

To: Dr. Nancy Rosen-Cohen, Executive Director
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence,
Maryland Chapter

From: Steve Raabe, OpinionWorks

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Subject: Maryland Polling on a Proposed Alcohol Tax

Overview

In a year of continuing economic stress for average households and little appetite for new taxes, a majority of Maryland voters say the State's leaders should make an exception to pass an increased alcohol tax. Our most recent Maryland statewide voter poll has found 71% support for an increased tax of 10 cents per alcoholic drink, with a solid majority saying they favor the proposal "strongly."

Detail

Strong Support for Health-Related Public Spending

There is almost overwhelming public support for the types of policy priorities an increased alcohol tax might fund. Two-thirds or more of the electorate believe there should be increased public funding for each of these priorities: alcohol and drug addiction treatment (65% in favor), extending health care coverage to more of the uninsured (66%), programs for people with mental health needs (79%), and programs for people with developmental disabilities (80%).

Support for Increased Public Funding

	Favor	Oppose	Not sure	Refused to say
Alcohol and drug addiction treatment	65%	28%	6%	1%
Extending health care coverage to more of the uninsured	66%	25%	8%	*%
Programs for people with mental health needs	79%	14%	6%	1%
Programs for people with developmental disabilities	80%	12%	8%	*%

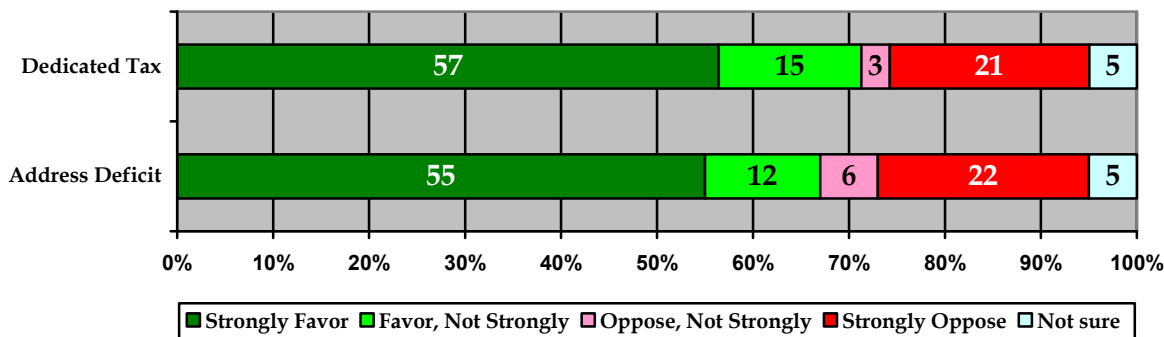
"Would you favor or oppose increasing public funding in Maryland for each of these?" (Read and randomize list.)

Strong Support for an Alcohol Tax Increase

Two-thirds of the electorate (68%) favor an increased tax of 10 cents per alcoholic drink to help address the state's budget deficit, with 55% of Maryland voters saying they "feel that way strongly." Only 27% are opposed.

The number who support an increased alcohol tax grows further to 71% if the revenue is dedicated to the health-related public policy priorities mentioned above. Only 24% are opposed. Under this scenario, 57% of all Maryland voters favor the alcohol tax proposal strongly.

Voter Support for 10-Cent Alcohol Tax Increase



“Would you favor or oppose an increased tax of 10 cents per alcoholic drink to help address the state's budget deficit?” (If favor/oppose): “Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?”

“Would you favor or oppose an increased tax of 10 cents per alcoholic drink if the money was dedicated specifically to alcohol and drug treatment and prevention, health care for the uninsured, and programs for people with developmental disabilities and mental health needs?” (If favor/oppose): “Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?”

Making an Exception for the Alcohol Tax

It is well-known that Marylanders continue to suffer significant economic stress. In our own recent polling, voters continue to see the Maryland economy getting worse rather than better by three-to-one. Approximately two-thirds of Marylanders worry about money in their households. This is not an environment where the public is hungry for new taxes.

But a majority say that the State’s leaders “should make an exception to raise the alcohol tax.” By a margin of 50% to 35%, the public believes leaders should set aside their no new taxes pledge for this priority. Another 5% give a qualified answer of “it depends.”

Make an Exception to Raise the Alcohol Tax?

Yes	No	Depends (Volunteered)	Not sure/ Refused
50%	35%	5%	9%

“State government leaders in Maryland have declared that there will be no new tax increases in 2010. Do you think that they should make an exception to raise the alcohol tax?”

Too Much Influence by the Industry

Voters express concerns about the influence of the alcohol industry. By more than two-and-one-half to one voters say “the alcohol industry has too much...influence on the decisions of the Maryland state legislature;” 41% hold this view while only 17% say the industry has “the right amount of influence.” The rest (42%) do not feel they know enough to comment.

How This Survey Was Conducted

OpinionWorks interviewed 402 randomly-selected registered voters across Maryland who said they are likely to vote in the 2010 Maryland general election. Interviews were conducted by telephone February 24 – 28, 2010. The poll has a potential sampling error of no more than $\pm 4.9\%$ at a 95% confidence level, meaning the survey results would differ by no more than that margin at least 95% of the time if *every* likely voter in Maryland had been interviewed.

Interviewees were drawn randomly from a current database of registered voters provided by the Maryland Boards of Elections and matched with telephone numbers by a commercial vendor. Weights were applied to bring the voter sample into strict compliance with normal turnout patterns and demographics of the electorate across the state.

Brief Background on OpinionWorks

OpinionWorks conducts frequent opinion studies in Maryland and the surrounding states. We are the most recent polling organization for *The (Baltimore) Sun* and have polled for numerous other media throughout the region. We work for state and local agencies throughout the Mid-Atlantic, and for a variety of non-profit and for-profit entities within the region and nationally.