



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: LORI WEIGEL & KAROLINE RICHARDSON, PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES
DAVID METZ, FAIRBANK, MASLIN, MAULLIN, METZ & ASSOCIATES

DATE: JULY 18, 2012

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF NEW MEXICO VOTERS REGARDING TOXIC
CHEMICALS

The bipartisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies (R) and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) recently completed a survey of 503 likely voters in New Mexico regarding their perceptions of government regulation of chemicals.¹ The survey results show that voters in New Mexico overwhelmingly support reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act, with nearly half saying that they would strongly back the reform given the description provided. Voters in every area of the state, across the political spectrum, and of every demographic sub-group support reform. This support remains strong even after state voters hear arguments from both supporters and opponents of the proposed legislation. Support appears to be grounded in a strong sense that exposure to toxic chemicals in day-to-day life poses a serious threat.

Specifically, the survey found that:

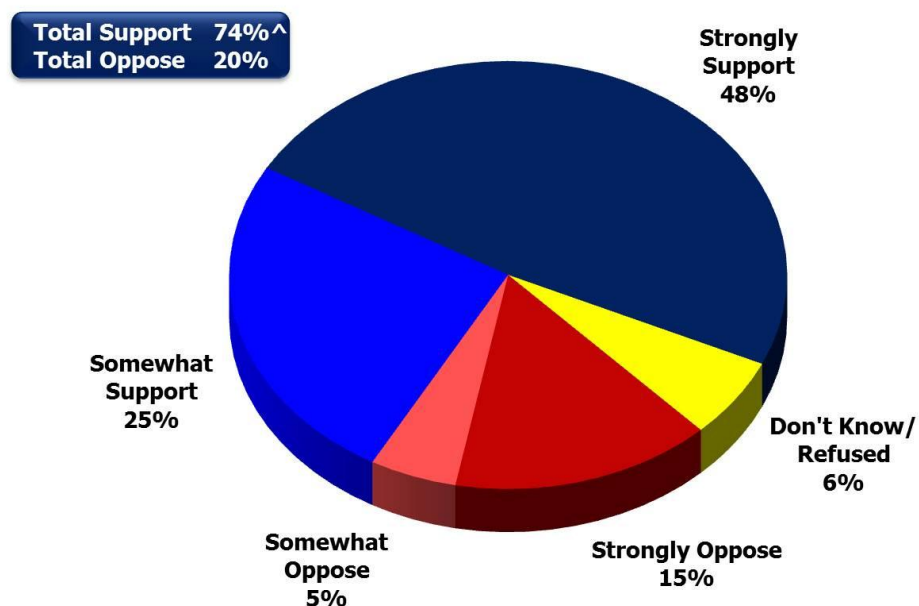
- **New Mexico voters are concerned about the effects of exposure to toxic chemicals in day to day life.** Over three-quarters of likely voters (76 percent) think that the threat posed to people's health by the exposure to toxic chemicals is serious, and over a third (42 percent) say they think the threat is "very serious." A mere five percent say they think the threat is not serious at all. A majority of every single sub-group indicates concern about the threat to public health from toxic chemicals present in everyday life.

¹ **Methodology:** Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates and Public Opinion Strategies conducted a telephone survey of N=503 likely voters in New Mexico. The survey was conducted June 28 – July 1, 2012 and has an overall margin of error of +4.38%. Sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Interviews were distributed proportionally throughout the state, and are demographically representative of the electorate. Interviews were conducted both on traditional land lines and cell phones and in both English and Spanish.

- **Most voters support “stricter regulation of chemicals produced and used in everyday products.”** Fully 71 percent of voters indicate support for stricter regulation, with support throughout every region of the state and evident among all demographic sub-groups. In principle, only a quarter (24 percent) say they oppose stricter government regulation. Strikingly, majorities of voters representing every political sub-group indicate support for stricter regulation, including majorities of GOP voters (62 percent), Independents (76 percent) and Democrats (75 percent). Moreover, key groups typically opposed to government regulation make an exception when it comes to chemicals, including self-described conservatives (58 percent) and Tea Party supporters (56 percent).
- **There is even stronger support for specific legislation to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act, with almost three-quarters (74 percent) backing such a plan.** Respondents were provided with a brief explanation of a proposal to reform current law governing chemicals and then asked for their opinion of it:

One proposal that may be considered in Congress is to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act that was passed in 1976 that provides the Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, with the authority to regulate chemicals. Under this plan, all chemical manufacturers would be required to show their chemicals are safe in order to sell them, and the EPA would be able to limit some or all uses of a chemical that may harm the public health or the environment.

As one can see in the following graph, support is intense as nearly half of voters (48 percent) strongly support the specifics.



- **Support for reforming the law is wide-spread and broad-based.** Majorities of all key sub-groups of voters support this proposal to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), including:
 - 81 percent of women and 65 percent of men;
 - 78 percent of voters in Bernalillo county, 81 percent in Doña Ana county and 69 percent in the rest of the state;
 - 84 percent of Democrats, 75 percent of Independents and 59 percent of Republicans;
 - 57 percent of Tea Party supporters;
 - 78 percent of Latinos and 74 percent of Whites; and,
 - 85 percent of voters under age 30, 76 percent of 30-49 year olds, 73 percent of 50-64 year olds and 67 percent of those age 65 and older.
- **A majority of New Mexico voters side with reform supporters after hearing both points of view about TSCA legislation.** Respondents were provided with two viewpoints about this issue. Both were drawn from Congressional testimony and publicly available information, in order to simulate the discussions and debates which have and could take place on this issue. The two statements were rotated to ensure there was not a bias based on the order in which they were presented. Respondents were more than TWICE as likely to side with the viewpoint in support of reform:

67 percent

People who say that Congress SHOULD pass this plan to reform the regulation of chemicals say that existing regulations are outdated. Currently, the EPA only requires safety testing for a tiny fraction of the tens of thousands of chemicals being used. Companies should prove that their products are safe and do not cause diseases or health problems, such as cancer, Parkinson's or children's learning disabilities.

26 percent

People who say that Congress SHOULD NOT pass this plan to reform the regulation of chemicals say that updating the law is important, but the current proposal is too extreme. Chemicals are vital to ninety-six percent of U.S. manufacturing, and the industry employs eight hundred thousand highly skilled American workers. We do not want to do anything that will hurt jobs, stifle innovation, or add to costs.

- **In conclusion,** New Mexico voters overwhelmingly support reform of regulations overseeing chemicals produced and used in everyday products, particularly when provided with specifics about what that reform might entail. This support is wide-spread and broad-based. Even when provided with robust arguments on both sides of the issue, voters continue to side with supporters of reform. This support appears to be grounded in their view that exposure to chemicals is a serious threat to people's health.