



October 16, 2020

TO: Interested Parties

FR: Ben Greenfield, Change Research

RE: Voters in CA AD59 Overwhelmingly Favor Environmental Protections

A new survey of 300 registered voters in California's 59th Assembly District finds overwhelming support for transitioning to 100% clean energy, as well as for environmental protections and protections for the health of communities -- particularly communities that are being harmed most by the effects of pollution and climate change.

The survey was conducted as voters in this district and across the state are grappling with many layers of crises, from the public health catastrophe caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, to the economic inequality that has been exacerbated by the pandemic, to the extreme heat waves and wildfires that have already burned a record-breaking 4 million acres across the state and forced Californians to breathe hazardous air for months.

Voters in AD59 are overwhelmingly making a connection between climate change and the unprecedented wildfires and heat waves they've been experiencing: 80% say that climate change has played a strong role, including 67% who say it's played a very strong role.

And they want the state to do something about it: 71% say the state needs to move faster in transitioning to 100% clean energy, while just 11% want to move more slowly -- even after being shown the argument that the transition could cost jobs and hurt the economy.

OTHER KEY FINDINGS

- **74% agree that the transition to 100% clean energy should happen first in low-income communities, while just 16% disagree.**
- **A majority of voters disagree with the state's action to delay the phasing out of fossil fuel plants.** 51% want to phase them out as soon as possible, while 31% agree with the decision to let them operate longer than previously planned.
- **80% support requiring a safety buffer zone between oil operations and the places people live, work, play, and study, while 10% oppose.**
- **76% support stronger oil regulations, while 12% oppose.** This question explicitly mentioned that such regulations could disrupt good-paying oil jobs as we transition to clean energy.
- **The district's top transportation priorities are free or reduced-cost public transportation for low-income communities, and reducing pollution from vehicles.** Asked to rank 6 possible priorities, 45% ranked public transportation cost reductions first or second, while 43% ranked reducing pollution from cars and commercial trucks in their top two.

- **Voters want the state's transition to zero emissions to prioritize the affordability of clean energy cars as well as clean public transportation investments.** On this question, respondents were asked to rank 5 priorities. 59% ranked investments in the affordability of clean energy cars in their top two, while 49% put investments in public transportation options like electric buses and trains in their top two.
- **92% of voters think local residents need to be notified and involved in potentially polluting development projects.** Voters want residents and other stakeholders to be directly notified about the projects, educated on their effects, and allowed to provide written and oral comments.
- **But most voters think that local government is currently not doing a good enough job of protecting public health when issuing permits, particularly for low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.** 36% think local governments are doing an excellent job, while 53% think they're not.
- **82% support a tax on the wealthiest 1% of Californians in order to avoid cuts to climate, health, education, and housing programs.** Just 14% oppose such a tax.
- **82% want the state to take immediate action to clean up the more than 150,000 sites with hazardous industrial waste across the state.** Just 10% say that this does not need to be done immediately because there are more pressing needs.
- **Voters in this district are struggling to stay cool during heat waves.** Asked which their community needs most during the extreme heat, 37% say access to air conditioning, 26% say more shaded public spaces, 18% say more community cooling centers, and 11% say access to safe drinking water.
- **Two-thirds of voters say their communities would benefit from requiring deeply affordable housing, and large numbers would benefit from a range of other housing changes.** 67% say that requiring deeply affordable housing would benefit their communities. 59% say their communities would benefit from protecting long-term existing tenants. 56% would benefit from measures to prevent gentrification and displacement. 51% would benefit from energy and water efficiency upgrades. And 46% say their communities would benefit if the state prevented housing from being built near pollution sources.
- **71% support a fracking ban, and 46% say it needs to happen sooner than 2024.** Just 9% of voters in the district think the state should not ban fracking at all.
- **More than 1 in 5 voters in the district report negative experiences with access to water, safety of drinking water, and affordability of water.** 23% say their experience with water safety has been negative; 21% say the same about access to water. 27% have had a negative overall experience with the reliability of drinking water sources. And 24% have had negative experiences with the affordability of drinking water.

- **When it comes to policies around public lands, 54% want to ensure the protection of clean air, water, and habitats.** An additional 37% want the state to focus on the production of clean energy by maximizing the use of public lands for clean energy development.

Change Research surveyed 300 registered voters in California's 59th Assembly District from October 9-October 14. The survey was conducted online, using Change Research's Dynamic Online Sampling Engine. Post-stratification was done on age, gender, race, education, and 2016 presidential vote.