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Survey of Nevada Voters Examines Views Toward Smoke-Free Law and SB 372

April 29, 2009 – The Nevada state legislature is considering a new bill, SB 372, that would loosen legal restrictions put in place by the 2006 Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act (NCIAA), adopted by popular ballot in November of 2006. Lake Research Partners conducted a statewide survey of N = 600 likely voters from April 17 through 20, 2009. The margin of sampling error is ± 4.0 percentage points. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate how voters feel about the smoke-free law (NCIAA) two-and-a-half years later, how the law has affected their likelihood to go out to restaurants and bars, and gauge voter opinions toward SB 372.

Among the key findings are:

- A majority of Nevada voters (72%) support the current smoke-free law, including 23% saying they wish the law had gone further to make more public places smoke-free.
- By more than a five-to-one margin, Nevada voters say they are more likely to go to a restaurant or bar if it is smoke-free (56% more likely vs. 10% less likely).
- A majority (61%) says going to smoke-free restaurants and other venues has become more enjoyable since the 2006 law went into effect. Only seven percent say going out to smoke-free places has become less enjoyable.
- After hearing a description of SB 372, 62% of voters say they oppose the new bill. Nevada voters are more than twice as likely to strongly oppose (51%) than strongly support (20%) the bill.
- When presented with economic arguments for and against SB 372, a majority of voters (68%) side with the argument that the current smoke-free law has not hurt local businesses.
- More than one third (37%) say they would be less likely to vote to re-elect a legislator who supports SB 372, compared to 17% who say they would be more likely to vote to re-elect.

Following are detailed findings.

Detailed Findings

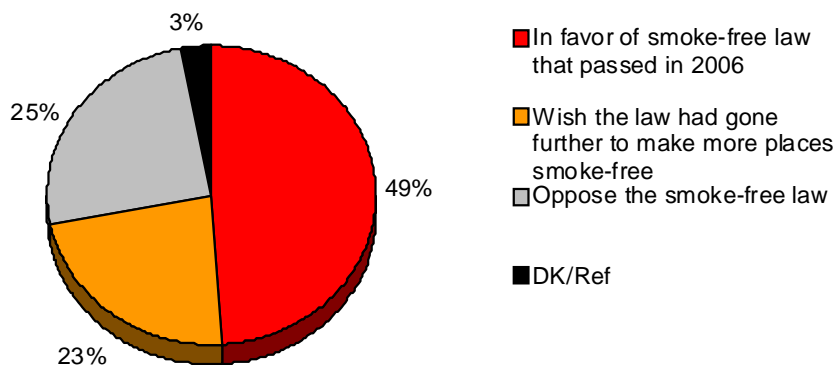
Nearly three years after passing the 2006 Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act, a majority of voters (72%) say they either support the smoke-free law or wish the law would have gone further to restrict indoor smoking. Survey respondents were read a brief description of the 2006 NCIAA, after which they were asked their current opinion of the law:

As you may remember, back in 2006, voters passed the Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act, which is the smoke-free law. This law prohibits smoking inside licensed child care facilities, movie theaters, video arcades, school buildings or on school property, government or public buildings, malls and retail establishments that grant access to minors, grocery stores, and all areas within restaurants. This law still allows for smoking inside casinos, strip clubs, brothels, retail tobacco stores, and stand-alone bars that do not serve food.

Half of Nevada voters (49%) say they are in favor of the smoke-free law that passed in 2006, and nearly one in four (23%) says they wish the law had made *more* places smoke-free. One in four (25%) opposes the law. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Views Toward 2006 Smoke-Free Law

Thinking about now, a few years later,
which of the following best describes your view toward the smoke-free law?



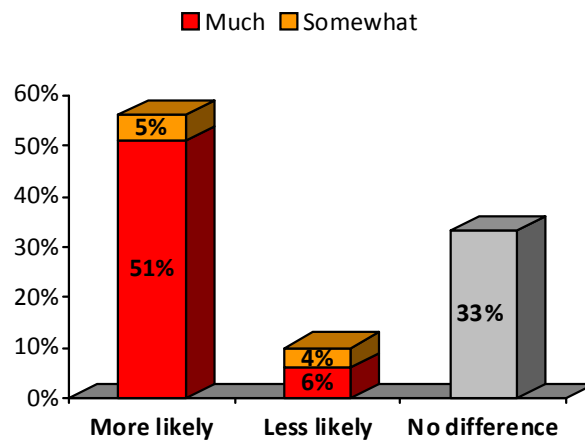
Majorities across the state either support the 2006 law or wish it had gone further, including 68% in Clark County and 80% in the Reno/Carson City area (Washoe and Carson City Counties combined). Although the sample size is small for the remaining counties in the state (n=59), 76% of these rural voters feel the same.

Majorities of Democrats (71%) and Republicans (77%) support the existing law or wish it had made more places smoke-free.

Current smokers are the only demographic group in which a majority (71%) opposes the 2006 law. However, they comprise a small minority of voters; 16% of likely voters are current smokers (10% smoke regularly and 6% on occasion).

By a 5 to 1 margin, voters say they are much more likely to go to a bar or restaurant if it is smoke-free. Slightly more than half of voters (56%) say they are more likely to go to a restaurant or bar if it is smoke-free, including 51% of voters saying much more likely. Ten percent say they are less likely to go to smoke-free establishment, including six percent saying much less likely. One in three (33%) says it does not make a difference to them whether or not an establishment is smoke-free. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2: Likelihood to Go to Establishment If It's Smoke-free
Are you more or less likely to go to a restaurant or bar if it's smoke-free, or does it not make a difference to you?



Voters in both Clark County (57%) and Washoe/Carson City Counties (58%) say they are more likely to go to an establishment if it is smoke-free. Forty-five percent of rural voters¹ say the same, and 43% say it makes no difference.

Since establishments have become smoke-free, a majority of voters say going out has become more enjoyable. Six in ten Nevada voters (61%) say that since restaurants and other social places have been smoke-free, going out has become a more enjoyable experience. Seven percent of voters say the experience has become less enjoyable, and 32% say it has made no difference. Even a majority of current smokers say either it has not made a difference (48%) or going out has become more enjoyable (14%).

¹ Caution: small sample size (n=59)

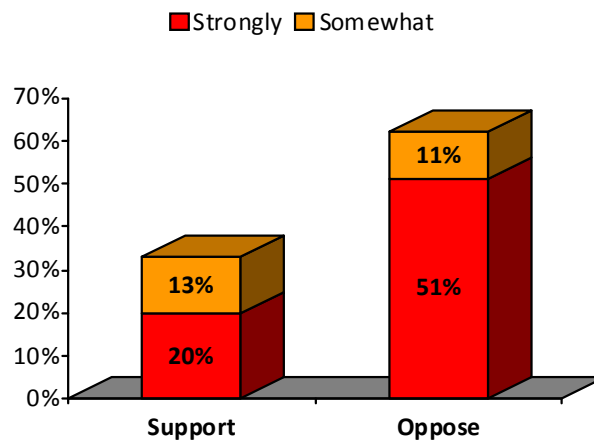
A majority of voters oppose this year's SB 372. Voters were presented with a brief description of SB 372 and what would be scaled back in the current smoke-free law if the bill passed:

State legislators are currently voting on a new bill that would scale back the current smoke-free law. Please listen carefully to what would be scaled back as result of this new bill, and then I'd like to get your reaction. The new bill would allow smoking inside stand-alone bars and restaurants if they prohibit anyone under 21 from entering. The new bill would also allow smoking inside convention facilities for some trade shows and other events where tobacco products are displayed. The new bill would also remove local control, taking away the rights of communities to decide what smoking policies work best in their local area.

After hearing this description of SB 372, 62% of voters say they oppose the new bill and 34% express support for it. Nevada voters are more than twice as likely to strongly oppose (51%) than strongly support (20%) the bill. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3: Support and Opposition to SB 372

Based on what you heard, do you support or oppose this new bill to scale back the current smoke-free law?



Six in ten Clark County voters (59%) and those in rural areas² (58%) oppose SB 372, and seven in ten (70%) voters in Washoe/Carson City Counties express opposition. Fifty-nine percent of Democrats and 64% of Republicans oppose the bill. Latinos (72%) and those who have never smoked (76%) are among the most likely to oppose SB 372.

The only subgroup in which a majority supports SB 372 is current smokers (80%).

² Caution: small sample size (n=59)

When given two economic arguments around SB 372, a majority of voters tend to agree with the new UNLV study showing the smoke-free law has not hurt local businesses.

Survey respondents were presented with economic arguments presented by two hypothetical state legislators:

State Legislator A says the smoke-free law has hurt local businesses because smokers have stayed home or not stayed out as long as because they can't smoke inside some spaces. In this tough economic time, we need to scale back the smoke-free law to help local businesses and the economy.

State Legislator B says a new U-N-L-V study shows that the smoke-free law has not hurt local businesses, but rather, much larger issues like the mortgage crisis is what is hurting businesses. Also, studies show that smoke-free laws actually help the bottom line by reducing workers' sick days and increasing productivity, while making life healthier for workers who can breathe clean air at work.

Respondents were then asked which state legislator they agree with more. More than two thirds (68%) say they agree with "state legislator B's" argument citing the UNLV research that shows the smoke-free law has not hurt businesses. One in four voters (25%) agrees more with "state legislator A's" argument that the current smoke-free law has hurt businesses, and we need to scale back the law to help local businesses and the economy.

There is no difference across political party in views toward these arguments. Seven in ten Republicans (72%) and Democrats (72%) agree more with "state legislator B" and the new UNLV study. Eight in ten voters in Washoe/Carson City Counties (83%) side more with "state legislator B," as do 63% of Clark County voters.

By more than a 2 to 1 margin, voters say they would be less likely to re-elect a legislator who supports SB 372. When asked whether a legislator's vote in favor of SB 372 would affect their support, 37% say they would be less likely to vote to re-elect him or her, compared to 17% who say they would be more likely to do the same. About four in ten say it would not make a difference in voting to re-elect a state legislator (44%).

Methodology

This survey was conducted April 17 - 20, 2009, among 600 likely voters in Nevada, using random digit-dial (RDD) sample. Respondents were screened for likelihood to vote in the 2010 elections. All survey respondents report being currently registered to vote, voted in either the 2006 or 2008 general election, or has registered since November 2008, and say they are "almost certain" to vote or will "probably" vote in the 2010 elections. The data were weighted slightly by age. The margin of sampling error for the survey is ± 4.0 percentage points. The sampling error is larger for smaller subgroups within the sample.

For more information regarding this survey, please contact:

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