

MEMORANDUM

TO: EVERGLADES FOUNDATION

FROM: DAVE SACKETT

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A STATEWIDE SURVEY OF VOTER ATTITUDES
IN FLORIDA

DATE: FEBRUARY 16, 2011

The Tarrance Group is pleased to present the Everglades Foundation with the key findings from a survey of voter attitudes in Florida. These key findings are based on telephone interviews with N=607 “likely” registered voters throughout state. Responses to this survey were gathered February 13-14, 2011 and the confidence interval associated with a sample of this type is $\pm 4.1\%$.

KEY FINDINGS

Importance of Everglades Restoration

- Florida voters indicate that they place a great deal of importance on the issue of Everglades restoration. Approximately two-thirds of Florida voters, sixty-five percent (65%) indicate that “restoring the Everglades” is an extremely or very important issue to them personally. More than one in four Florida voters indicate that Everglades restoration is “extremely important” to them.
- Over sixty percent (60%) of voters in every region of the state indicate that restoring the Everglades is a very important issue to them, and there are little or no differences in the importance of this issue based on age or gender.
- Over seventy percent (70%) of Independent voters indicate that restoring the Everglades is a very important issue to them, as is also the case with a majority of Republicans and self-identified conservative voters.
- In the minds of Florida voters, the issue of Everglades restoration is important enough that they believe that their own state legislators should be putting a good deal of effort into restoring the Everglades. Fully half of the electorate, fifty percent (50%),

believes that their own state legislator should be putting a good deal of effort into restoring the Everglades.

Specific Benefits of Everglades Restoration

Voters are read a list of ten (10) benefits from Everglades restoration and asked to rank the importance to them personally of these benefits on a 1-10 scale. Responses are summarized in the chart below.

Q	Benefit	Mean Rating	% Very Important
17	Ensuring a fresh drinking water supply for six million Floridians	8.62	84%
25	Reducing the levels of toxic pollutants like methyl mercury that has been found in fish in Florida	7.82	74%
19	Protecting endangered wildlife life like the Florida Panther and the Southern Bald Eagle	7.33	69%
26	Reducing the frequency of algae blooms that kill fish and cause respiratory and other health problems in humans	7.47	37%
18	Protecting the environment and preserving open space	7.26	65%
21	Saving jobs in the tourism, boating, and fishing industries	7.45	70%
20	Providing flood control protection	7.15	62%
22	Preventing urban sprawl and congestion	6.77	55%
24	Creating new private-sector construction and engineering jobs on Everglades restoration projects	6.31	50%
23	Helping to combat the effects of climate change and sea level rise	5.70	43%

Funding for Everglades Restoration

- Florida voters have a strongly negative reaction to the current budget proposal to cut the Everglades restoration budget from the current \$50 million a year down to only \$17 million a year.
- A solid majority of Florida voters, fifty-five percent (55%) indicate that they are opposed to this proposal to further cut funding for Everglades restoration, and there is significant intensity to this opposition, with thirty-seven percent (37%) indicating that they are “strongly opposed” to this proposal. Only forty percent (40%) of Florida voters indicate they are in favor of these cuts, and only 5% are unsure.
- Opposition to these cuts in funding for Everglades restoration are wide spread throughout the state, with a majority of voters in the Miami, West Palm Beach, Orlando and Tampa regions indicating that they are opposed to these cuts.
- A majority of both men and women voters are opposed to these cuts, as are a majority of voters of all ages. Fully two-thirds of Hispanic voters, sixty-six percent (66%) indicate they are opposed to cutting funding for Everglades restoration.

Motives for Supporting Funding for Everglades Restoration

- Given the level of importance that Florida voters place on the issue of restoring the Everglades, and their strong opposition to cutting funding for this restoration, it comes as no surprise that they react quite strongly to the basic “facts” about the need for and the importance of restoring the Everglades.
- As you can see from the chart on the next page, each one of the six pieces of information that respondents were exposed to generates a significant intensity in terms of causing them to become “more likely” to support increasing funding for Everglades restoration.

Q	Message	% More Likely	% Less Likely
38	The Everglades and our state’s other natural lakes, rivers, and waterways improve the quality of life for our state’s residents and families and must be protected.	83%	12%
33	One in three Floridians depend directly on the Everglades for their daily supply of fresh water. If the Everglades are not restored, the state’s water supply will be jeopardized.	82%	12%
34	Florida needs to attract new businesses and industries to Florida to create jobs and strengthen the economy. This cannot happen without access to a stable water supply.	79%	15%
37	The Everglades restoration project will create 22,000 short to mid-term jobs on the restoration itself, and more than 442,000 jobs will be created over the next several decades in tourism, real estate, and commercial and recreational fishing industries due to restoration of the everglades.	79%	16%
36	A recent economic study found that we generate four dollars in economic activity for the state of Florida for every one dollar invested in Everglades restoration.	73%	19%
35	The Everglades protection project can be maintained without expanding the number of government employees. All of the Everglades restoration work can be done by private sector companies and contractors.	68%	23%

Role of State in Growth Management

- Florida voters clearly indicate a belief that there is an important role for the state to play in managing new development in the state of Florida. As you can see from the chart below, there is strong agreement that the state does need to play a role:

Q	Statement on Development Regulation	% Agree	% Disagree
8	We need the state to manage new development to protect our rivers, lakes, streams, and beaches from pollution	81%	18%
6	We need the state to manage new development in order to protect the Everglades.	74%	22%

10	We need the state to manage new development in order to reduce traffic congestion and prevent it from getting worse.	65%	33%
4	We need the state to manage new development to avoid placing additional burdens on taxpayers for the costs of building new roads, schools and other infrastructure in undeveloped areas.	61%	34%

CONCLUSIONS

- Despite the difficult economy and the desire to reduce government spending at every level, Florida voters clearly recognize the importance of restoring the Everglades to their own lives and the economic future of the state.
- While many state projects must be sacrificed or delayed as a result of budget difficulties, Florida voters send a clear message that Everglades restoration is important, that their state legislators should be focused on this issue, and that maintaining funding for Everglades restoration must be a top priority.
- There is a significant recognition that future economic growth in the state and a healthy economy are tied to access to fresh water, and that Everglades restoration must occur in order to provide a viable setting for economic growth.

PARTISAN/IDEOLOGICAL MAKEUP OF POLL SAMPLE

- Republican 36%, Democrat 41%, Independent 20%, Other 1%, Unsure 2%
- Very conservative 22%, Conservative 38%, Moderate 5%, Somewhat liberal 26%, Very liberal 6%, Unsure/Don't Know 3%

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