



behavior research center's

Rocky Mountain Poll

NEWS RELEASE
RMP 2002-I-08

Contact: Earl de Berge
Research Director

SUPPORT FOR CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON GASOLINE PRICES STILL STRONG, BUT SOMEWHAT SUBSIDED.

Phoenix, Arizona, February 7, 2002. Consumer belief that gasoline prices at the pump reflect the realities of supply and demand has grown significantly since 1999 when only 12 percent held that opinion and 79 percent believed prices were higher than warranted by supply and demand economics. Today, in a period of comparatively low at-the-pump prices, 35 percent of consumers believe prices at the pump reflect reality, nearly a tripling in the reading. Nonetheless, a majority remain of the opinion that prices are artificially high and another eight percent are unsure. With predictions now growing that prices will begin to rise as supply falls, consumer and business frustration with roller coaster prices may regenerate calls for congressional investigations.

Perhaps more important, there has been little change in the proportion who believe the U.S. Congress should investigate gasoline prices with an eye toward whether the industry should be regulated. Belief in the need for such an inquiry registered 51 percent in 1997, rose to 58 percent during peak price periods in 1999 and now registers 49 percent. Forty-two percent oppose such investigations, a level roughly comparable to 1997 but higher than in 1999.

Views on the need for a congressional investigation have always been somewhat partisan in tone, but have become increasingly partisan in this survey. Today, only 36 percent of Republican voters favor congressional inquiries compared to 52 percent of Democrats and 44 percent of Independents. Nearly six of ten Republicans oppose such an inquiry, compared to 36 percent of Democrats.

The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 708 adults across Arizona conducted between January 9 and January 17, 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 to read this and other recent polls.

-30-

EDITOR'S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll Arizona (2002-I-08) is based on 708 interviews with adults across Arizona conducted from January 9th through January 17th, 2002. 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 may say with a 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.7 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.

STATISTICAL DATA

Behavior Research Center
 Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona
 RMP 2002-I-08

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

“As you may be aware, gasoline prices at the pump are not regulated in the U.S., so prices are determined by market supply and demand economics. In general, do you think gasoline prices in this country reflect the realities of supply and demand or do you think gasoline prices are higher than they should be?”

	1997	1999	2002
Reflect reality	20%	12%	35%
Higher than should be	73	79	54
Lower than should be	3	5	3
Not sure	4	4	8

“Do you favor or oppose the U.S. Congress investigating whether gasoline prices should be regulated by the Federal Government?”

	1997	1999	2002
Favor	51%	58%	49%
Oppose	43	36	42
Unsure	6	6	9

PROPORTION WHO FAVOR/OPOSE
CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS – 2002

	Favor	Oppose	Unsure
Total	49%	42%	9%
Democrat	52	36	12
Republican	36	57	7
Independent	44	48	8