Maine Voter Preference Study

Summary Report of Findings

Prepared for:

Natural Resources Council of Maine

March 2011

Focus Groups • Surveys • Public Opinion Polling

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Background & Survey Method

• In March 2011, the Natural Resources Council of Maine commissioned Critical Insights of Portland, a nonpartisan public policy polling firm, to conduct a statewide public opinion survey to gauge voter sentiment on specific issues that may impact the economy, and on a series of environmental initiatives that are facing the Maine Legislature.

• Critical Insights completed a total of 402 random telephone interviews across the state between March 21, 2011 and March 24, 2011.

  – All interviews were conducted with self-reported registered voters; final data was statistically weighted according to relevant demographics to reflect the voter base in Maine. A summary of the demographic profile of the sample appears at the end of this report.

  – With a sample of 402 interviews, results presented here have an associated margin of error of ±4.1 percentage points at the 90% confidence level, or ±4.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

  – On average, the entire survey instrument – including general interest items and all subscriber questions – was 11 minutes in administrative length.

• Live interviews were conducted by telephone and coordinated from the Critical Insights Information Center in Portland, employing a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system.
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

- Among registered voters surveyed, the greatest negative impact on Maine’s economy is attributed to financial factors such as health insurance and energy costs, a weak national economy, and taxes.

- Compared to financial factors, a smaller proportion of respondents – although still a majority – feel that road conditions negatively effect the state’s economy.
  - Northern Maine residents are significantly more likely than those living in other regions of the state to feel that road conditions are detrimental to the economy.

- Only about a quarter of respondents indicate that Maine’s environmental laws, geographic location, or the availability of well trained workers in the state impact the economy negatively.
  - Large blocs of respondents assumed a “neutral” stance in each of the three areas mentioned above; therefore, it is important to note that only a minority expressed that these factors have little to no negative impact on Maine’s economy.
  - More highly educated respondents, women and self-reported Democrats and Independents are significantly more likely than others to say that environmental laws have less negative impact on the economy.
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”

The cost of health insurance
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”

The cost of energy

- NET LESS NEGATIVE IMPACT: 7%
- NET MORE NEGATIVE IMPACT: 69%

1--->No negative impact: 2
2: 5
3: 23
4: 30
5--->Major negative impact: 39
DK/Ref: 1
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”

The condition of Maine’s roads and transportation systems

![Bar chart showing perceived negative impact of various factors on Maine’s economy. The chart indicates that 20% of respondents believe there is no negative impact, 29% believe there is a negative impact, while 51% believe there is a major negative impact.]

March 2011
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”

The availability of well trained workers
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”

Maine’s geographic location

NET LESS NEGATIVE IMPACT: 39%

NET MORE NEGATIVE IMPACT: 27%

Percent
Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”

- Maine’s environmental laws

![Bar Chart]

- NET LESS NEGATIVE IMPACT: 41%
- NET MORE NEGATIVE IMPACT: 27%

Percent
Summary of Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”

- **The cost of health insurance:**
  - Less negative impact: 9
  - Neutral: 17
  - More negative impact: 74
  - Total: 100

- **The cost of energy:**
  - Less negative impact: 7
  - Neutral: 23
  - More negative impact: 69
  - Total: 100

- **The weak national economy:**
  - Less negative impact: 7
  - Neutral: 24
  - More negative impact: 68
  - Total: 100

- **Taxes:**
  - Less negative impact: 13
  - Neutral: 23
  - More negative impact: 64
  - Total: 100
Summary of Perceived Negative Impact of Various Factors on Maine’s Economy

In your opinion, how much of a negative impact do you think each of the following factors has on Maine’s economy? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “no negative impact” and a 5 means “major negative impact.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Less negative impact</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>More negative impact</th>
<th>DK/Ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The condition of Maine’s roads &amp; transportation systems</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of well trained workers</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine's geographic location</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine's environmental laws</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Views on Laws & Policies Pertaining to Maine’s Environment
General Views on Environmental Laws

• An overwhelming majority of voters across the state (more than 9-in-10) believe that Maine’s lawmakers should prioritize preserving and protecting the environment.
  – Over half of these respondents (53%) indicated that this should be a “high priority” for Maine’s lawmakers;
  – An additional 4-in-10 (38%) indicated that this should be “somewhat of a priority”.

• When asked to choose which of two statements most closely represents their personal point of view, nearly two-thirds of respondents feel that environmental laws and regulations have worked, while about one-third feel that the laws have gone too far.
  – Categorically similar to respondents who view environmental laws as having a lesser negative impact on the economy, those who are more likely to feel that the environment should be a “high priority” for lawmakers or that environmental laws and regulations have worked tend to be more highly educated or describe their political affiliation as Democratic or Independent.
Views on Prioritizing Maine’s Environment

In general, do you believe that preserving and protecting Maine’s environment should be a high priority, somewhat of a priority, a low priority, or not a priority at all for our lawmakers?

- High priority: 53%
- Somewhat of a priority: 38%
- Low priority: 7%
- Not a priority at all: 2%
Trade-off on Environment and Economy

Next I am going to read you two statements. Please tell me which one comes closest to your own point of view.

Environmental laws and regulations have worked. They protect our environment and public health. We can have a clean environment while also achieving a stronger economy.

Environmental laws and regulations have gone too far. They are hurting Maine's economy so we should loosen up.

Neither / Can't decide

Percent
Environment and Economy Trade-Off
Regional Perspectives *

Approval / Disapproval of Proposed Changes to Maine’s Laws & Policies

• Of the proposals surveyed, the Land for Maine’s Future, reducing Maine’s dependence on oil, investing in energy efficiency, and limiting the chemical BPA received the highest approval ratings among respondents.
  – Indeed, more than 8-in-10 respondents cited approval for each of these proposals.
  – Generally, respondents most likely to approve of these proposed changes tended to be women, well-educated, or self-described Democrats.

• By contrast, proposals of a less environmentally-friendly nature – specifically those related to repealing the state’s bottle recycling program and weakening shoreland zoning – garnered disapproval by a majority of respondents.

• Given the robust opinions on energy cost and efficiency noted previously, it is not surprising that fully 8-in-10 respondents approve of Maine’s uniform building and energy code. This support was consistent across demographic and geographic subgroups.
Now, I’m going to mention some proposed changes to Maine’s laws and policies. For each one, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of that particular proposal.

Providing funding for the Land for Maine’s Future program, which conserves land for public access, traditional uses, and preserves farmland and working waterfronts
Now, I’m going to mention some proposed changes to Maine’s laws and policies. For each one, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of that particular proposal.

Adopting legislation that sets ambitious goals to reduce Maine’s dependence on oil as a source of energy

- Strongly approve: 58
- Somewhat approve: 26
- Somewhat disapprove: 6
- Strongly disapprove: 6
- No opinion / DK: 4

NET APPROVE: 84%
NET DISAPPROVE: 12%
Approval / Disapproval of Proposed Changes to Maine’s Laws & Policies

Now, I’m going to mention some proposed changes to Maine’s laws and policies. For each one, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of that particular proposal.

Requiring companies that make baby bottles and other plastic containers to stop using B-P-A, a chemical that has been linked to learning disabilities and other health problems

- **Strongly approve**: 67
- **Somewhat approve**: 15
- **Somewhat disapprove**: 3
- **Strongly disapprove**: 10
- **No opinion / DK**: 4

**NET APPROVE**: 82%

**NET DISAPPROVE**: 13%
Now, I’m going to mention some proposed changes to Maine’s laws and policies. For each one, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of that particular proposal.

Increasing public investments in energy efficiency programs for Maine businesses, homeowners and industry

Approval / Disapproval of Proposed Changes to Maine’s Laws & Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NET APPROVE</th>
<th>NET DISAPPROVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent

- Strongly approve: 51
- Somewhat approve: 31
- Somewhat disapprove: 8
- Strongly disapprove: 6
- No opinion / DK: 3
Now, I’m going to mention some proposed changes to Maine’s laws and policies. For each one, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of that particular proposal.

Repealing Maine’s bottle bill, which establishes the state’s deposit and recycling program for bottles, cans and other containers

- Strongly approve: 16
- Somewhat approve: 11
- Somewhat disapprove: 11
- Strongly disapprove: 59
- No opinion / DK: 3

NET APPROVE: 27%
NET DISAPPROVE: 70%
Now, I’m going to mention some proposed changes to Maine’s laws and policies. For each one, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of that particular proposal.

Changing shoreland zoning requirements so that people could build their homes closer to the shoreline of lakes, rivers, and the coast, but with the likely result that water pollution would increase.
Now, I’m going to mention some proposed changes to Maine’s laws and policies. For each one, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of that particular proposal.

- Providing funding for the Land for Maine's Future program
  - Net approve: 86
  - Net disapprove: 13
  - No opinion/DK: 2

- Adopting legislation that sets ambitious goals to reduce Maine's dependence on oil
  - Net approve: 84
  - Net disapprove: 12
  - No opinion/DK: 4

- Requiring companies that make baby bottles and other plastic containers to stop using B-P-A
  - Net approve: 82
  - Net disapprove: 13
  - No opinion/DK: 4

- Increasing public investments in energy efficiency programs
  - Net approve: 82
  - Net disapprove: 14
  - No opinion/DK: 3
Now, I’m going to mention some proposed changes to Maine’s laws and policies. For each one, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of that particular proposal.

**Repealing Maine’s bottle bill**
- Net approve: 27
- Net disapprove: 70
- No opinion / DK: 3

**Changing shoreland zoning requirements**
- Net approve: 26
- Net disapprove: 71
- No opinion / DK: 3
Approval / Disapproval of Maine’s Uniform Building & Energy Code

Maine is one of more than 40 states that has adopted a uniform building and energy code that requires new homes to be built using energy efficiency features designed to help homeowners reduce energy costs. Do you approve or disapprove of Maine’s uniform building and energy code?
Approval of Uniform Building & Energy Code

Maine is one of more than 40 states that has adopted a uniform building and energy code that requires new homes to be built using energy efficiency features designed to help homeowners reduce energy costs. Do you approve or disapprove of Maine’s uniform building and energy code?
Views on Weakening Environmental Laws & Standards

- Given the level of support for the environment noted throughout this report, it is not surprising that more than 6-in-10 voters polled say they would be concerned if they learned that their elected representative in the Maine State Legislature had voted to weaken laws that protecting Maine’s overall environment.
  - Women, older voters, respondents with higher educational attainment, voters in Central Maine, and self-reported Democrats and Independents are more likely than others to be concerned about the possibility of environmental laws being weakened by their elected representative.

- More than 6-in-10 respondents polled also say they would be concerned if environmental standards for reviewing development proposals in Maine’s North Woods were weakened. Concern about a possible weakening of such standards was at 60% or higher in all four demographic regions sampled by the poll (Northern, Central, Coastal, and Southern)
Concern about Legislators Weakening Laws that Protect Maine’s Environment

How concerned would you be if you learned that your elected representatives in the Maine State Legislature had voted to weaken the laws that protect Maine’s clean air, clean water, and the environment? Please use a scale of 1 to 5 where a 1 means “not at all concerned” and a 5 means “very concerned.”

NET MORE CONCERNED
63%

NET LESS CONCERNED
17%

1-->Not at all concerned
9

2
8

3
18

4
13

5--->Very concerned
50

DK/Ref.
3
Concern about Legislators Weakening Laws that Protect Maine’s Environment
Regional Perspectives *

How concerned would you be if you learned that your elected representatives in the Maine State Legislature had voted to weaken the laws that protect Maine’s clean air, clean water, and the environment?

Concern with Weakening Environmental Standards for Maine’s North Woods

Thinking about Maine’s North Woods, how concerned would you be if the environmental standards for reviewing major industrial, commercial and large scale residential development in the North Woods were weakened? Please use a scale of 1 to 5 where a 1 means “not at all concerned” and a 5 means “very concerned.”

NET LESS CONCERNED
15%

NET MORE CONCERNED
62%

1--->Not at all concerned
2
3
4
5--->Very concerned
DK/Ref.

March 2011
Perceived Importance of Protecting Maine’s Environment
Perceived Importance of Protecting Maine’s Environment

• When asked to rate the importance of protecting a clean and healthy environment for specific reasons, the prevailing reason chosen by these representative voters was, “For our children’s future and natural heritage.”
  – Indeed, more than 8-in-10 respondents feel that it is important to protect the environment for our children.

• The other reasons tested also garnered high levels of importance, specifically the future of the economy (75%) and attracting new business to the state (70%).

• Consistent with findings noted previously, the value placed on each of the assessed reasons to protect the environment is significantly greater among women, as well as among self-described Democrats and Independents.

• Virtually all voters surveyed agree that it is important for Maine to identify and require replacement of dangerous chemicals used in consumer products, provided the safer replacement chemicals are effective and affordable.
Perceived Importance of a Clean & Healthy Environment

Using a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “not at all important” and a 5 means “very important,” how important is protecting a clean and healthy environment for each of the following reasons?

For our children’s future and natural heritage

- NET LESS IMPORTANT: 6%
  - 3

- NET MORE IMPORTANT: 81%
  - 62
For the future of Maine’s economy

**Perceived Importance of a Clean & Healthy Environment**

*Using a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “not at all important” and a 5 means “very important,” how important is protecting a clean and healthy environment for each of the following reasons?*

**Bar Chart:**
- **NET LESS IMPORTANT:** 8%
  - 4 respondents rated it as 1 (Not at all important)
  - 4 respondents rated it as 2
- **NET MORE IMPORTANT:** 75%
  - 15 respondents rated it as 3
  - 24 respondents rated it as 4
  - 51 respondents rated it as 5 (Very important)

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March 2011
Perceived Importance of a Clean & Healthy Environment

Using a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “not at all important” and a 5 means “very important,” how important is protecting a clean and healthy environment for each of the following reasons?

For attracting new business to the state

NET LESS IMPORTANT: 9%
NET MORE IMPORTANT: 70%

4 5 20 24 46
1-->Not at all important 2 3 4 5 --> Very important

Percent
Summary of Perceived Importance of a Clean & Healthy Environment

Using a scale of 1 to 5, where a 1 means “not at all important” and a 5 means “very important,” how important is protecting a clean and healthy environment for each of the following reasons?

- For our children’s future and natural heritage:
  - Less important: 6
  - Neutral: 13
  - More important: 81

- For the future of Maine’s economy:
  - Less important: 8
  - Neutral: 15
  - More important: 75

- For attracting new business to the state:
  - Less important: 10
  - Neutral: 20
  - More important: 70
Perceived Importance of Using Safer Chemicals in Consumer Products

How important do you believe it is for Maine to identify the most dangerous chemicals used in making consumer products, and to require manufacturers to replace them with safer ones as long as they are effective and affordable?

- NET MORE IMPORTANT: 90%
- NET LESS IMPORTANT: 8%
- 63% Very important
- 27% Somewhat important
- 5% Not very important
- 3% Not important at all
- 1% DK/Ref.
Views on Wind Power as a Source of Maine’s Electricity
Support / Opposition for Wind Power

- More than 8-in-10 survey respondents support the development of wind power in Maine as an alternative source of electricity.
  - Indeed, only 15% of all survey respondents indicate any level of opposition.
- Women and respondents citing Democratic party affiliation are significantly more likely to “strongly support” wind power as a form of alternative energy.
- Net support for wind power (combining those who “strongly support” and those who “somewhat support”) exceeds 70% for all demographic subgroups: Democrats, Republicans, and Independents; all age and income categories; male and female; and all regions of Maine.
Support / Opposition for Wind Power as a Source of Electricity

Thinking now about wind power, do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the development of wind power in Maine as a source of electricity?

- Strongly support: 46
- Somewhat support: 36
- Somewhat oppose: 6
- Strongly oppose: 9
- DK/Ref.: 2

NET SUPPORT: 82%
NET OPPOSE: 15%
Sample Profile
Voter Party Affiliation

*In what political party are you registered to vote?*

- **Democrat**: 36%
- **Republican**: 32%
- **Independent**: 25%
- **Other**: 2%
- **DK/Ref.**: 5%
Which of these statements best describes your political leanings?

- Somewhat conservative: 32%
- Somewhat liberal: 23%
- Very conservative: 14%
- Very liberal: 9%
- Neither: 18%
- DK/Ref.: 4%
Respondent Gender and Age

- Male: 46%
- Female: 54%

Into which of the following categories does your age fall?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 to 34</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 or older</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Education

What is the highest level of education you have completed?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school or less</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated high school</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Vocational/Community College</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated college</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Household Income

Which of the following broad groups includes your household’s approximate total yearly income before taxes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or refused to specify</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Household Composition

Do you have any children, age 18 or younger, living with you at home?

- Yes: 35%
- No: 65%