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Rocky Mountain Poll

Rated in the Top 15% of Political Polls in the U.S.

N E W S

RELEASE [RMP 2015-I-03]

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VOTER PRIORITIES FOR GOVERNOR & LEGISLATURE: **CHILD PROTECTION & K-12 EDUCATION**

Phoenix, Arizona, February 17, 2015 – As Arizona begins 2015 with a new Governor and State Legislature, consumers and voters across the state were asked to prioritize each of 13 issues in terms of what they would like elected state officials to address. Interesting among the findings is that although economic recovery tops the rhetoric of politicians across Arizona and the nation, other issues have greater priority among voters in Arizona today. This shift in focus may trace to growing confidence in the recovery of the economy, both nationally and in Arizona, and a belief they can return to issues closer to their hearts and to their day-to-day lives.

The two issues of greatest importance to voters are taking steps to protect children from abuse by their parents and improving public education at the K to 12 level. From 75 to 78 percent rate these as very high priorities to which the Governor and Legislature should attend. Ex-governor Jan Brewer championed demands for improvement in both education and child protective services and her legacy has not been forgotten by voters now that she is out of office.

Three other issues are ranked as high priority by half the public. These include funding mental health programs (58%), protecting Arizona's environment (57%), and taking steps to get so-called dark money out of Arizona elections (48%).

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The strong reading on “dark money” is no doubt a reflection of the general discomfort voters felt during and after the bruising 2014 election which many believed focused more on character assassination than on issue debate and which involved millions of dollars being spent in Arizona by shadowy outside sources. Protecting the natural environment has been a latent issue in search of an advocate for many years, but in recent times, as climate change has grabbed many imaginations, the issue may be on the verge of resurgence.

Of lower priority to taxpayers is the concept of giving tax incentives to major companies to move to Arizona, yet even for this issue, 48 percent consider it a major priority. A marginally greater percentage (52%) consider it a high priority to give tax incentives to existing companies to expand job opportunities in the state. And while there is no doubt that the public is still deeply concerned about the job market in Arizona (65 percent still classify job availability in Arizona as “few or hard to get”) the public is nonetheless divided on whether giving business tax breaks is a good job creation strategy.

Lower priorities are assigned by the public to six other issues:

- Expanding fire and police protection (43%);
- Improving community streets and roads (38%);
- Homeowners solar energy incentives (38%);
- Expanding Public transportation (38%);
- Building more freeways (23%); and
- Slowing Arizona’s rate of population growth (23%).

This report is based on a statewide survey of 701 adult heads of household including 460 registered voters. It was conducted between January 13 and 21 of 2015 by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is part of the Center’s Independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll Series which is rated in the top 15 percent of independent polls in America . The public is welcome to visit www.BRCpolls.com for this and other polls.

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Priorities by Political Party: The overall priority given to issues is more or less the same regardless of whether one is a Democrat, Independent or Republican. Notice however that Republicans are generally less enthusiastic about giving priority to any of the issues – perhaps a reflection of their general lower level of support for government intervention in any aspect of the business, economic or social affairs of private citizens. The only exception is that Republican voters are somewhat more embracing of tax incentives for business than are Democrats.

Views from Rural Counties: The study also reveals that while the overall priority of issues is the same in the various regions of the state, we notice that rural county residents are more positive about strategies to give tax incentives to businesses to move to the state and are more demanding of programs to improve roads and streets in their communities.

Priorities by Age: Voters and citizens older than 35 years and particularly those over 55 are the most demanding that more be done to rid Arizona elections of “dark money” influences in the political life of the state.

Priorities by Gender: By and large, priorities have the same hierarchy for women as for men. Men may be modestly more inclined to give tax incentives to create jobs a higher rating than are women, but the difference is small. Women are more likely than men to give priority to strengthening police and fire protective services.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona (2015-I-03), is based on 701 interviews with adult heads of household statewide including 460 registered voters, conducted between January 13 and 21, 2015. Interviewing was conducted in English or Spanish by professional interviewers of the Behavior Research Center on both land lines and cell phones. Where necessary, figures for age, sex, and race were weighted to bring them into line with their actual proportion in the population. In a sample of this size, one can say with a 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.8 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program sponsored by the Center.

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

Rocky Mountain Poll is rated in top 15 percent of polls in America: In 2014, Nate Silver of the noted analytics website *fivethirtyeight.com* rated BRC in the top tier of political polling firms in America for methodology and accuracy. Mr. Silver and his website have correctly predicted national and state election outcomes in recent election cycles by aggregating polling results from multiple research firms.

ENCLOSED: Statistical tables.

STATISTICAL DATA

Behavior Research Center
Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona

For this and other polls, see www.brcpolls.com/results.

RMP (2015-I-03)

“As you may know, Arizona begins the new year with a new governor and state legislature. As I read you some of the issues they may be called on to deal with, please tell me how much priority you feel each issue should receive using a ten point scale where one means it is not a priority and ten means it is a extremely high priority.” (ORDER OF ITEMS RANDOMLY ROTATED)

ISSUE RANKING	P R I O R I T Y		
	High 8 TO 10	Some 6 TO 7	Low 1 TO 5
1. Protecting children from parental abuse	78%	10%	11%
2. Improving the quality of public K-12 education	75	9	14
3. Provide funding for mental health programs	58	19	21
4. Protecting the natural environment	57	20	21
5. Helping existing Arizona companies expand jobs by providing them tax incentives	52	21	24
6. Make elections more transparent by exposing donors behind so-called dark money or third party ads.	48	18	27
7. Attract major employers to the state by using tax incentives.	48	22	27
8. Expanding police and fire protection in your community	43	21	34
9. Improve existing streets in your community	38	22	38
10. Provide financial incentives to homeowners to install solar energy on their homes.	38	18	40
11. Expanding public transportation in your community	36	19	40
12. Building more freeways and highways	23	17	59
13. Slowing the rate of population growth in Arizona	23	15	56

Shaded boxes = where 50 percent or more rate item as top priority

Note: totals reading across do not equal 100 percent due to “no opinion responses give by some respondents

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ISSUE RANKING	8 to 10 P R I O R I T Y		
	Democrats	Independents	Republican
1. Protecting children from parental abuse	83%	75%	75%
2. Improving the quality of public K-12 education	83	79	67
3. Provide funding for mental health programs	69	62	42
4. Protecting the natural environment	57	61	35
5. Helping existing Arizona companies expand jobs by providing them tax incentives	45	55	52
6. Make elections more transparent by exposing donors behind so-called dark money or third party ads.	58	54	46
7. Attract major employers to the state by using tax incentives.	42	49	53
8. Expanding police and fire protection in your community	50	38	41
9. Improve existing streets in your community	47	37	30
10. Provide financial incentives to homeowners to install solar energy on their homes.	41	34	31
11. Expanding public transportation in your community	45	34	27
12. Building more freeways and highways	20	19	27
13. Slowing the rate of population growth in Arizona	21	20	21

Shaded boxes indicate issues for which a **majority** give it high priority.

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ISSUE RANKING	Top P R I O R I T Y (8 to 10)		
	Maricopa	Pima	Rural
1. Protecting children from parental abuse	78%	75%	83%
2. Improving the quality of public K-12 education	72	84	76
3. Provide funding for mental health programs	60	55	55
4. Protecting the natural environment	57	58	57
5. Helping existing Arizona companies expand jobs by providing them tax incentives	52	50	52
6. Make elections more transparent by exposing donors behind so-called dark money or third party ads.	47	54	47
7. Attract major employers to the state by using tax incentives.	45	45	58
8. Expanding police and fire protection in your community	43	38	45
9. Improve existing streets in your community	33	43	50
10. Provide financial incentives to homeowners to install solar energy on their homes.	42	45	39
11. Expanding pubic transportation in your community	36	34	39
12. Building more freeways and highways	23	27	21
13 Slowing the rate of population growth in Arizona	24	20	23

Shaded boxes = where 50 percent or more rate item as top priority

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Top Priority by Age and Gender (8 to 10)					
ISSUE RANKING	Age Under 35	Age 35 to 54	Age 55 or Older	Men	Women
1. Protecting children from parental abuse	87%	79%	71%	77%	80%
2. Improving the quality of public K-12 education	86	71	68	79	71
3. Provide funding for mental health programs	64	60	49	56	60
4. Protecting the natural environment	65	60	47	59	56
5. Helping existing Arizona companies expand jobs by providing them tax incentives	47	60	48	53	51
6. Make elections more transparent by exposing donors behind so-called dark money or third party ads.	38	51	54	46	50
7. Attract major employers to the state by using tax incentives.	40	55	49	53	42
8. Expanding police and fire protection in your community	42	41	45	37	49
9. Improve existing streets in your community	35	42	38	35	42
10. Provide financial incentives to homeowners to install solar energy on their homes.	40	40	36	39	37
11. Expanding public transportation in your community	36	40	32	34	39
12. Building more freeways and highways	25	20	26	23	23
13. Slowing the rate of population growth in Arizona	25	20	35	22	25

Shaded boxes = where 50 percent or more rate item as top priority