



MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: PATRICK LANNE / PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

RE: RECENT SURVEY RESULTS

DATE: JUNE 21, 2011

Public Opinion Strategies recently completed a survey of 500 likely voters in Wisconsin on behalf of Smokefree Wisconsin, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and American Lung Association. The survey was conducted June 15-16, 2011 via landline and cell phone. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.38%.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ ***One year later, the Smoke-Free Air law is widely popular.***
Across a wide spectrum of Wisconsin's electorate, the state's smoke-free initiative wins strong approval. Three-quarters (75%) of voters favor the July 2010 law that prohibits smoking in most indoor places. Not only is support for the law wide, it is also very deep with 62% "strongly" in favor. Support for the law cuts across every major sub-group in the poll – with only current smokers (13% of the sample) opposed to the law (27% favor – 70% oppose).
- ✓ ***A strong majority of voters believe the law is working and want to keep it.***
There is little doubt: Wisconsin voters do not want to weaken the state's smoke-free law. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of voters believe the smoke-free law has worked well (51% - "*the smoking restrictions have worked well,*") or well-enough to keep in place (27%- "*the smoking restrictions have not been perfect, but have worked well enough to keep in place.*"). Only 12% of voters believe, "*the smoking restrictions were never a good idea and should not have been adopted in the first place.*"

In fact, a strong majority (58%) of voters – including 70% of non-smokers – say they would be less likely to vote for a state legislator who voted to weaken the smoke-free law.

- ✓ ***Smoke-free creates a better night out.***
Across multiple measures, Wisconsin residents credit the smoke-free law with improving their experience while out at restaurants and bars:

- Nearly nine in ten (89%) residents agree that, “*Restaurants and bars are healthier for customers and employees now that they are smoke-free.*”
 - Over eight in ten (86%) agree with the statement, “*It has been really nice to go out and enjoy restaurants and bars without smelling like cigarette smoke when you get home.*”
 - Two-thirds (67%) of all voters, including 84% of non-smokers, say going out is a “more enjoyable experience” since the passage of the smoking ban. Just 8% of voters say the smoke-free law has resulted in a “less enjoyable” experience.
 - Nine-in-ten (91%) of resident say the smoking ban has made them either “more likely” to go out to restaurants and bars (45%) or it has not impacted their decision on going out (46%). By comparison, just 9% who indicate the law has made them “less likely” to go out.
- ✓ ***Reducing exposure to secondhand smoke is a priority.***

Finally, it is clear Wisconsin voters believe secondhand smoke is a health risk and that protecting the public from secondhand smoke is important. Fully 85% of respondents say secondhand smoke is a health hazard – including 56% who believe it is a “serious health hazard.” In addition, 85% of voters say it is either “very important” (65%) or “somewhat important” (20%) to them personally to have smoke-free environments in workplaces, restaurants and bars.

Echoing these sentiments, by a wide 78%-12% margin, voters say “*the rights of customers and employees to breathe clean air in restaurants, bars and other indoor public places,*” is more important than, “*the rights of smokers to smoke inside restaurants, bars and other indoor places.*”

The Bottom Line

There is no question: Wisconsin’s smoke-free law is a big hit. Voters are deeply concerned about secondhand smoke, and they report that the smoke-free law has led to a more enjoyable, healthier experience when going out to restaurants and bars. The bottom line is that a wide, bi-partisan coalition of voters endorses the current law and opposes efforts to weaken the law.