



TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: GARRETT BALLENGEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: STATE OF THE MOUNTAIN STATE POLLING MEMO
DATE: JANUARY 9TH, 2023

Executive Summary

The Cardinal Institute commissioned a public opinion survey to track and determine the attitudes and opinions of West Virginia voters on important issues and initiatives. The results are described below. Generally speaking, West Virginians are proud of their state and their heritage according to this survey, but they also believe certain aspects of society can and should improve.

On the Economy and Education: Economic issues such as job creation/retention and issues of taxation remain a priority. These are followed closely by education issues and social issues such as drug abuse. Importantly, improving the state's K-12 education system is seen by most as not just a quality-of-life issue but also an economic development tool. A noticeable number of respondents would consider sending their children to charter schools in West Virginia and even more support the government providing tax credits to parents/guardians who send their children to non-public schools in the state.

On Energy: West Virginia residents also maintain core support for the state's energy leadership, be it in fossil fuels, green energy, or even nuclear generated energy. Simply, West Virginians, based on this survey, support an all-of-the-above energy approach. They perceive such as economically beneficial to the state and beneficial to overall national security.

On Jobs: West Virginia residents want to see more opportunity for themselves and their children. They also want to open up opportunity to people moving to the Mountain State. A majority believes that occupational and business licenses granted by other states should be honored by the state government of West Virginia – an issue more commonly referred to as reciprocity.

On Health Care: Most respondents believe there is room for improvement regarding health care in the state. As it relates to large health care organizations operating most hospitals in West Virginia, respondents are nearly equally divided as to whether it would improve or decrease the overall quality of health care. However, health care organizations associated with major teaching hospitals such as WVU and Marshall University appear to improve trust and confidence among respondents. A large majority of respondents believe doctors should be allowed to consult with their patients via other means than in-person consultation such as telemedicine. In fact, many respondents report regular usage of telemedicine in recent years.

In conclusion, West Virginians are proud of their state and its heritage. However, that is not to imply

they believe the State of the Mountain State is excellent. Rather, while they are proud to call themselves West Virginians, they indicate there is room to improve in areas they deem very important: economic development, energy independence, education, and work.

Polling Questions & Results

- Interestingly, a plurality believes improving the state's infrastructure would have the most positive impact on the economy while 21% believes improving the West Virginia K-12 education system would.

***Question** - Thinking specifically about the state's economy, which of the following measures do you believe would have the most positive impact on our job market and economy?*

- (13%) Reforming the state tax code
- (27%) Improving the state's roads, highways and other infrastructure
- (12%) Reducing the number of government regulations on businesses
- (21%) Improving the states K-12 education system
- (15%) Increasing government funding for small and start up business grants and loans
- (5%) Spending more tax dollars to promote tourism in West Virginia
- (6%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- Unfortunately, 65% of respondents are not very, or not at all, confident West Virginia's young people will have adequate job opportunities in the near future. In fact, just 4% are very confident adequate job opportunities will exist for their children and grandchildren. Coupled with the sense of pride this survey shows residents have in the state, it stands to reason they would also want young people to have the same opportunities and ability to live and grow old here but lack confidence that it is possible.

***Question** - How confident are you that children in West Virginia will have adequate job opportunities in the state during the next 15 years or so?*

- (4%) Very confident
- (29%) Somewhat confident
- (46%) Not very confident
- (19%) Not at all confident
- (2%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- When asked which industries or job sectors have the greatest ability to improve West Virginia's job market and economy, most believe it is in high-tech and manufacturing industries followed by the energy industry.

***Question** - Of the following industries, which do you believe has the greatest potential to create jobs in our state during the next 5 to 10 years or so?*

- (13%) The Tourism Industry
- (11%) The Natural Gas Industry
- (10%) The Coal Industry
- (2%) The Automotive Industry
- (3%) State and local governments
- (21%) The High Tech Industry
- (21%) Manufacturing
- (5%) Agricultural and Farming
- (7%) Other (Specify/DNR)

(7%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- Similar to the survey conducted in 2018, just 3% of West Virginians rate the state's K-12 education system as excellent. In fact, in this survey, more than one-third rate K-12 education as poor or failing. Given the importance respondents place on economic improvement, given their correlation between an improved K-12 education and an improved economy, it is clear most West Virginians are hungry for education improvement.

Question - *Regarding the state's K through 12 public education system, do you believe West Virginia's public education system is excellent, good, average, or failing?*

(3%) Excellent
(19%) Good
(41%) Average
(36%) Poor/Failing
(2%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- 44% of West Virginia respondents who are parents or guardians of school-aged children indicate they would consider sending their child to a charter school. Likelihood of considering charter school attendance is consistent across geographic, demographic, and political variables. Just 20% of these respondents say they are not at all likely to consider charter schools. Compared to the survey conducted in 2017, just 16% of respondents disagreed that parents should be afforded more educational choices (such as charter schools) in the state.

Question - *Charter Schools now operate in West Virginia. A charter school has more flexibility in creating its curriculum and school standards compared to a traditional school which must abide by the standards put forth by the West Virginia State School board. How likely would you be to send your child to a charter school in West Virginia?*

(16%) Very likely
(28%) Somewhat likely
(31%) Not very likely
(20%) Not at all likely
(5%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- Nearly three-fourths of all respondents support tax credits to parents who spend money on their child's education. In fact, only 6% strongly oppose such tax credits. Support for these tax credits exceeds 60% in every region of the state and exceeds 70% of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.

Question - *Would you support or oppose state government providing parents with tax credits to offset money they spend on their child's education in grades K through 12?*

(33%) Strongly support
(41%) Somewhat support
(11%) Somewhat oppose
(6%) Strongly oppose
(9%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- A majority (53%) of respondents support the creation of nuclear power in West Virginia compared to 38% who oppose. A majority of Republicans (54%), Democrats (52%), and Independents (53%) support the creation of nuclear power plants for electricity generation. It should be noted that support and opposition is not very intense as to this question. 30% of the 53% who support say they somewhat support, while 21% of the 38% who oppose say they are only somewhat opposed. In other words, should nuclear power generation become a reality in West Virginia, it is clear citizens of the state need additional information before solidifying their opinions.

Question- *Do you support or oppose construction of Nuclear Power Plants in West Virginia to provide more businesses and people with electricity?*

(23%) Strongly support
 (30%) Somewhat support
 (21%) Somewhat oppose
 (17%) Strongly oppose
 (5%) Dk/Na

- The vast majority of respondents (78%) believe domestic US energy production is not just important but VERY important. Just 1% believe domestic energy production is not at all important. Such importance is consistent across all major demographic sub-sets such as age, geography, political party, gender, et cetera.

Question - *How important do you believe it is for the United States to produce most of the energy it needs within the country opposed to buying energy from other countries?*

(78%) Very important
 (16%) Somewhat important
 (2%) Not very important
 (1%) Not at all important
 (2%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- Most West Virginians (61%) believe energy independence is more important than fighting global warming. Energy independence is preferred by 47% of Democrats, 74% of Republicans, and 62% of Independents.

Question - *In your opinion, should it be more of a priority for the federal government to make the United States more energy independent or to reduce carbon emissions from energy production to fight global warming?*

(61%) More important to become energy independent
 (30%) More important to reduce carbon emissions to fight global warming
 (9%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- One such path to energy independence according to respondents is the development of more natural gas and construction of more pipelines. An overwhelming majority (84%) agree more natural gas development and pipeline construction in the United States will allow the country to become more energy independent.

Question - *Do you agree or disagree developing more natural gas in the United States and building more pipelines to transport that natural gas will allow the United States to become more energy independent?*

(53%) Strongly agree
 (31%) Somewhat agree
 (8%) Somewhat disagree
 (3%) Strongly disagree

(4%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

- Improving the economy of West Virginia is important to many West Virginians, who want to see their children able to live and work in the state. Two-thirds (66%) of those surveyed agree that individuals and businesses who are licensed to work in other states should be allowed to do so in West Virginia as well.

***Question** - Many occupations and businesses in West Virginia require a permit or license from the state government in order to conduct business in West Virginia. Do you agree or disagree that if a person or business has a permit or license to conduct a certain kind of business in another state, generally speaking, West Virginia should honor that permit or license to do business in West Virginia?*

(24%) Strongly agree

(42%) Somewhat agree

(19%) Somewhat disagree

(10%) Strongly disagree

(5%) Dk/Na/Rf (DNR)

Background and Methodology

- *The survey was sponsored by the Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy to better understand the perceptions and opinions of West Virginia registered voters on a host of issues. It was conducted by MBE, LLC.*
- *400 registered West Virginia voters were interviewed for this survey. For results on the total sample, the margin of error is +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence level. Additionally, instrument design and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls. Some totals may not equal 100% as a result of rounding.*
- *Interviews were conducted in November of 2022. The interviews were conducted online and by telephone among both landline and high-use cellular telephone respondents.*