



Turning Questions Into Answers.

*Fairbank,
Maslin,
Maullin &
Associates*

*Opinion Research &
Public Policy Analysis*

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: David Metz
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RE: Results of Statewide Voter Survey

DATE: February 8, 2008

The Democratic polling firm of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMM&A) and the Republican polling firm of Public Opinion Strategies (POS) recently partnered to complete a statewide survey of Ohio voters on a proposal to amend the state constitution to dedicate new funding to conservation.¹ The survey results show that **a sizable majority of Ohio voters indicate that they would vote in favor of a continuation or an expansion of the Clean Ohio program, supporting bonding for conservation of natural areas, working farms and parks, and for revitalization of abandoned industrial sites in the state.** That majority support remains strong even after voters hear a series of pro and con arguments about the potential amendment. Given clear ballot language and a well-funded campaign to communicate to voters in a high profile election year, either potential formulation of this amendment stands an excellent chance of winning approval from Ohio voters next November.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **A solid majority of Ohio voters support a constitutional amendment to bond existing revenues for conservation and revitalization purposes – in essence, a continuation and expansion of the existing Clean Ohio program.** Survey respondents were read the following summation of potential ballot language for a proposed constitutional amendment. Half of the respondents were read language which equates to a renewal of the program, while the other half were read language which equates to an increase from previous funding amounts:

RENEWAL: 65% Yes in favor, 30% No against

*“This proposed amendment would authorize the state to issue **fifty** million dollars a year in bonds and other obligations for **four** years to pay the cost of conservation projects, such as*

¹ **Methodology:** From January 21-24, 2008, FMM&A and POS completed 600 telephone interviews with registered voters in Ohio who are likely to cast ballots in the November 2008 general election. The survey was sponsored by the Ohio chapter of The Nature Conservancy. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 4.0%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be larger.

*preserving natural areas and farmlands and providing for state and local parks, and **fifty** million dollars for revitalization purposes, meaning the remediation or clean up of contamination that might be harmful to public health and the environment and enabling the redevelopment of such public and private lands.”*

INCREASE: 59% Yes in favor, 33% No against

*“This proposed amendment would authorize the state to issue **sixty** million dollars a year in bonds and other obligations for **six** years to pay the cost of conservation projects, such as preserving natural areas and farmlands and providing for state and local parks, and **sixty-five** million dollars for revitalization purposes, meaning the remediation or clean up of contamination that might be harmful to public health and the environment and enabling the redevelopment of such public and private lands.”*

The intensity of support for both measures is also significant. Fully 29% of voters say they would “definitely” vote for the renewal, and 26% for the increase. In each case, those are double the proportion that say they would “definitely” vote against it.

Support for the amendment cuts broadly across demographic and geographic groups within the electorate. The amendment is backed by:

Renewal:

- ✓ 74 percent of Democrats, 62 percent of independents, and 55 percent of Republicans;
- ✓ 65 percent of women and 66 percent of men;
- ✓ Majorities of all age groups, including 58% of (typically tax sensitive) seniors;
- ✓ Majorities of voters in every region of the state, including 69 percent of voters in the Columbus media market, 64 percent in Cincinnati market, 59 percent in Cleveland, and 58% of rural voters.

Increase:

- ✓ 70 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of independents, and a 47-percent plurality of Republicans;
- ✓ 57 percent of women and 61 percent of men;
- ✓ Majorities of all age groups, including 57% of (typically tax sensitive) seniors;
- ✓ Majorities of voters in every region of the state, including 55 percent of voters in the Columbus media market, 64 percent in Cincinnati market, 55 percent in Cleveland, and 56% of rural voters.

The main reasons that Yes voters provide as rationales for support of these amendments are:

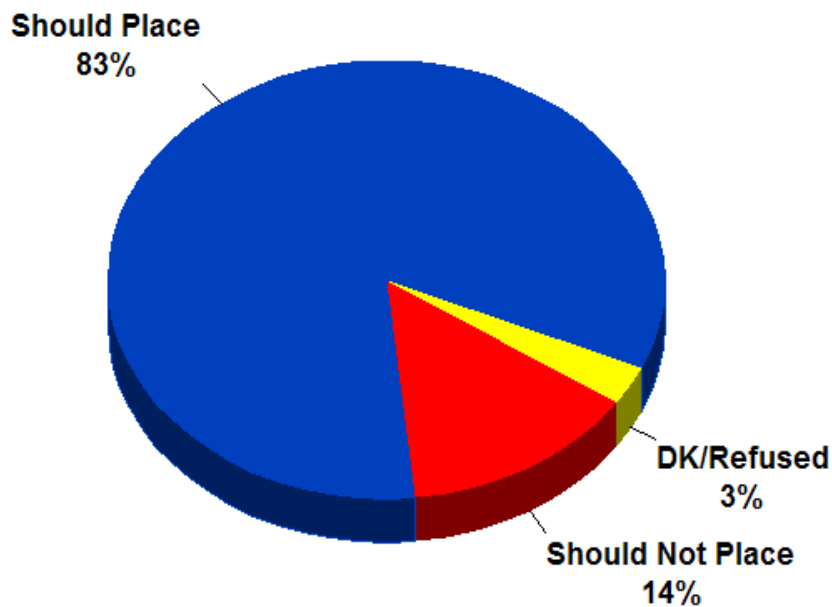
- To reduce pollution / clean up polluted areas;
 - To protect farms and open areas from all being developed;
 - To preserve the quality of our air, land and natural resources for our children and grandchildren; and
 - To keep up our parks.
-
- **Support for both formulations of the amendment remains strong even after pro and con arguments.** Survey respondents were offered a series of potential arguments from supporters and opponents of the proposed amendment. As shown in **Figure 1**, arguments in favor of the measure boost support into the low 70’s. And while opposition arguments slightly diminish that support, they still leave it in the high 60’s – well above initial support levels. This pattern of support suggests that voter support for the proposed amendment is durable and likely to withstand the back-and-forth debate of a campaign.

FIGURE 1:
Change in Support for Constitutional Amendment After Arguments

	Initial Vote	After Positive Arguments	After Negative Arguments	Difference
RENEWAL				
Yes	65%	73%	69%	+4%
No	30%	22%	28%	-2%
Undecided	3%	5%	3%	0%
INCREASE				
Yes	59%	73%	65%	+6%
No	33%	24%	32%	-1%
Undecided	7%	3%	3%	-4%

- **An overwhelming majority of the electorate wants the opportunity to see this issue on the ballot.** As seen in **Figure 2**, fully 83% of Ohio voters say that they think the Governor and State Legislature should place this measure on the ballot and allow the voters to decide whether they want to continue the Clean Ohio fund. Just 14% reject this notion.

FIGURE 2:
Desire to Vote on Constitutional Amendment



In addition, a majority of the state’s voters say that they are more likely to support their Legislator if he/she supports this Clean Ohio constitutional amendment. Fully 54% say they would be more likely to vote for their Legislator knowing about this one stand on an issue, while 37% say it makes no difference to their vote. The most significant number, perhaps, is that a mere 6% say this would make them less likely to support their State Legislator – a clear indication that this issue would have no negative impact on voter preferences for the vast majority of voters. This sentiment is fairly universal with just 8% of GOP voters, 6% of Independents and 4% of Democrats saying they would

be less likely to vote for a State Legislator who supports the measure.

- **Voters place the highest priority on using money raised by the amendment to protect water quality and clean up brown fields.** Survey respondents were read a list of ways that money raised by the proposed constitutional amendment could be used, and were asked to rank each as either “extremely important,” “very important,” “somewhat important,” or “not important.” As shown in **Figure 3** below, voters were most likely to rank the protection of water quality as at least a “very important” use of the money.

FIGURE 3:
Ratings of the Importance of Various Uses of Money From the Amendment
(% “Extremely” or “Very Important”)

Use of Funding	% Ext./Very Important
Protecting clean drinking water	90%
Protecting the Great Lakes and the rivers and streams that flow into them	84%
Protecting Ohio’s rivers, lakes, and streams	78%
Protecting Lake Erie and the rivers and streams that flow into it	76%
Cleaning up contaminated industrial properties	76%
Cleaning up polluted, abandoned industrial sites	75%
Protecting fish and wildlife habitat	72%
Protecting working farms	71%
Protecting forests and woodlands	69%
Protecting natural areas	65%

Overall, the survey results show that with clear ballot language and a well-funded, active “yes” campaign, the amendment’s prospects for passage are excellent. Ohio voters have a strong desire to invest in the protection of the state’s water, natural areas, parks, and clean up polluted, abandoned industrial sites. Voters very much want the opportunity to vote on continuing the Clean Ohio program through authorizing additional bonding, and a majority is more favorably inclined toward a Legislator who supports the program.