



RAN Poll Shows Nevadans More Optimistic about Economy, but Jobs are still a Major Concern

Majority Believe that Increased Business Taxes will cost Nevadans jobs

(Las Vegas)—The Retail Association of Nevada's (RAN) latest survey, conducted on their behalf by Public Opinion Strategies, shows the number of Nevadans agreeing that Nevada is going in the right direction tripled from 11% in 2010 to 33% last week; for the first time in the two-year history of the survey, more than fifty-percent of respondents feel that the worst of Nevada's difficult times are over.

According to Mary Lau, president of RAN, "Nevadans are feeling more optimistic with fewer bracing for worse economic news. While jobs and the economy remain primary concerns, most (73%) of Nevadans reported that their own economic situation had either improved or stayed the same in the past six months. While people are not feeling totally optimistic, the overwhelming pessimism shown in earlier polls is certainly receding."

On questions concerning taxes and state spending, voters gave conflicting answers. Most (64%) believe the amount of state taxes they pay is about right and a majority (59%) believe that state spending cuts can be absorbed by cutting waste, fraud, and abuse. However, a majority also favor increasing their own taxes (58%) rather than cutting state spending on government services such on education and health care (37%). Nevadans even support, by roughly the same margin, raising property taxes (56%) to support education and school construction.

Raising taxes on businesses is not viewed as favorably, most likely because a majority (62%) believe that increasing taxes on businesses will result in job losses and most (60%) also believe that increased business taxes will harm Nevada's attempts to diversity our economy. Proposals to increase the gaming tax and to institute a margin tax on business failed to gain approval from the majority of those polled. Only 49% support an increase in the gaming tax while 48% believe such an increase will harm the economic recovery and cost jobs. Similarly, only 47% of those polled believe a margin tax would provide needed revenues while 48% believe such a tax will raise prices, cost jobs, and hurt businesses. An increase in the mining tax, however, receives more support, with 58% of those polled believing that an increase in the mining tax is a good idea. This support comes primarily from Democrats (70%) while Independents and Republicans are less supportive.

Voters also show strong support for spending restraint by lawmakers. When asked whether the Legislature should be subject to a spending cap linked to population growth and inflation, a strong majority (67%) supported the limitation. This support crossed party lines, with a majority of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats favoring the spending cap.

Politically, the survey found that 63% of Nevadans approve of Governor Sandoval's job performance, a 16 percent increase since February 2011, and most believe that the Governor understands the problems they face. Members of the state legislature did not fare as well, with only 38% believing that members of the state legislature understand their problems and a majority favor a new person (52%) over the current legislator (32%).

Neither political party has a strong advantage in Nevada. According to those polled, if the election for state legislature were held today, 42% of respondents would vote republican and 41% would vote democrat. In the match-up for U.S. Senate, Dean Heller (R) has a narrow lead over Shelley Berkley (47% Heller/44% Berkley). For the Presidential election, 49% want a new person and 47% believe that President Obama deserves re-election.

RAN commissions their surveys from Public Opinion Strategies twice a year which allows trends to be identified and provides an historical context to some of the toughest challenges facing Nevada. Public Opinion Strategies (POS) is a national political and public affairs research firm. Founded in 1991, POS has conducted more than five million interviews with voters and consumers in all fifty states and over two dozen foreign countries. The most recent RAN poll, which was conducted from February 21-23 used a sample size of 500 likely voters, and has a margin of error of 4.38 percentage points.

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