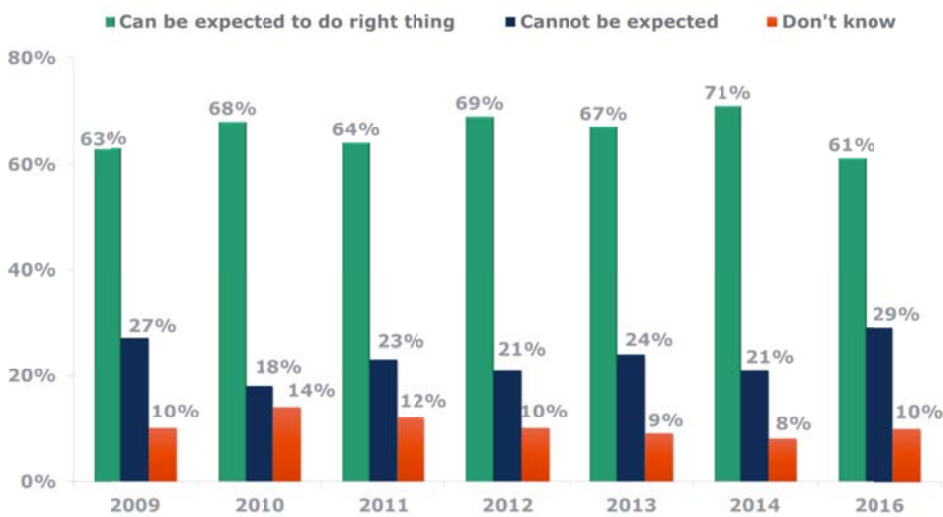


"Thinking about business and industry in Montana, do you think Montana businesses can or cannot be expected to do the right thing **when it comes to treating workers fairly when deciding on health care coverage, retirement and other workplace benefits?**"



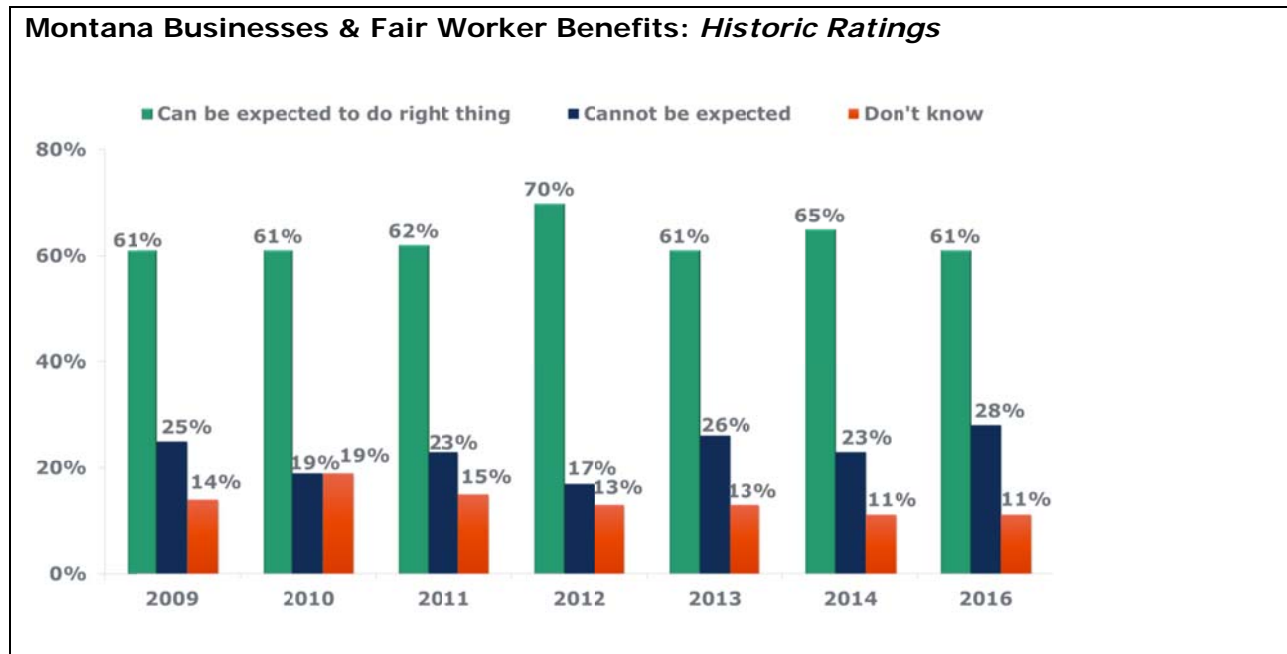
Looking back at past survey results since 2009, we find more than six-in-ten voters in each survey have said they believe Montana businesses can be trusted to do the right thing when it comes to protecting the environment. However, voters are less likely today than in recent years to say Montana businesses can be expected to do the right thing when it comes to protecting the environment. When comparing sentiment today with sentiment in the 2014 survey, we find the decline has occurred across the board; however, the biggest declines have occurred among Independents, residents of the Butte/Helena TV Market and those residing in Eastern Montana outside the major TV markets.

## Montana Businesses & Protecting the Environment: *Historic Ratings*





Looking at voter sentiment regarding treating workers fairly when deciding on health care coverage, retirement and other workplace benefits in each survey since 2009 and including in the current survey, we find more than six-in-ten voters believe Montana businesses can be expected to do the right thing in these instances. Still, voters are less likely today than in 2014 to share this sentiment and we find the biggest declines have occurred among Democrats, Independents and voters age 55-64.



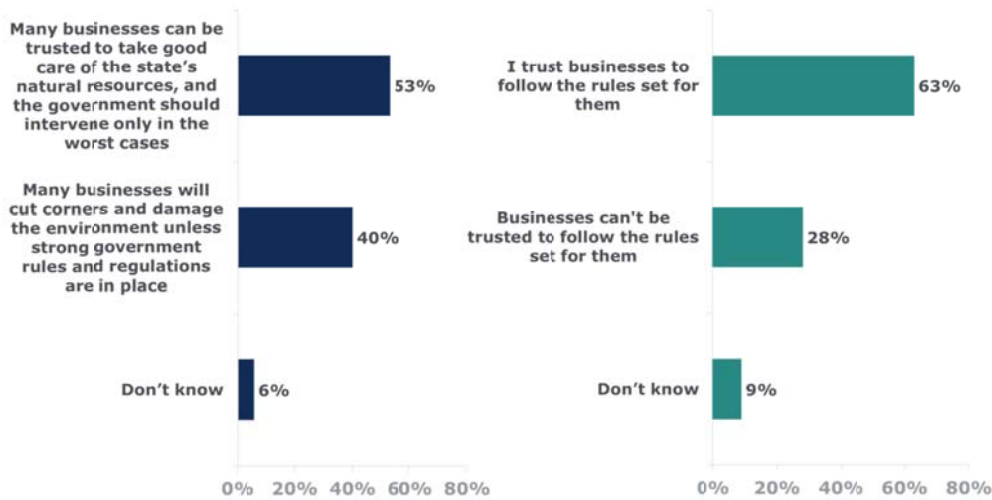
We also explored voter perceptions of businesses by asking them which viewpoints they agree with most regarding businesses and government. The majority (53%) believes “many businesses can be trusted to take good care of the state’s natural resources and the government should intervene only in the worst cases,” but 40% say “many businesses will cut corners and damage the environment unless strong government rules and regulations are in place.”

By party, Republicans widely agree businesses can be trusted, but Democrats widely disagree and Independents are divided. Regionally, voters in the Missoula and Butte/Helena TV Markets are divided, but elsewhere in the state majorities of voters agree businesses can be trusted to take good care of the state’s natural resources.

In addition, by a better than 2:1 margin, Montanans “trust businesses to follow the rules set for them.” Specifically, 63% have trust in businesses while just 28% say “businesses can’t be trusted to follow rules” and 9% have no opinion. There is consensus agreement on this issue among most voter subgroups, however, there is an exception. Democrats age 55+ are more likely to believe businesses “can’t be trusted to follow rules set for them,” but younger Democrats and voters in all other subgroups say they “trust businesses to follow the rules set for them.”

## Businesses & Trust

"I am going to read you a pair of statements, and I want you to tell me which statement you agree with most."

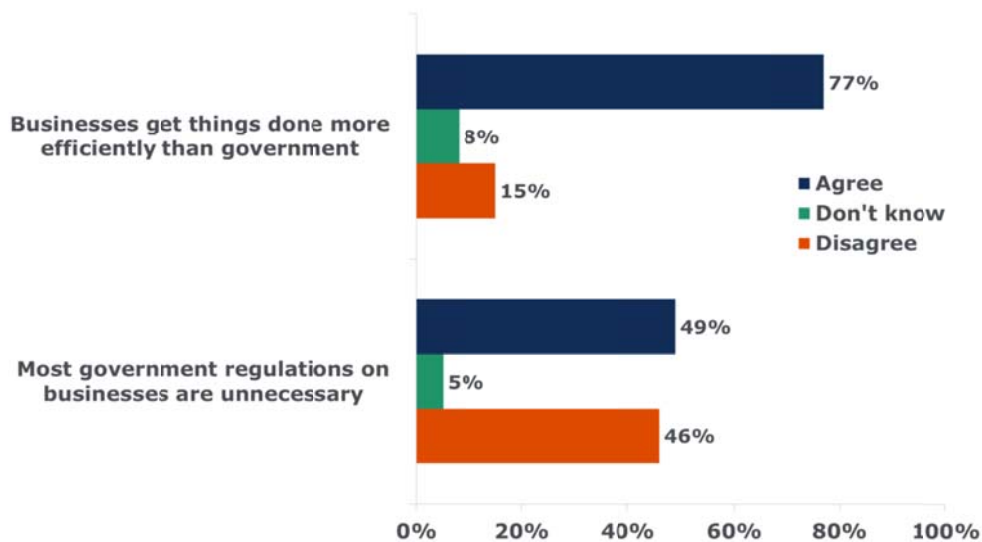


In another pair of statements, more than three-quarters (77%) of voters agree "businesses get things done more efficiently than government," compared to just 15% who disagree. There is consensus agreement among majorities in all subgroups.

At the same time, voters are divided on regulations; 49% agree "most government regulations on businesses are unnecessary," but another 46% disagree. The biggest differences in sentiment on this issue are by partisan vote behavior, with majorities of Republicans agreeing most regulations are unnecessary and majorities of Democrats disagreeing. Independents are divided.

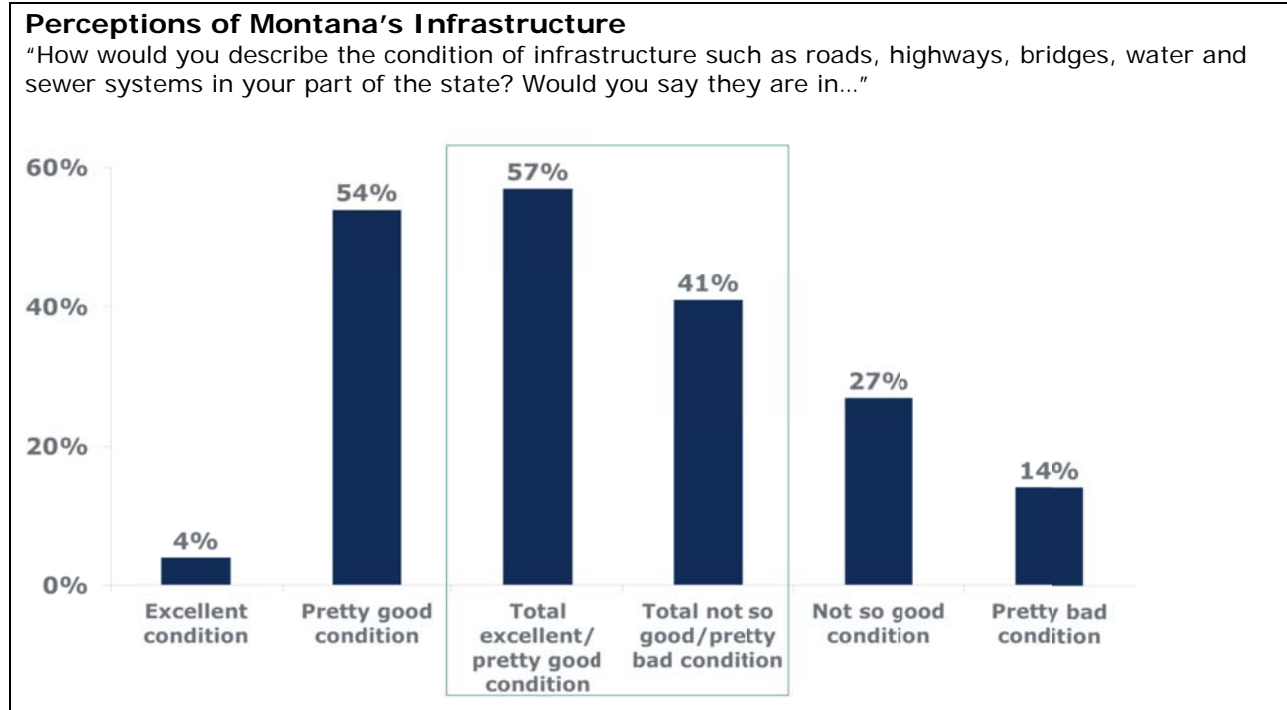
## Business vs. Government

"Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following."



## Montana's Infrastructure

The majority of voters in the state (57%) describe roads, highways, bridges, water and sewer systems in their part of the state as being in excellent/pretty good condition, while 41% are unimpressed, describing local infrastructure to be in not so good/pretty bad condition.

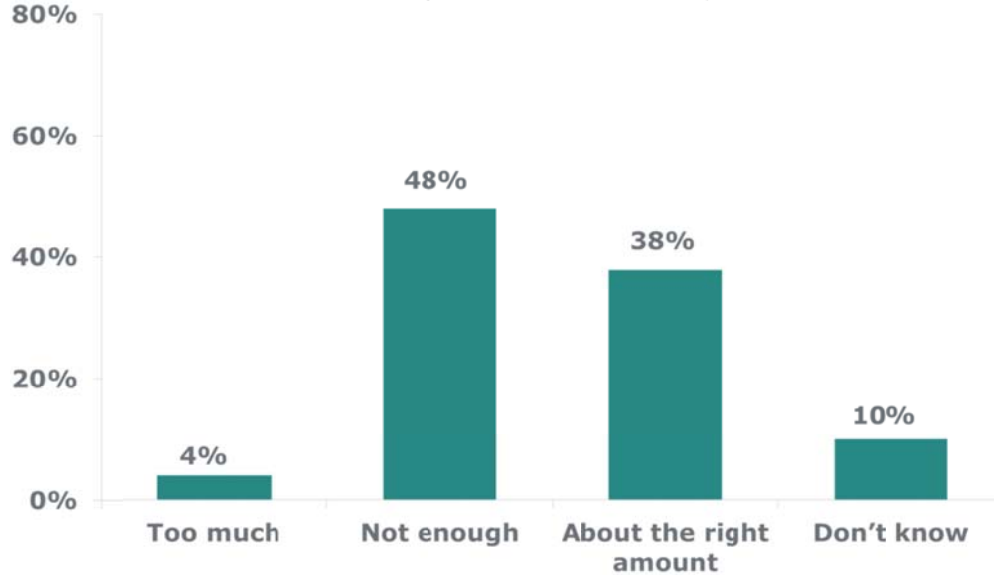


Regionally, voters in much of the state rate Montana's infrastructure positively, but the exception is voters who reside outside the major TV Markets; in Eastern Montana 68% say the state's infrastructure is not so good/pretty bad, compared to just 32% who rate it excellent/pretty good.

In terms of spending levels on infrastructure, a plurality of voters (48%) say the state legislature isn't spending enough on infrastructure in the state, but 38% say they are spending the right amount and 4% say too much. Another 10% have no opinion. By partisan vote behavior, Republicans say the legislature is spending about the right amount, but a plurality of Independents and a majority of Democrats say the legislature isn't spending enough. Additionally, voters who describe the state's infrastructure as excellent/pretty good are satisfied with the spending levels but voters who perceive infrastructure as being not so good/pretty bad say the legislature isn't spending enough.

### Legislative Spending Levels on Montana Infrastructure

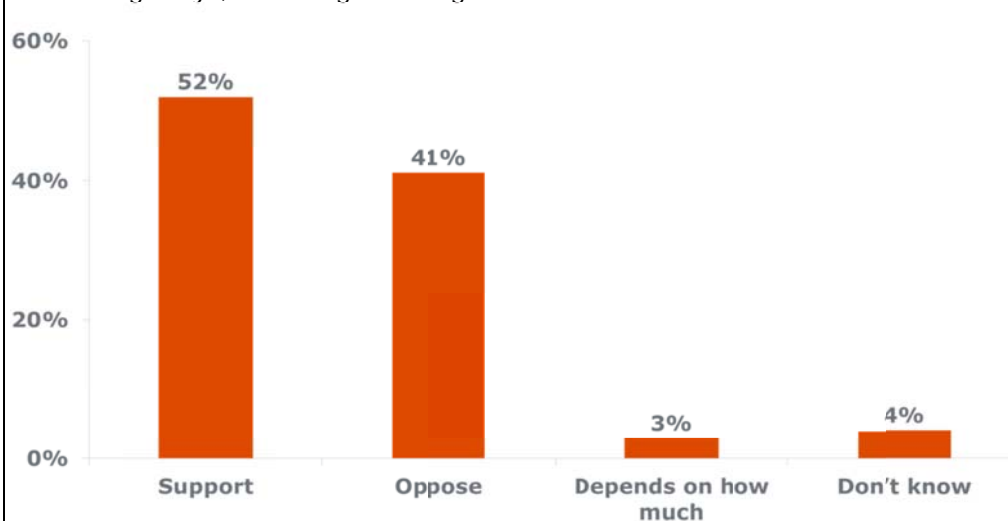
"In your opinion, how would you describe the state legislature's level of spending on Montana's infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, water and sewer systems?"



Increasing the state tax on gasoline and diesel to pay for roads, highways and bridges throughout the state is favored by a 52-41% margin. Another 3% say it depends how much the tax is and 4% have no opinion. Majorities of Republicans and Independents are opposed, but fully 74% of Democrats support raising the state gas tax for this purpose. In addition, there is also support for raising the gas tax among voters residing in the Missoula and Butte/Helena TV Markets, among women, voters age 18-44 and seniors. Sentiment is divided among men and voters age 45-64.

### Increasing State Gas/Diesel Tax

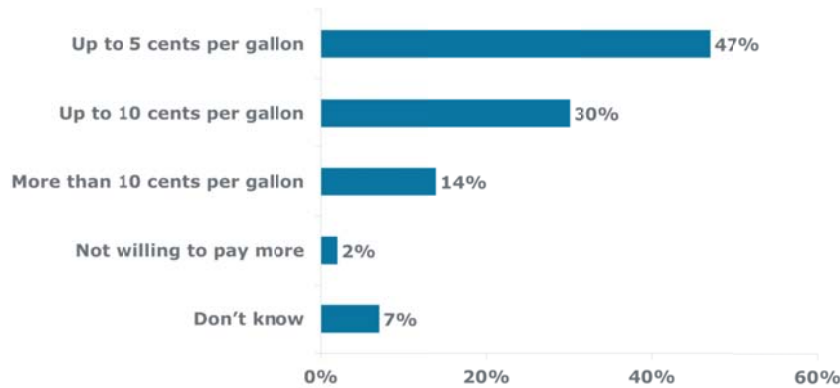
"Would you support or oppose increasing the state tax on gasoline and diesel to pay for roads, highways, and bridges throughout the state?"



Among voters not opposed to a state gas tax to pay for roads/highways/bridges in the state (including voters who support increasing the tax or are undecided), 47% are willing to pay up to 5 cents per gallon more, 30% would pay up to 10 cents more and 14% would pay more than 10 cents. The majority of Democrats (51%) are willing to pay up to 10 cents/more than 10 cents, but Republicans aren't willing to spend as much – a majority of Republicans (56%) would pay only up to 5 cents more per gallon.

**Willingness to Pay More per Gallon**

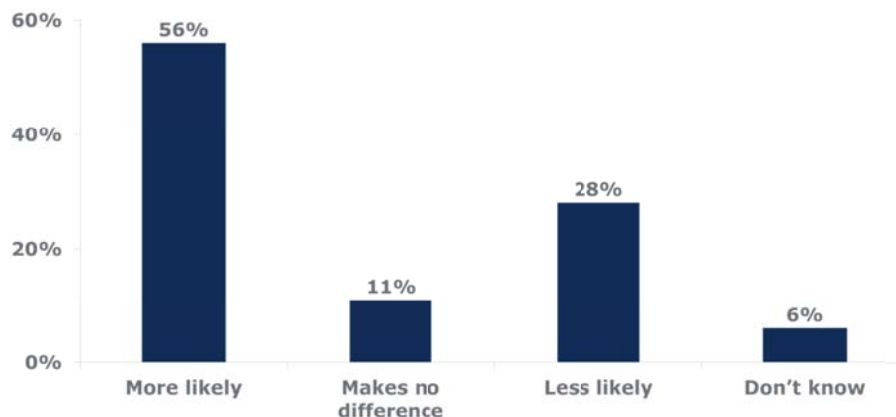
(N=472 voters not opposed to increasing state gas tax)



After hearing that the state gas tax was last raised in 1993, that fuel economy has reduced revenues and highway construction costs have gone up by 68%, 56% are more likely and 28% less likely to support increasing the state tax on gasoline and diesel. Another 11% say this information makes no difference. This information is most likely to have a positive impact on support for increasing gas tax among Republican men and voters who reside outside the major TV markets (Eastern Montana).

**Messaging: State Gas Tax Increase**

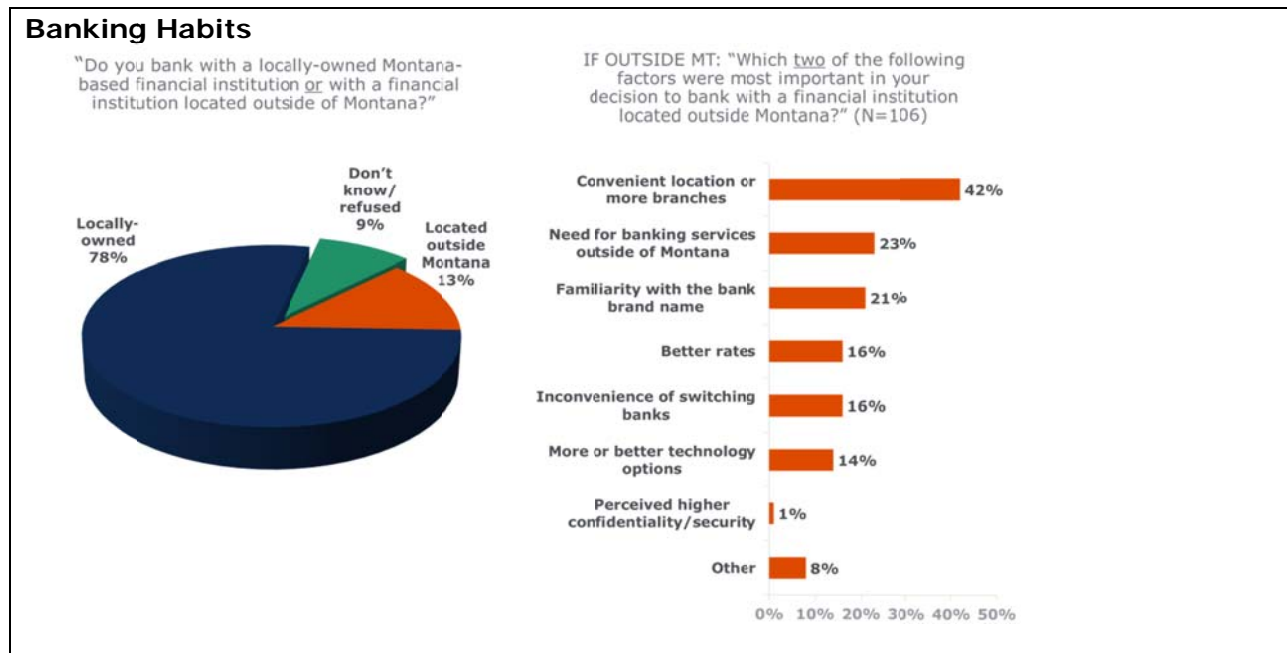
“Would you be more likely or less likely to support increasing the state tax on gasoline and diesel to pay for roads, highways, and bridges throughout the state if you knew that the state tax on gasoline and diesel was last raised in 1993, fuel economy has reduced revenues, and highway construction costs have gone up by 68% since that time?”



## Banking Habits

More than three-in-four voters (78%) say they bank at a locally-owned banking institution, while 13% say they bank with a “financial institution located outside Montana.” Most likely to use financial institutions located outside Montana are voters age 18-44 (24% vs. 8% of voters age 45+).

When voters who bank with financial institutions outside the state were asked which two factors were most important in choosing that institution, “convenient locations/branches” is far and away the top reason (mentioned by 42%), followed by “need for banking services outside Montana” (23%), “familiarity with bank brand name” (21%), “better rates” (16%), “inconvenience of switching banks” (16%) and “more or better technology options” (14%).



### MT Clean Power Plan

By a 59-28% margin, voters want Governor Bullock to fight the federal government on the Clean Power Plan for making Montana pay too much for rules that will have limited impact on global climate change, rather than support federal government rules in order to reduce state carbon emissions, even if it means higher electricity prices and job losses.

#### Montana Clean Power Plan

"The Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA has imposed new power plant emissions regulations, known as the Clean Power Plan in order to reduce state carbon emissions.

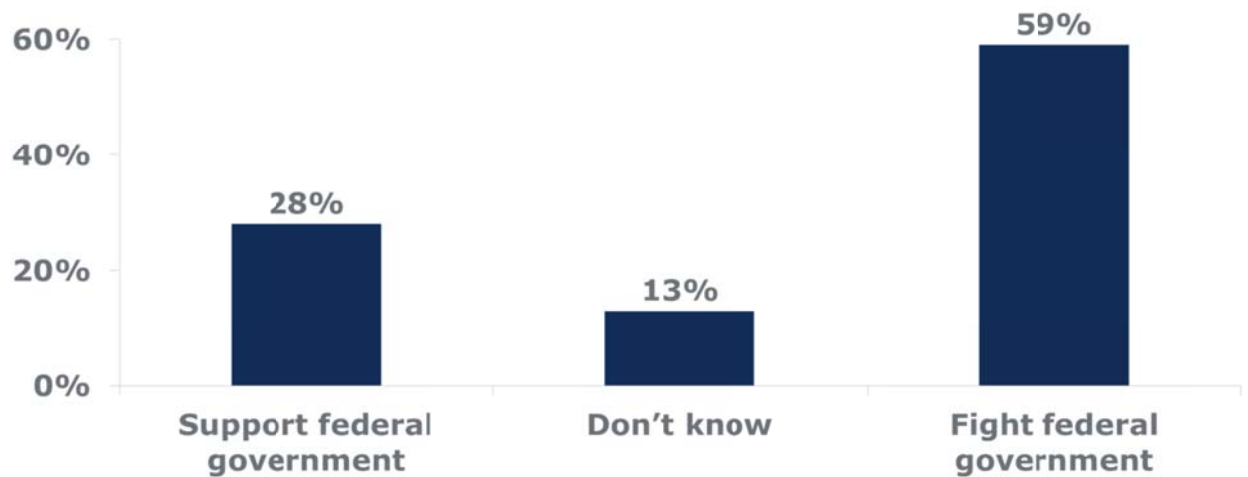
Montana's reduction target under the Clean Power Plan is the biggest in the nation. Meeting the target will mean higher electricity prices and significant job losses in Montana even though the EPA itself says the rule may reduce global carbon dioxide, or CO2 levels by about one percent if fully effective.

Do you believe that Governor Bullock should,

Support these federal government rules even if it means higher electricity prices and job losses

OR

Fight the federal government on this issue for making Montana pay too much for rules that will have limited impact on global climate change?"



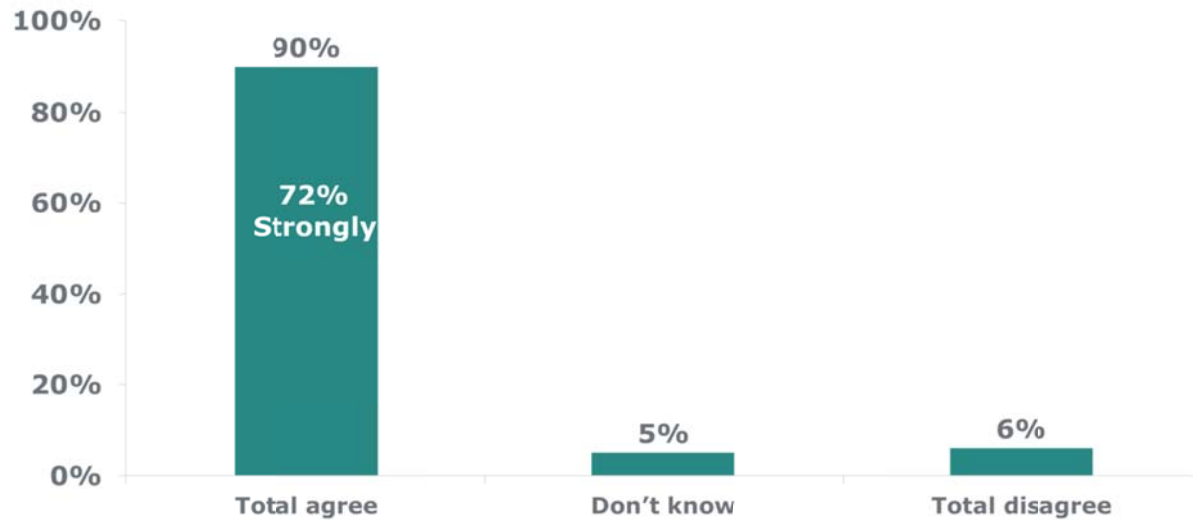
By partisan vote behavior, most Republicans want Governor Bullock to fight the federal government on this issue (82% of Republicans want him to fight vs. 9% who support the federal government), as do a majority of Independents (61-23%). However, among Democrats, 52% support the federal government rules and just 32% want Bullock to fight the federal government.

### Other Issues

There is nearly universal agreement (among 90% of voters) that “holding Montana’s public schools to high academic standards is an essential component of ensuring that Montana children remain competitive in a global economy.” Just 6% disagree. There is consensus agreement among all subgroups throughout the state.

#### High Academic Standards in Public Schools

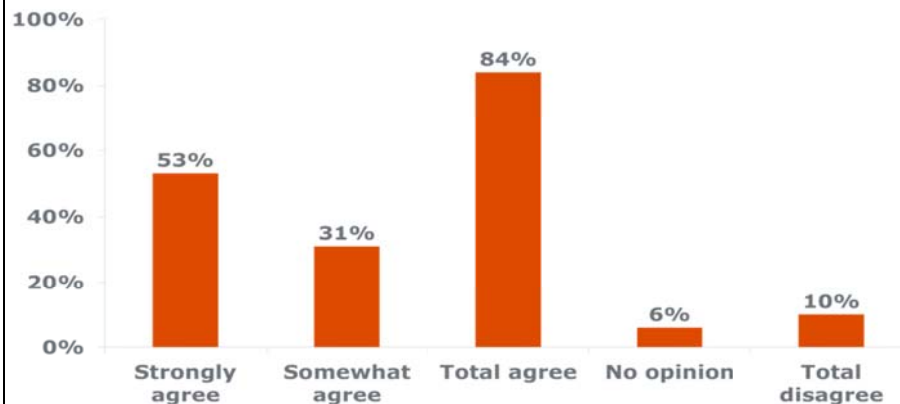
“Do you agree or disagree that holding Montana’s public schools to high academic standards is an essential component of ensuring that Montana children remain competitive in a global economy?”



The vast majority (84%) agree that railroads, in addition to other modes of transportation, are a critical means of delivering new American crude oil production to U.S. markets. Just 10% disagree and 6% have no opinion. Agreement is widespread throughout the state among Republicans, Democrats and Independents, alike.

#### Railroads

“Growth in North American crude oil production is an opportunity for the U.S. to become less dependent on oil imported from overseas. Do you agree or disagree that railroads, in addition to other modes of transportation, are a critical means of delivering new American production to U.S. markets.”





## CONCLUSION

Our survey of 800 voters statewide in Montana in February 2016 reveals Montana's businesses and Chamber of Commerce continue to be well-regarded; voters are positive about business organizations like the Montana Chamber and continue to be more likely to vote for candidates endorsed by the Chamber over candidates endorsed by labor unions or environmental groups. Additionally, voters also trust Montana businesses to do the right thing in terms of protecting workers and the environment and are more likely to credit business over public officials for economic growth in the state.