

Public Support for Natural Resources Management and Protection

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U.S. Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy
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The Nature Conservancy

- Global organization with programs in every U.S. State and 35 countries
- Mission: to conserve the lands and waters upon which all life depends
- Science-based; non-confrontational
- Focus on tangible conservations results at the “whole system” scale
- Broad range of interests—terrestrial, freshwater, marine

Public Opinion, Conservation, and the Environment

- TNC lobbies for a wide range of issues
- Supports local and state referenda
- Difficult to get environmental legislation through Congress and legislatures
- Easier to pass conservation referenda
- What **are** people thinking?



LORI WEIGEL

PARTNER


DAVE METZ

PARTNER

Nationwide Poll in June, 2012

Four-in-five American voters say that conservation of our natural resources is patriotic.

"For each of the following, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that particular statement."



Conserving our country's natural resources - our land, air and water - is patriotic.

<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
82%	17%

In fact, three-quarters say that stewardship of public lands is one of the things our government does best.

One of the things our government does best is to protect and preserve our national history and natural beauty through national parks, forests, and other public lands.

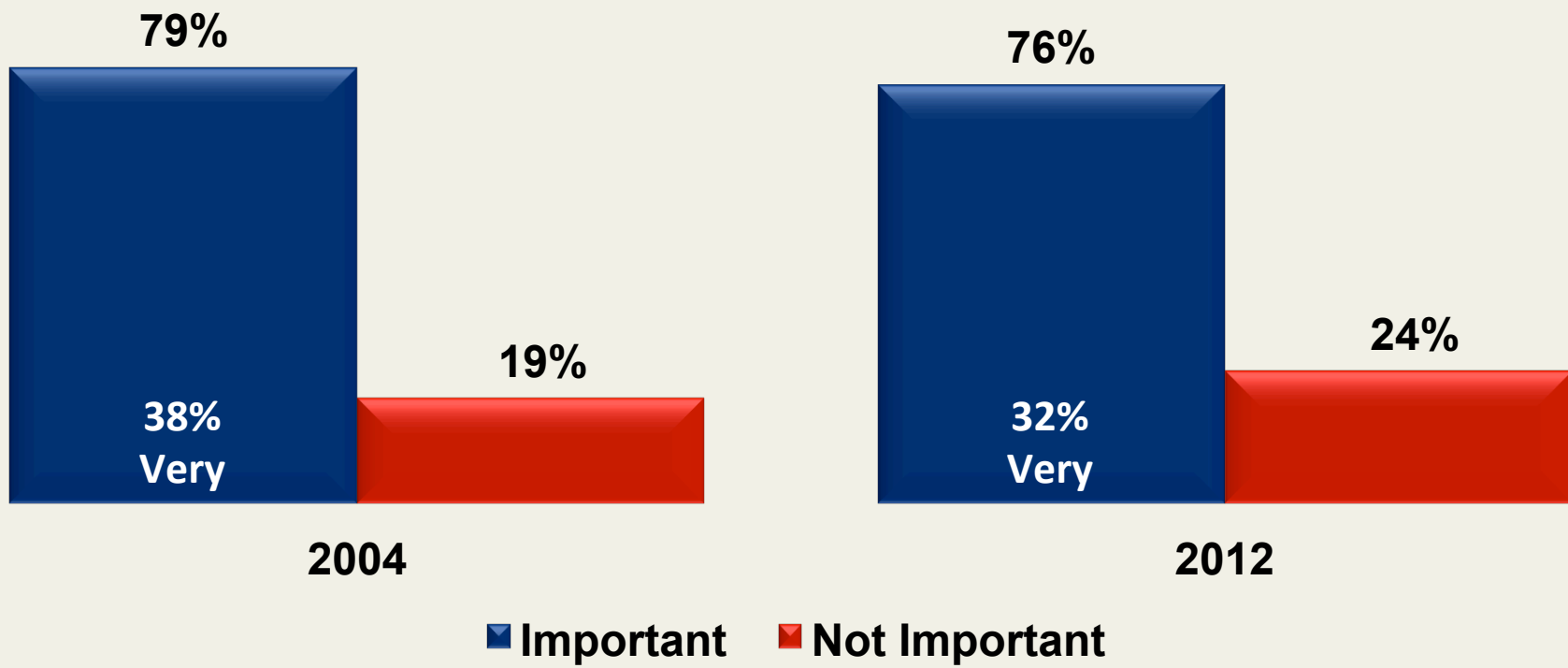
Agree

Disagree

77% 20%

Over three-quarters of voters continue to say that “conservation” is important in their voting decision.

“In making a voting decision, how important are issues involving water quality; natural areas; lakes, rivers, or beaches; neighborhood parks; and wildlife habitat for you in deciding how to vote? Are they...”



But, as a campaign issue amidst other headline-grabbing ones, conservation tends to be mid-tier.

*“Thinking now about how you will decide for whom to vote in November for offices like President and Congress -- I'm going to read you some different issues candidates may take stands on, and please tell me for each one how interested you are in hearing more about the candidates' positions on that issue?
Are you...”*

Ranked By Total Interest



When ranked against core fiscal issues, voters express lower levels of concern about conservation.

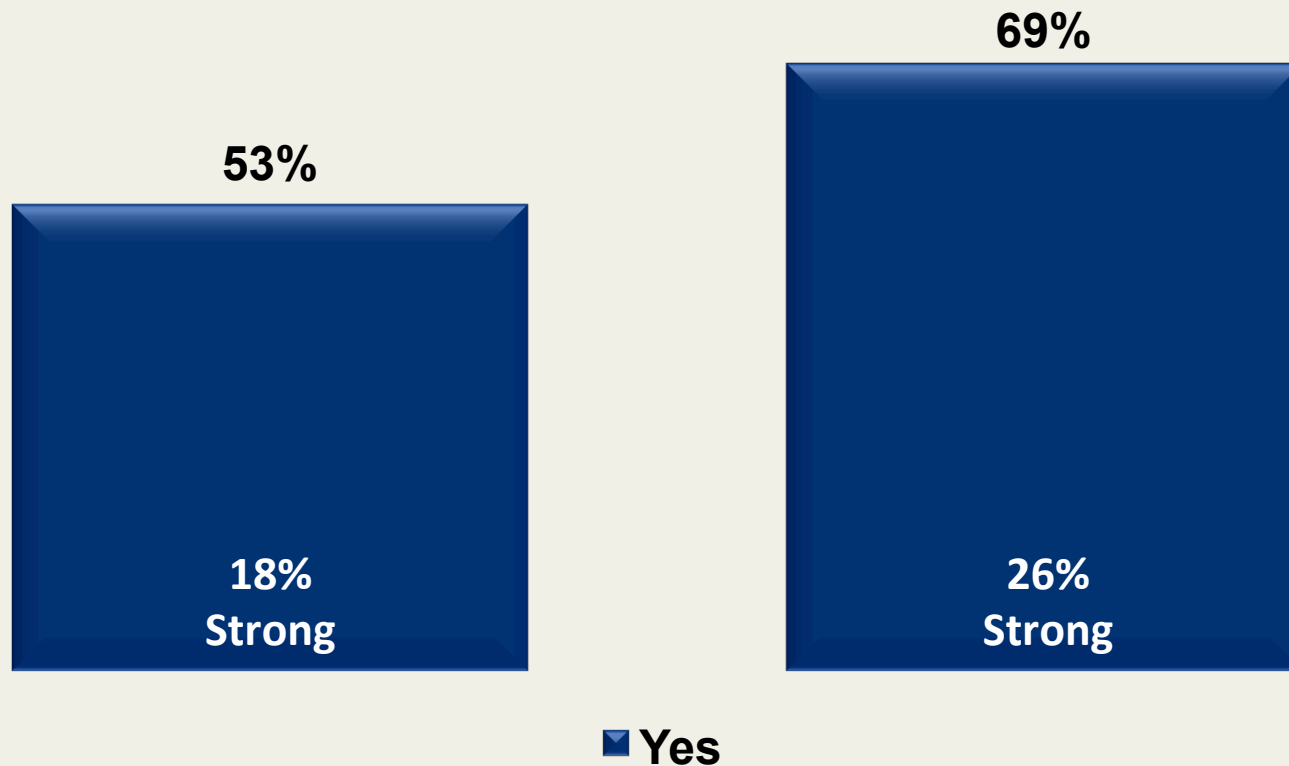
<i>Issues Ranked By Extremely/Very Serious</i>	% Extremely/ Very Serious	% Total Serious
The economy and unemployment	80%	97%
The federal budget deficit	76%	93%
Too much government spending	65%	82%
Kids not spending enough time outdoors and in nature	50%	82%
Pollution of rivers, lakes and streams	42%	76%
Pollution of oceans	40%	66%
Loss of property rights	39%	65%
After-effects of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico on wildlife and natural areas	39%	62%
Global warming	36%	60%
More frequent droughts	35%	62%
Not enough planning by local governments trying to direct how and where growth occurs in their communities	34%	67%
Loss of habitat for fish and wildlife	34%	63%

More voters consider themselves a conservationist than label themselves an environmentalist.

"Do you consider yourself an...?"

Environmentalist

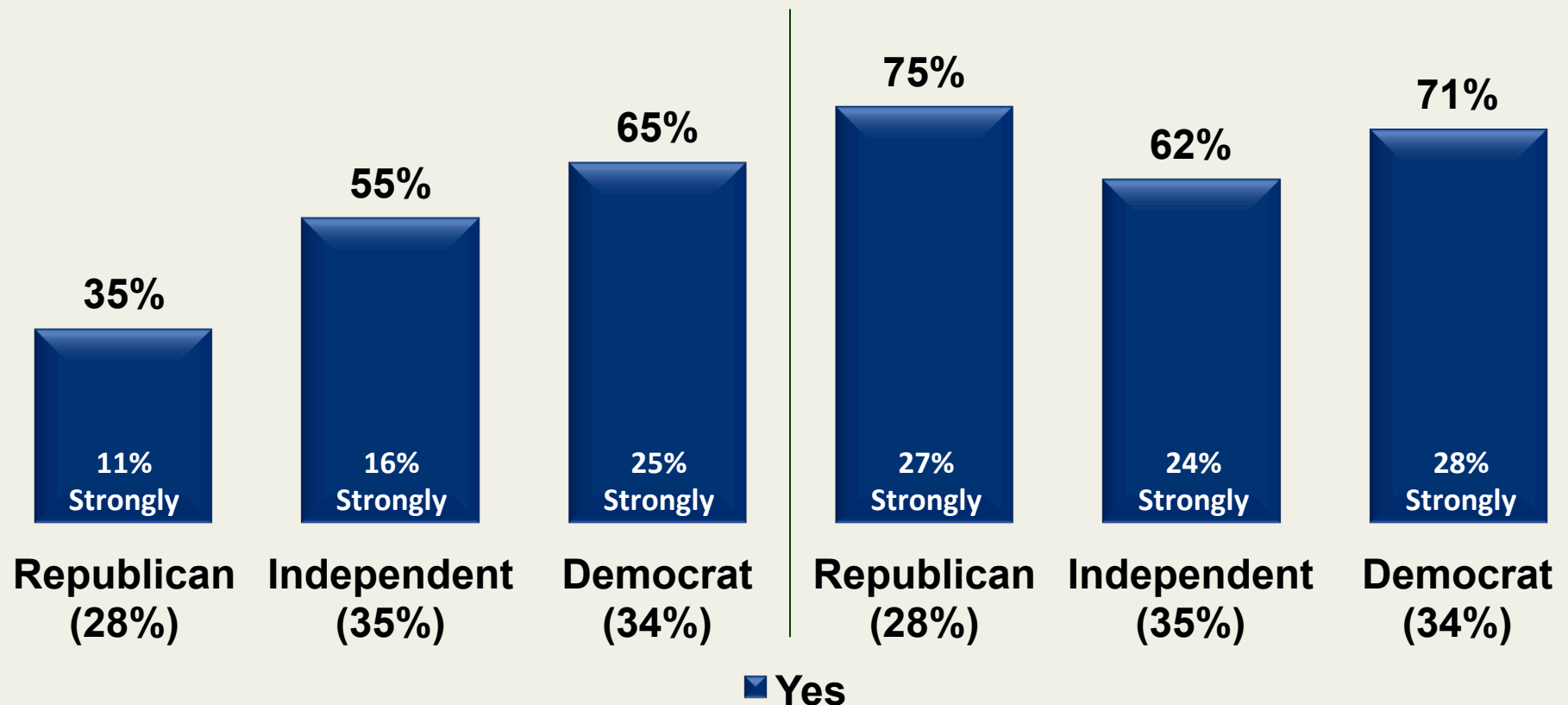
Conservationist



There is a strong relationship between party and identification as an “environmentalist” – GOP most likely to say they are a “conservationist.”

Environmentalist By Party

Conservationist By Party



We continue to see that voters overwhelmingly reject the idea that protecting land and water is at odds with a strong economy.

“Which of the following comes closer to your opinion?”

We can protect land and water and have a strong economy with good jobs for Americans at the same time, without having to choose one over the other.

Sometimes protections for land and water and a strong economy are in conflict and we must choose one over the other.

2009

2012

76%

79%

19%

16%

In fact, voters are increasingly saying they want a “people link” to conservation.

“Please tell me which of these two statements you agree with most, even if neither fits your opinion exactly.”

The best reason to conserve nature is to preserve the benefits people can derive from it - for our economy, our health, and our enjoyment.

2010

45%

2012

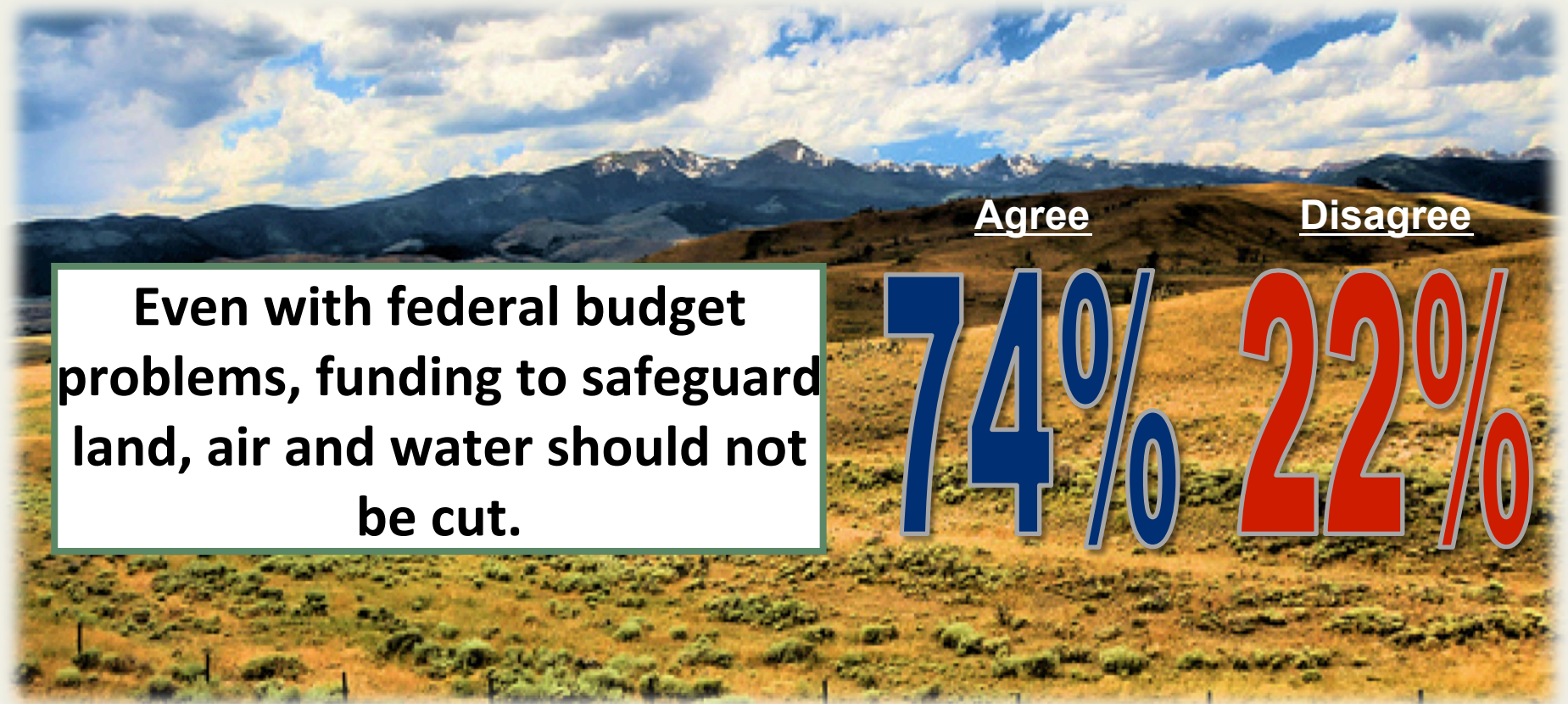
53%

The best reason to conserve nature is for its own sake - to leave systems of plants and wildlife undisturbed to evolve, change and grow.

42%

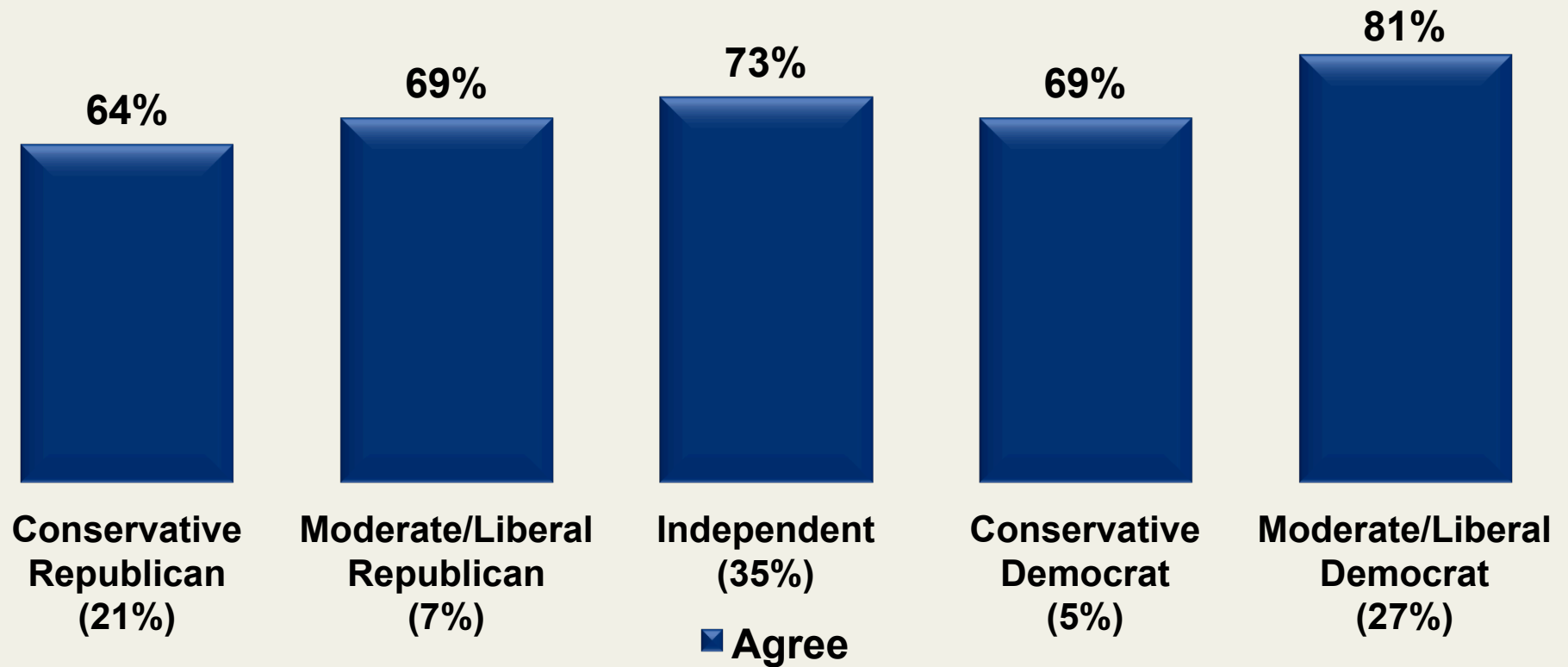
39%

Three-quarters of the electorate rejects cuts to current conservation funding, even when placed in the context of the budget deficit.



More than three in five voters, including conservative Republicans, believe there is an essential role for government in conservation.

Government Conservation Vital By Ideology/Party



And a mere nine percent say that too much public land being set aside is a “very serious” problem.

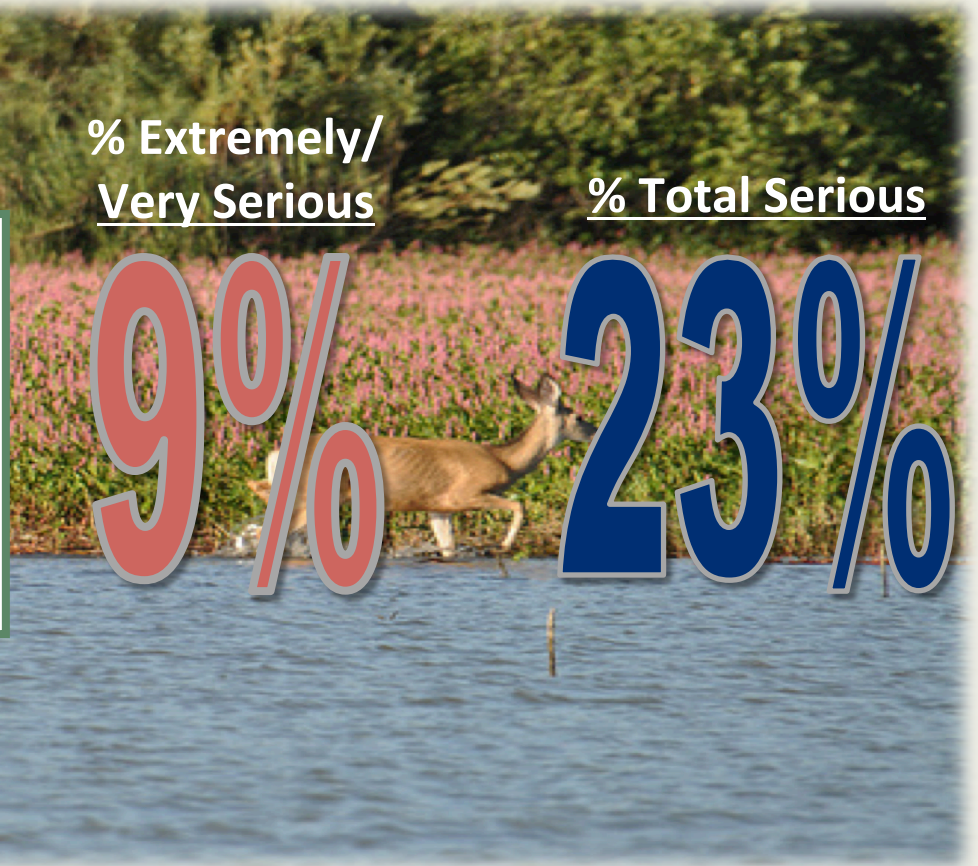
Too much land set aside as public land, such as national parks, national forests, monuments, or wildlife refuges

% Extremely/
Very Serious

9%

% Total Serious

23%

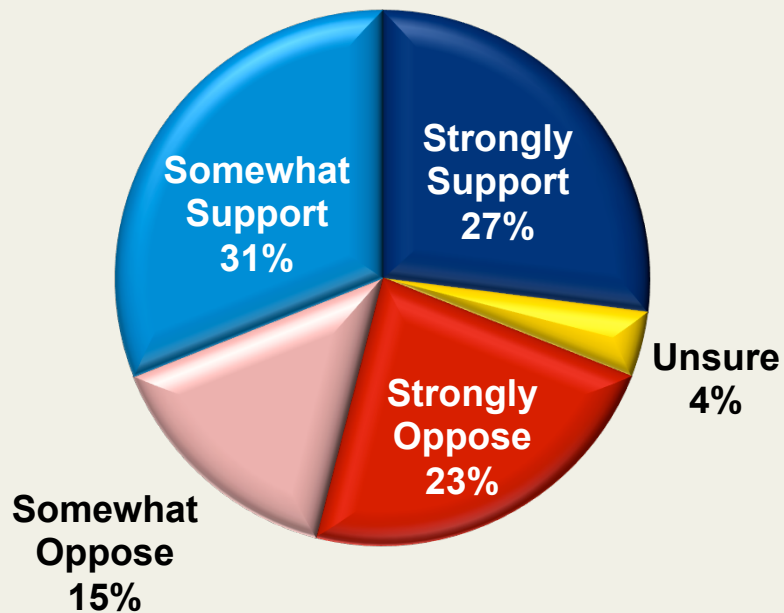


A majority of voters say they would support conservation efforts at various levels of government, even if it meant a tax increase.

*"In general, would you support or oppose programs through which **your STATE OR LOCAL / the FEDERAL government** would purchase land to protect water quality; natural areas; lakes, rivers or beaches; neighborhood parks; and wildlife habitat if it required a small increase in taxes?"*

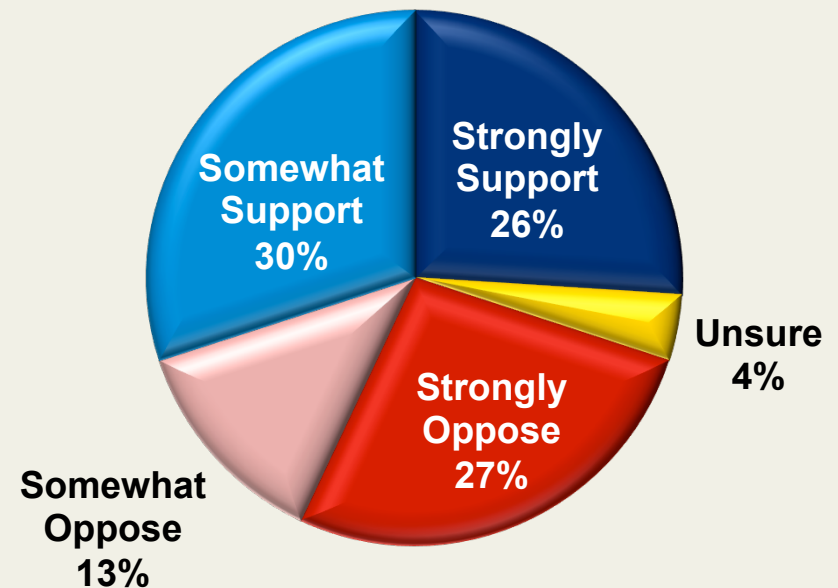
State/Local Government

Total Support	58%
Total Oppose	38%



Federal Government

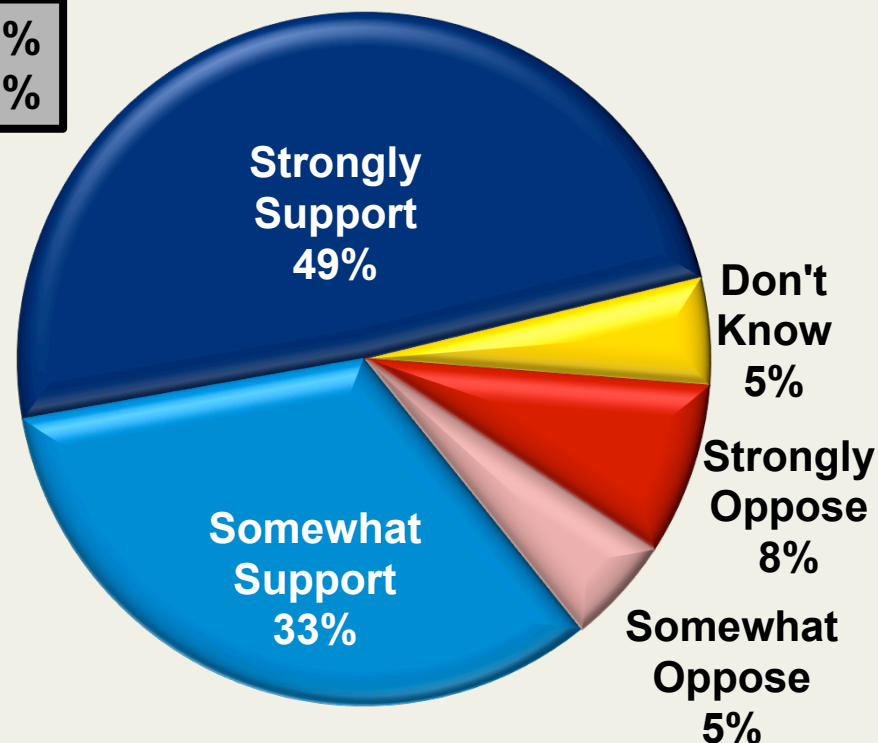
Total Support	56%
Total Oppose	40%



Voters are overwhelmingly supportive of other ways to increase funding, with four in five backing continued dedication of drilling fees to LWCF.

Ensure that the small portion of federal offshore drilling fees already being paid by oil and gas companies is dedicated to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was created by Congress so that these fees could be used for conserving natural areas, wildlife, and clean water and providing access to outdoor recreation throughout the country.

Total Support	82%
Total Oppose	13%

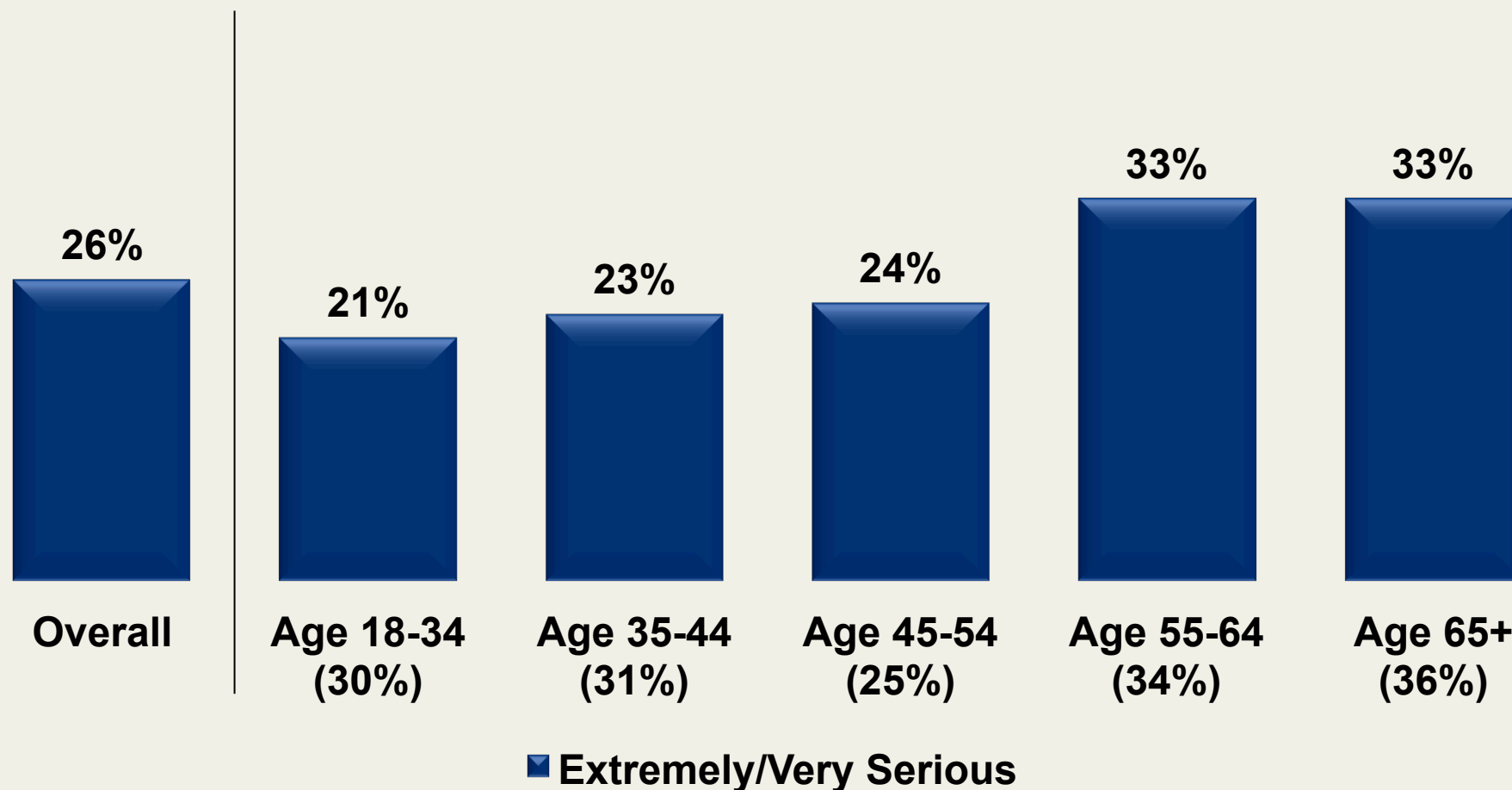


Voters support dedicating existing funds to conservation, irrespective of party affiliation.

	GOP	IND	DEM	Tea Party	Non-Tea Party
Ensure that a portion of the fees paid by visitors and those who use public lands, such as national parks, forests, or wildlife refuges, are dedicated to managing those lands and conserving natural areas, such as forests, land along rivers and streams and wildlife habitat	89%	94%	92%	88%	95%
Ensure that a portion of the fees paid by timber, oil and gas, and other companies which extract resources on public lands are dedicated to managing those lands and conserving natural areas, such as forests, land along rivers and streams and wildlife habitat	82%	86%	93%	82%	89%
Ensure that the small portion of federal offshore drilling fees already being paid by oil and gas companies is dedicated to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was created by Congress so that these fees could be used for conserving natural areas, wildlife, and clean water and providing access to outdoor recreation throughout the country.	74%	77%	92%	72%	87%

Just one-in-four voters say that extreme weather is a “very serious” problem, although older voters are more likely to register this concern.

More Storms and Extreme Weather



Changing Perception of Climate

- Yale/George Mason Poll in September, 2012
- Significant trend toward:
 - Belief that climate change is happening
 - Belief that it is caused by human activity
 - Confidence in scientific assessments
- Reversal of declining support

The 2012 Elections: What It Means for the Country & Conservation

November 2012

LORI WEIGEL



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

DAVE METZ

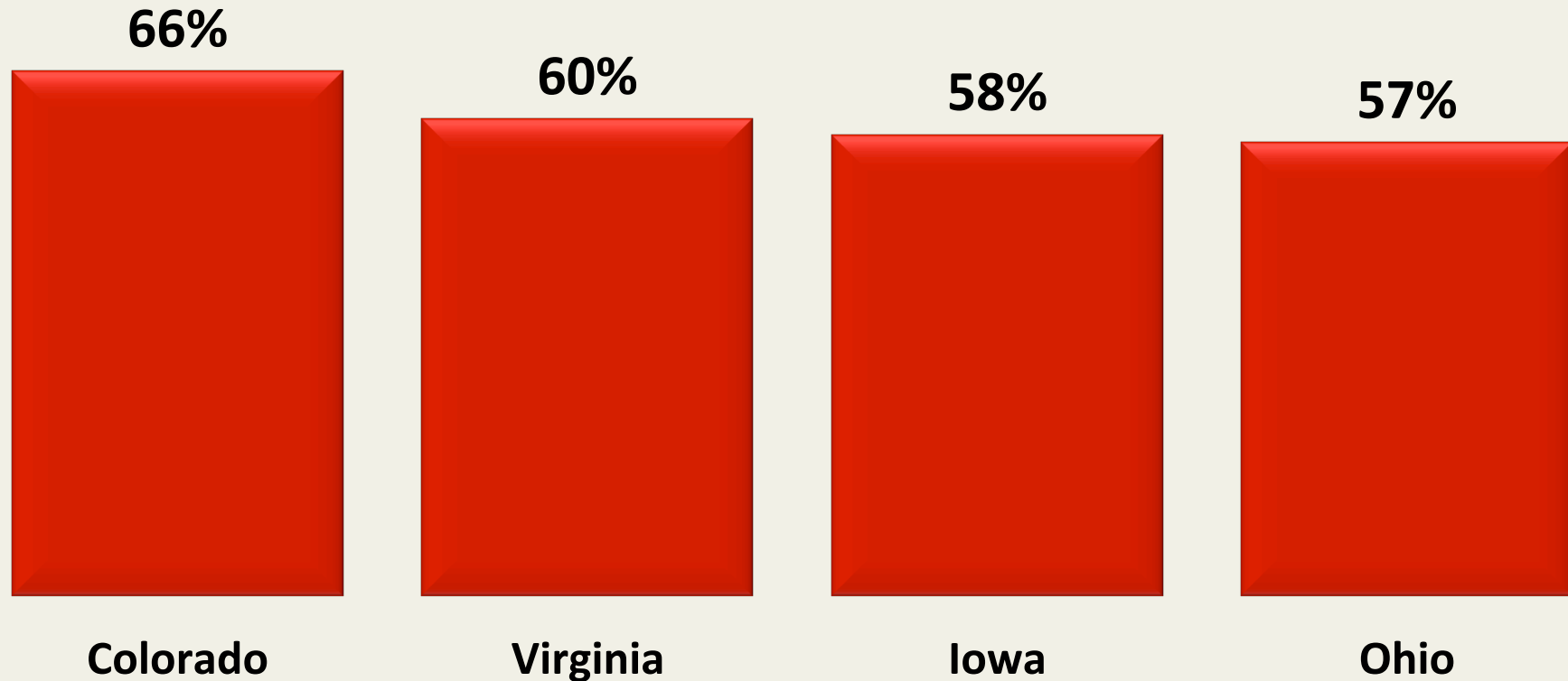
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates - FM3

Public Opinion Research & Strategy

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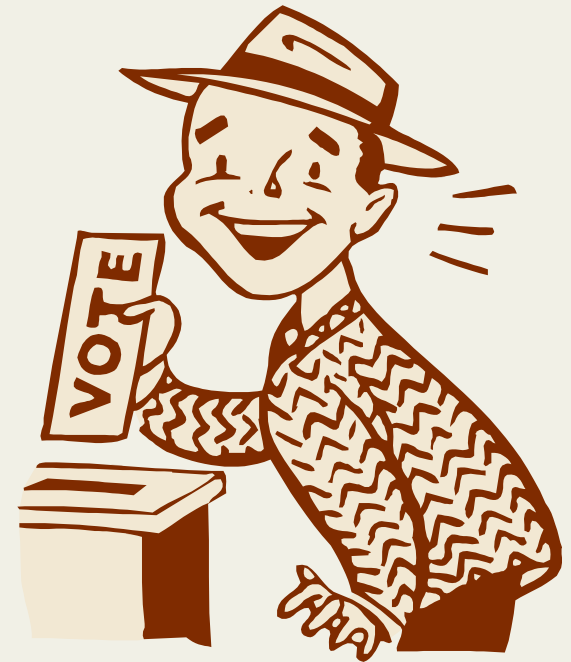
Energy played a role as well; most 2012 voters in four key swing states said energy was very important in their Presidential vote decision.

Energy "Very Important" Issue By State



Nationally, voters continued to offer strong support for conservation ballot measures.

- Voters nationally approved 46 of 57 (81%) conservation finance measures.
- Voters in 21 states approved ballot measures, which will provide over \$1 billion overall, including \$767 million in new funding to support water quality protection, parks, natural areas and working farms and ranches.
- The 81 percent approval rate tops the long-term 76 percent approval rate for conservation ballot measures.
- Statewide measures were approved in locations as diverse as Maine, Rhode Island and Alabama.

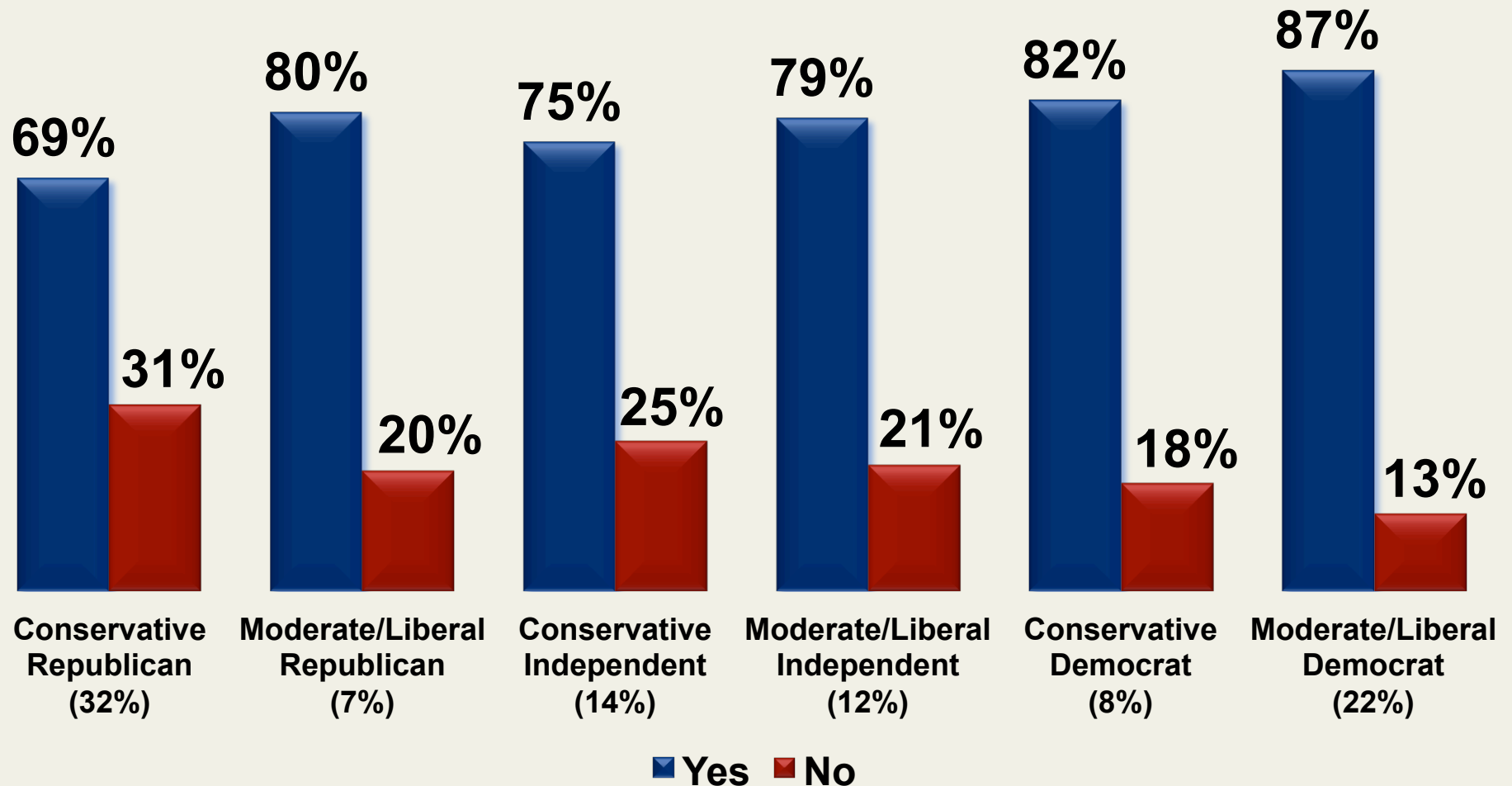


Source: The Trust for Public Land's "LandVote" Project

Conservation is one area that could offer a foundation for bipartisan support – several ballot measures experienced this in 2012.

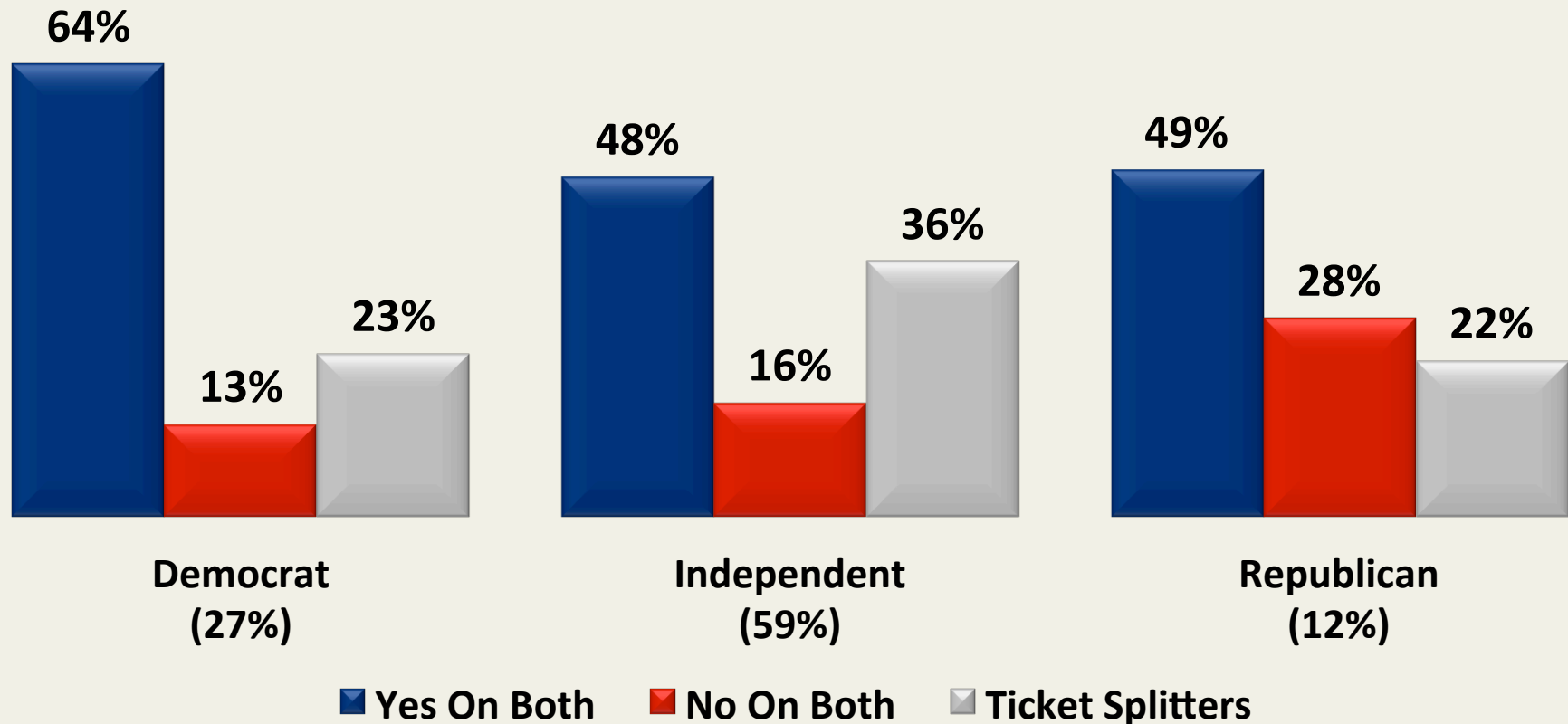


Alabama's Amendment One received broad support across the ideological spectrum.



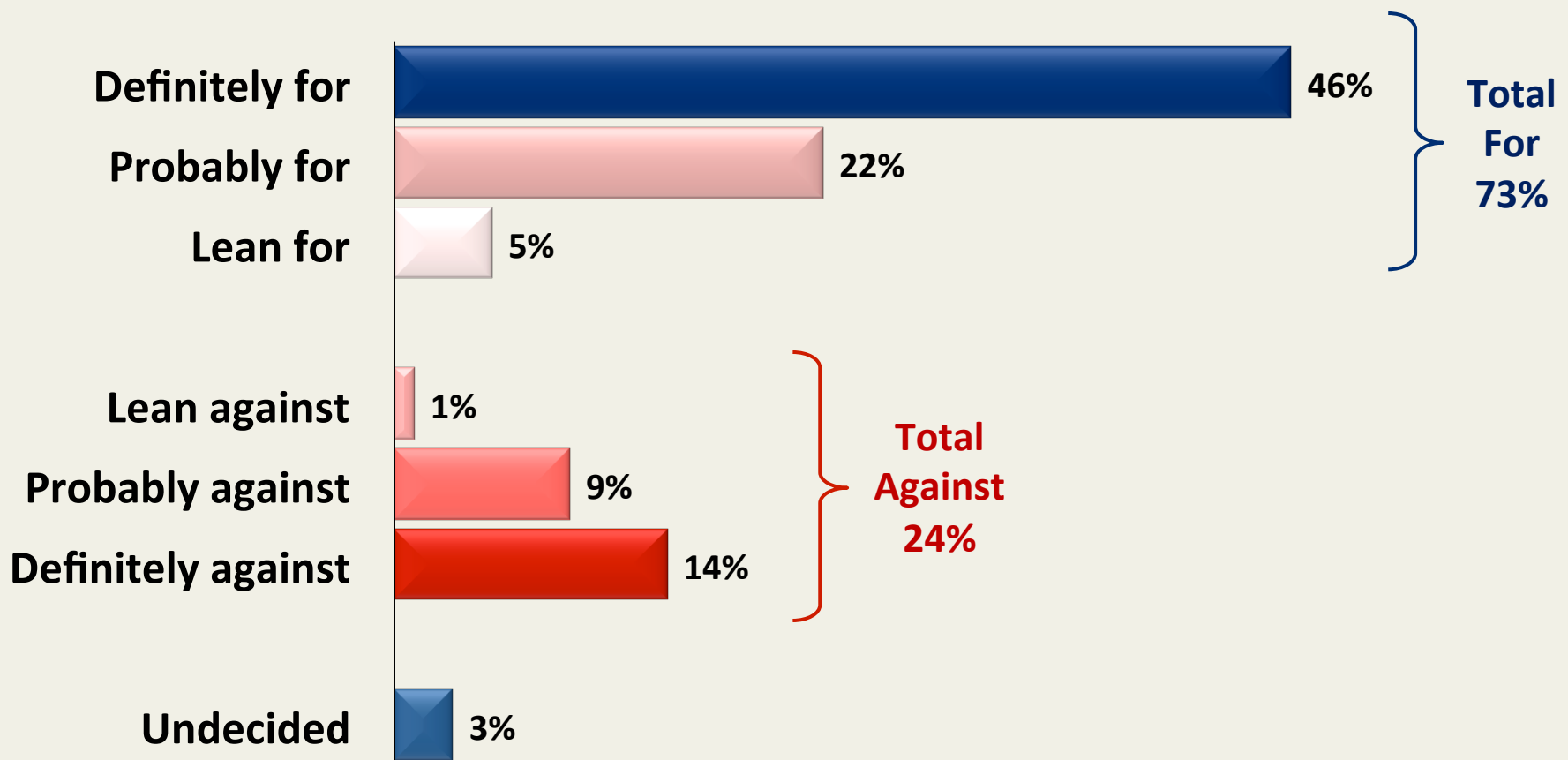
Even with two conservation measures on the ballot, RI Republicans were more likely to vote for both than against both.

Initial Combined Question 5/6 Vote by Party

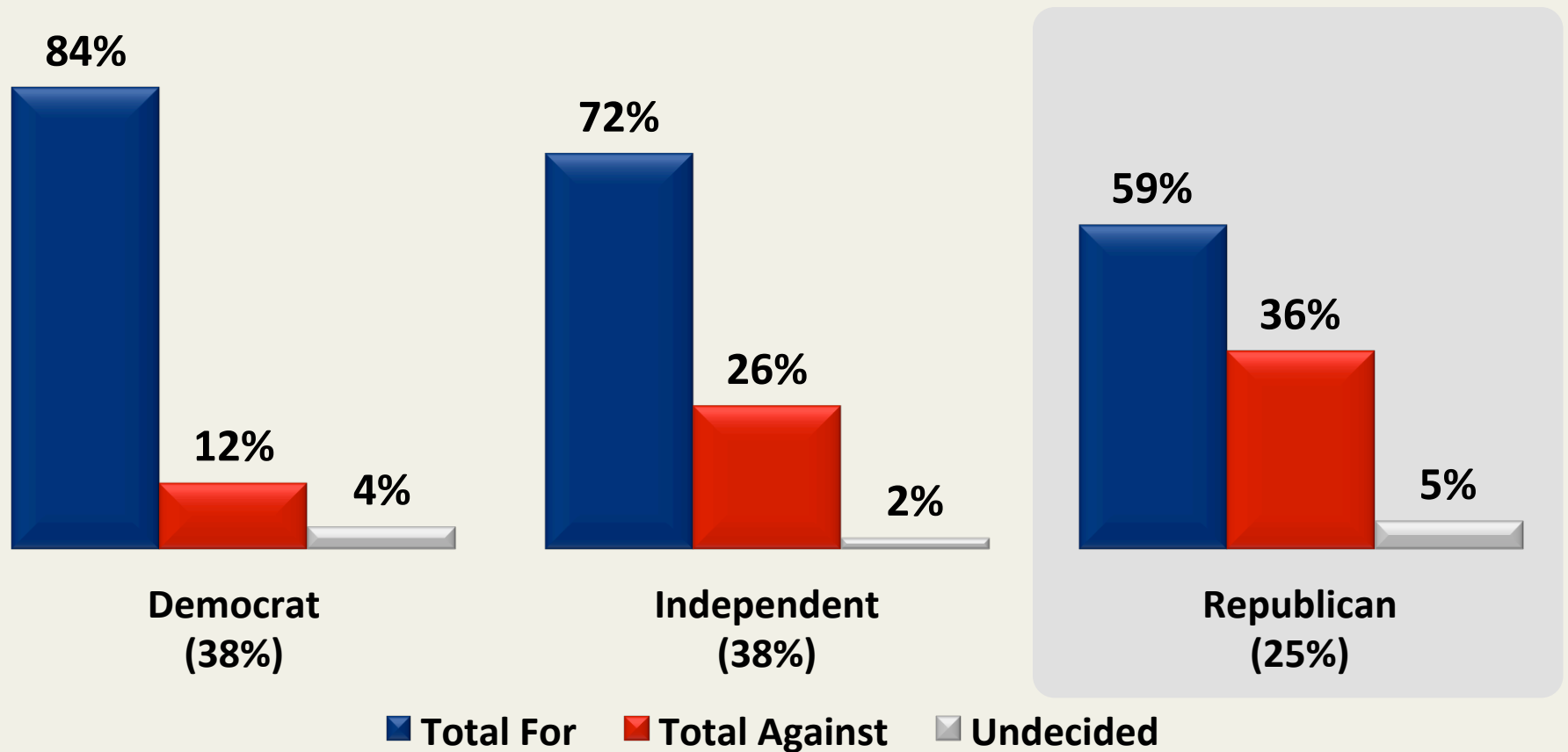


In Houston, Proposition B had the support of seven in ten voters, with nearly half “definitely” in favor.

“The issuance of \$166 million in park improvement bonds for the conservation, improvement, acquisition, construction and equipment of neighborhood parks, recreational facilities and bayous, including such green spaces along all bayous to create an integrated system of bayou walking, running and bicycle trails to enhance, preserve and protect the health of citizens, water quality, natural habitat and native wildlife, and the levying of taxes sufficient for the payment thereof and interest thereon.”



Voters across the political spectrum supported Proposition B in the surveys – three in five GOP voters registered their support.



Rocky Mountain West Colorado College Poll (January, 2012)

When it comes to protection water, air, natural areas and wildlife here, do you think state government should be doing

More	Less	Enough
47%	10%	40%

Rocky Mountain States Colorado College Poll

- As part of efforts to improve the state economy and generate jobs as quickly as possible, some people have proposed reducing protections for land, air and water that apply to major industries. Would you prefer that the state:
 - Reduce protection 19%
 - Maintain protection 75%

Conclusions

- Public continues to support conservation and the environment
- Economic and some other issues are more important, but majority of citizens do not want to see undoing America's long bi-partisan conservation/environmental tradition
- There is not so much of partisan split among voters except on climate change
- Some evidence for growing confidence in science
- **Disconnect between what people think, how legislators vote and the partisan split in Congress**

My Perceptions

- Special interests have strong influence on legislative process through contributions, lobbying and marketing
- Fiscal and economic problems enable indirect attacks on environmental and conservation programs
- While conservation issues important, generally do not determine how people vote
- Environmentalists, conservationists have not done enough to reconcile the environment and the economy—to demonstrate the value of nature to our society
- Times are tough now, but foundation for well designed policy advances particularly when tied to place