



## **Statewide poll by Retail Association of Nevada Shows More Optimistic Tone**

### **Education moves to number one issue in the state**

Carson City--Optimism is on the rise in Nevada. For the first time in years, more voters believe the state is heading in the right direction (47%) rather than on the wrong track (42%). Additionally, most voters (61%) say the worst is over for the state, a complete turnaround from May of 2009, when 62% said the worst was yet to come.

The poll is the latest by the Retail Association of Nevada (RAN), which sponsors the twice-yearly survey of Nevadans on the issues important to the state. Conducted by Public Opinion Strategies (POS), the poll contacted 500 likely voters between February 16-18 and has a margin of error of 4.38%.

"We certainly see optimistic signs in this poll," said Mary Lau, president of RAN. "But we also note that Nevadans are only cautiously optimistic, as throughout the poll Nevadans are wary of anything that could disturb our fragile economic recovery and impact on jobs."

Seventy-two percent of those polled believe Nevada's unemployment rate will stay the same (48%) or increase (24%) and just 26% believe the unemployment rate will decrease over the next year.

Looking at issues, education (45%) has moved past jobs (41%) and the economy (33%) as the top issue in the state. Despite the economy improving throughout the country, pollster Glen Bolger of POS noted that education is not the top issue elsewhere in the country, which underscores how important education is to Nevada voters.

On taxes, the numbers are fairly steady and somewhat contradictory. Most voters (62%) say they pay about the right amount in state taxes, while 24% say their taxes are too high and 7% say they are too low.

However, most polled would rather see their taxes increased (58%) than have the state government cut the budget for services like education and health care (33%).

On the issue of business taxes, voters continue to believe that business tax increases will result in additional job losses and harm attempts to diversify the types of businesses in the state. "Going back to February of 2010, a strong majority of Nevadans believe that increasing taxes and fees on businesses will result in job losses and harm efforts to diversify," said Lau. "Nevadans also believe there is still a lot of room to reduce spending though getting rid of waste, fraud and abuse."

Nevadans are split with respect to whether Nevada's current tax system works well (50%) or needs significant changes (47%). Overwhelmingly, though, those polled state that any changes to the tax system should not include tax increases (61%) while only 37% believe tax system changes should also bring in more revenue (37%).

Support for the Education Initiative (or margin tax) is initially strong (58% favor and 39% oppose), but people are concerned that the margin tax would negatively impact businesses and result in lost jobs (48%). People also don't accept the argument that prices are the same here as they are in states with a business tax and, therefore, the tax won't impact prices (44% accept that argument), while 52% believe that the additional tax will impact business decisions concerning expanding, hiring, and wages.

For the second time in a row, voters strongly believe that education reforms are much more likely to improve the education system in Nevada (73%) than increased education funding (22%).

When asked to looking at K-12 education funding priorities, reduced class sizes is seen as the most important education funding priority (38%), with increased teacher salaries second (22%), followed by putting more money into charter schools (17%), expanding full-day kindergarten (15%), and increasing funding for English as Second Language (ESL) programs at 3%.

On the other issues tested in the RAN poll, strong majorities support drug tests for welfare recipients (75%) and beginning to collect a tax on internet sales in 2013 (59% favor and 38% oppose). Slimmer majorities support legalizing marijuana and using the tax revenue to fund education (56% favor and 42% oppose) and removing the Protection of Marriage provision from the Nevada Constitution (54%

favor and 43% oppose), with both of these issues being divided along partisan and generational lines.

Voters are unsure about changing the state's minimum wage law (49% oppose and 47% favor) to eliminate the requirement that many Nevada employers pay a minimum wage that is one dollar higher than the federal minimum. There is a similar split decision on online gambling in the state, with voters across party lines evenly divided on the issue.

Just over half of Nevada voters (51%) believe there should be no changes to Nevada's gun laws, while 36% believe gun laws in the state should be tightened and only 9% believe they should be loosened.

On immigration questions, those polled strongly support requiring employers to verify a person's citizenship before hiring (91%), support giving permanent residency to undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children, graduated from high school in the U.S. and who have lived here for more than five years (72% favor and 26% oppose), and oppose allowing undocumented immigrants to obtain drivers' licenses (72% oppose and 27% support).

Finally, voters narrowly support creating an Appeals Court in the state (38% to 42%).

Public Opinion Strategies (POS) is a national political and public affairs research firm. Founded in 1991, POS has conducted more than six million interviews with voters and consumers in all fifty states and over two dozen foreign countries. For more information on the RAN poll results, please visit the press releases section of the media center (found on the right of the homepage) at [www.rannv.org](http://www.rannv.org) or contact Bryan Wachter at 775-771-8969.

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