



MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: LORI WEIGEL / PARTNER

DATE: OCTOBER 15, 2011

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

Public Opinion Strategies recently completed a survey of voters throughout New Hampshire regarding their perceptions of toxic chemicals and potential reform of the law to regulate toxic chemicals.¹ The survey results show that New Hampshire voters strongly support reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act, with three-quarters saying that Congress should “act now” to reform the regulation of chemicals produced and used in the United States. State residents across the political spectrum and of every demographic sub-group support reform. They also express strong support for a number of the specific different provisions in potential reform legislation. A viewpoint in support of reform is seen as compelling by three times more respondents than find the critics’ viewpoint compelling. After hearing these competing viewpoints about the issue, three-quarters say they agree more with supporters of reform. In fact, there is a nearly universal view that “if companies do not prove that a chemical is safe, they should not be able to sell it for public use.”

Support appears to be grounded in a strong sense that exposure to toxic chemicals in day-to-day life poses a serious threat, particularly to children. Fully 85 percent of New Hampshire voters say they know someone who has had cancer, neurological diseases, learning or developmental disabilities or infertility issues. The vast majority believe more people today are suffering from these health problems. Voters are telling us this is affecting their consumer decisions, with seven-in-ten saying they have bought a product specifically because they thought it was better for their health than another product.

¹ **Methodology:** Public Opinion Strategies conducted a telephone survey of N=500 registered voters throughout New Hampshire. The survey was conducted August 20-23, 2011 and has an overall margin of error of +4.38% statewide. 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.

Specifically, the survey found that:

- **New Hampshire voters strongly support “stricter regulation” of chemicals produced and used in the United States.** Fully 77 percent of state voters indicate support for stricter regulation (only 17 percent oppose), with support across the political spectrum, across the state and evident among all demographic sub-groups. Support is even stronger for “stronger safety standards” for such chemicals, with 83 percent support overall and 12 percent opposed.
- **There is strong support for specific legislation to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act, with three-quarters (76 percent) backing such a plan.** Respondents were provided with an explanation of a proposal to reform current law governing chemicals and then asked for their opinion of it:

There is a proposal that may be considered in Congress that would reform the Toxic Substances Control Act that was passed in 1976 and provides the Environmental Protection Agency, that is the EPA, with the authority to regulate chemicals. Under this plan:

All chemical manufacturers would be required to provide information showing their chemicals are safe in order for those chemicals to be sold on the market;

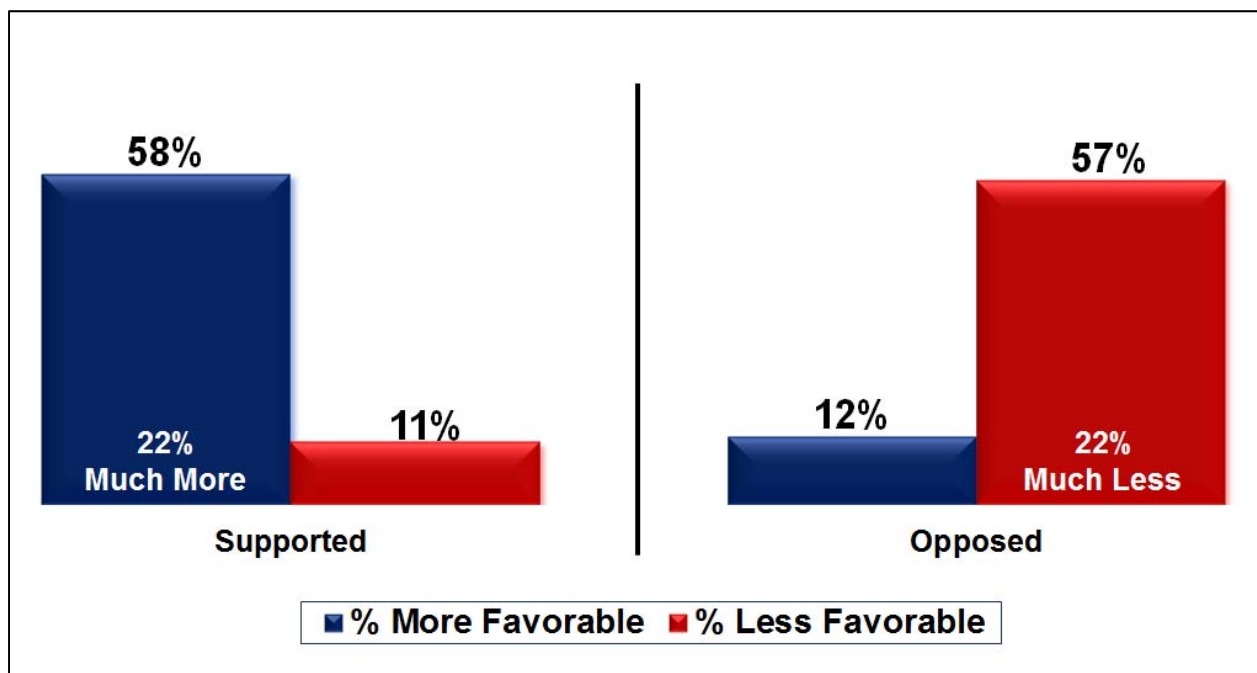
The EPA would be able to limit chemicals that are not shown to be safe and that may harm the public health and the environment; and

The EPA would also be able to ban some or all uses of a chemical, or require that people's exposure to that chemical be reduced. However, when use of a specific chemical is critical and there are no good alternatives, it would be allowed to stay on the market for a limited period of time.

Three-in-four (76 percent) of voters support this proposal (43 percent strongly support), while 21 percent oppose it (11 percent strongly).

- **Support for reforming the law is wide-spread and broad-based.** Majorities of all key sub-groups of voters support this proposal, including among:
 - 78 percent of women and 74 percent of men;
 - 82 percent of voters in the North of the state, 79 percent in the Central region, and 73 percent in the South;
 - 91 percent of Democrats, 75 percent of Independents and 64 percent of Republicans, including 54 percent of Tea Party Republican supporters;
 - 77 percent of parents and 76 percent of those without kids at home; and
 - 76 percent of those who have had someone in their household experience one of four health issues asked about in the survey including cancer, neurological diseases, infertility or developmental or learning disabilities.

- **This issue is not something voters want to see get tied up in Washington. Fully 74 percent say Congress should act now, rather than waiting to reform the law.** Just 23 percent think Congress should wait on this. A majority of voters across the partisan political spectrum say they would tell Congress to act now on this issue rather than waiting.
- **A majority also perceive this reform plan to be “about right” when it comes to the level of reform.** A solid majority of 56 percent characterizes the plan as being “about right,” while 22 percent think it does not go far enough and 16 percent believe it goes too far.
- **In fact, voters say they would regard an elected official more favorably if he or she supports this reform plan, and conversely view that person less favorably if they oppose this proposal.** In a question format that split the sample into two representative halves in order to avoid respondent confusion, voters indicate that this issue would have an impact on their view of the elected official in question.



- **New Hampshire voters do not find a statement opposed to reform very compelling. Instead, they overwhelmingly side with reform supporters after hearing both points of view.** 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 in order to ensure there was not a bias based on the order in which they were presented. Respondents were three times as likely to find the viewpoint in support of reform to be very compelling:

48 percent very convincing

Supporters who want Congress to pass this plan to reform the regulation of chemicals say that our existing regulations are inadequate and outdated. The EPA has only required safety testing for a fraction of the tens of thousands of different chemicals being produced or used in the United States. Scientific links between chemicals and health problems like cancer, Parkinson’s disease and learning disabilities are increasing. Chemicals are even passed from mother to child during pregnancy and through breast milk, and can lead to lifelong health problems for children. We need to reform regulation of chemicals to ensure we protect the health of all American families.

17 percent very convincing

Opponents who do NOT want Congress to pass this plan to reform the regulation of chemicals say that the law should be modernized, but not in a way that places too great a burden on American corporations. Chemicals are vital to ninety-six percent of the manufacturing done in this country and the industry employs eight hundred thousand highly skilled American workers. Especially with the economy so fragile, we do not want to do anything to cost us jobs or stifle innovation.

When asked to choose which point of view they agree with more, 76 percent say they agree with supporters of reform more while only 21 percent say they agree with those who oppose this particular plan for reform.

- **Even when digging deeper into the specifics of the reform, we find widespread support for individual elements of the proposal.** Respondents were asked whether they support or oppose a number of specific items, and again all receive a positive response as seen in the following graph:

Proposal Components <i>(Rank Order by % Strongly Support)</i>	% Strongly Support	% Total Support
Require chemical companies to test the chemicals they manufacture to prove that they are safe for everyone, especially children, pregnant women, and workers	71%	89%
Ban the use of toxic chemicals that persist in the environment and build up in the food chain and in people’s bodies	62%	86%
The Environmental Protection Agency would be able to restrict the use of chemicals that are shown to be unsafe and that may harm the public health and the environment	61%	85%
The states will continue to be able to enact tougher chemical policies	58%	87%
When use of a chemical is critical and there are no good alternatives, the chemical would be allowed to stay on the market for a limited period of time	24%	73%

- **State voters are indicating their concern about toxic chemicals in a number of different ways throughout the survey, including that:**
 - 87 percent say that ““if companies do not prove that a chemical is safe, they should not be able to sell it for public use;”
 - 78 percent believe exposure to toxic chemicals in everyday life is a very serious threat to children;
 - 70 percent say they have bought a product specifically because they thought it was better for their health than another product; and
 - 69 percent say the same out of concern about the environmental impact of a product.
- **Nearly three quarters say they believe that cancer or other illnesses are more prevalent today.** Fully 73 percent agree that “it seems like there are more people with cancer today than in the past,” and a similar 74 percent say the same for “health problems, such as learning disabilities, cancer, infertility, and birth defects.”

This may not be surprising, given that 85 percent of New Hampshire voters say they know someone who has had cancer, neurological diseases, learning or developmental disabilities or infertility issues. In fact, 17 percent say they personally have dealt with one of these issues.

- **In conclusion,** New Hampshire voters overwhelmingly support reform to regulations overseeing chemicals produced and used in the United States, both generally and when provided with specifics about what that reform might entail. This support is wide-spread and broad-based. Voters want Congress to act now, rather than waiting on the issue, and say that support or opposition to such legislation would indeed affect their views of an elected official. Even when provided with robust arguments on both sides of the issue, voters overwhelmingly continue to side with supporters of reform. This support appears to be grounded in their view that exposure to chemicals is a threat, particularly to children, and a sense that a number of different health problems are more prevalent today.