



behavior research center's

# Rocky Mountain Poll

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Contact: Earl de Berge  
Research Director  
Or: Jim Haynes  
President

## BUDGET CUTS NO EASY CHOICE FOR PUBLIC EITHER

Phoenix, Arizona, March 16, 2002. Even with a large budget deficit facing the state, taxpayers here evince considerable reluctance to address the problem through reduced state spending. When asked to cast their eyes across ten budget areas of state government, a majority of taxpayers with an opinion on such things say they oppose attempting to balance the state budget by reducing spending.

Budget categories for which tax payers are deeply reluctant to make spending cuts include care for the elderly, elementary and secondary education programs and state health care programs.

As well, close to six in ten oppose cuts in pollution reduction programs, pay levels of state employees, state universities, road construction and economic development.

Closer readings are found as regards environmental protection and open space preservation, but for each of these, a majority oppose cuts in state spending.

The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 604 adult heads of household throughout Maricopa County conducted between February 15<sup>th</sup> and February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2002, by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona as part of the Center's independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll series. The public is welcome to visit [www.brcpolls.com](http://www.brcpolls.com) to read this and other recent polls.

Clearly, demands from Arizona's growing population for high levels of governmental services, coupled with political demands for tax reductions, are inexorably leading to the point where something must give. Earlier polls this year have shown little abatement in public support for continued tax cuts and very little support for using government tax and spending powers as tools to prime the economic pump. Sooner or later, voters must recognize that they face the same conundrum as the legislature and the governor: whether they want to have their economic cake and eat it as well.

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The only category in which support for spending cuts comes close to equaling opposition is in the area of open space preservation, where 52 percent oppose cuts and 48 percent are in favor.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This Rocky Mountain Poll Arizona (2002-I-15) is based on 604 telephone interviews conducted from February 15th through February 24th, 2002, with adult heads of household throughout Maricopa County. In a sample of this size, one may say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 4.1 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult population been surveyed. The Arizona Consumer Confidence Study is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**BELOW:** Statistical data

For this and other polls, see [www.brcpolls.com/results](http://www.brcpolls.com/results)

*"By some estimates, the state of Arizona is facing a budget shortfall in the next fiscal year of about 800 million dollars. Do you favor or do you oppose reducing spending in each of the following areas to help balance the state budget?"*

	<u>(AS % OF THOSE WITH AN OPINION)</u>		
	<u>Favor</u> <u>Cuts</u>	<u>Oppose</u> <u>Cuts</u>	<u>% With An</u> <u>Opinion</u>
Care for the elderly	25%	75%	(97%)
Elementary and secondary education	26	73	(99)
Health care	25	75	(96)
Pollution reduction programs	39	61	(96)
State employees' pay	39	61	(93)
State universities	41	59	(91)
Road construction	43	57	(96)
Using state funds to subsidize new business	43	58	(91)
Environmental protection	45	55	(97)
Open space preservation	48	52	(91)