

To: Vincent DeMarco, President
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative

From: Steve Raabe, OpinionWorks

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Subject: Impact of a Proposed Alcohol Tax Increase
on Legislative Elections

Overview

Our recent Maryland statewide voter poll has found 71% support for an increased tax of 10 cents per alcoholic drink. For a legislative candidate, the benefit of supporting an alcohol tax increase can be substantial. Supporting the alcohol tax increase, with the revenue dedicated to several health-related priorities, can boost a legislative candidate by as much as 26 points over an opponent who opposes the tax.

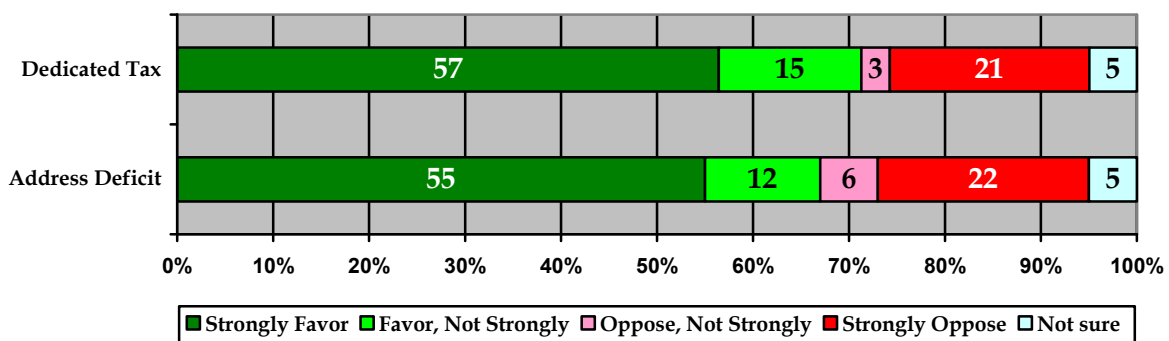
Detail

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 several health-related public policy priorities. 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?"

How the Proposed Alcohol Tax Impacts Legislative Elections

When likely Maryland general election voters are asked what party they intend to support in legislative elections this fall, Democrats hold a 16-point advantage in that so-called generic ballot, as outlined in the table below.

But the Democratic advantage increases to 24 points when a hypothetical Democratic candidate supports a 10-cent alcohol tax increase while the Republican opponent opposes it – a net increase of eight percentage points.

For Republican candidates, the benefit is much greater. If a Republican candidate supports the alcohol tax increase while the Democratic opponent opposes it, the Republican now enjoys an advantage of 10 points – for a 26-point swing from the generic ballot.

Impact on Legislative Elections

	Voting for the Democrat	Voting for the Republican	Democratic Margin	Not sure/ Depends/ Split Ticket
Generic intended vote	37%	21%	+ 16%	42%
Democrat supports the alcohol tax, Republican opposes it	48%	24%	+ 24%	29%
Republican supports the alcohol tax, Democrat opposes it	27%	37%	- 10%	36%

“In the upcoming November election for state legislature, do you plan to vote for (rotate): [the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate]?”

“If you knew that the Democratic candidate supported a dime a drink alcohol tax dedicated to the purposes I just described, and the Republican candidate opposed this proposal, for whom would you vote?”

“If you knew that the Republican candidate supported a dime a drink alcohol tax dedicated to the purposes I just described, and the Democratic candidate opposed this proposal, for whom would you vote?”

The conventional wisdom is that voters will not support a tax increase in an election year, particularly when the economy remains in such difficult shape. But from our focus groups among voters we know that many are frustrated by what they see as a lack of accomplishment on the most important public policy questions of the day. Better public health is one of those priorities for Maryland voters. They want their leaders to support concrete action on public health, and voters are ready to reward them at the polls for doing so.

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.