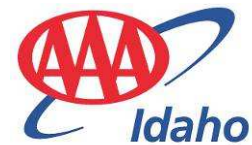


News Release



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AAA SURVEY: IDAHO VOTERS WEIGH IN ON TEXTING, TAXES, DRIVER TRAINING

Idahoans support texting ban law, say 'not now' to transportation fee and gas tax hikes, and oppose taking driver education out of public high schools

IDAHO - A survey of Idaho voters conducted in November should give lawmakers a better idea what their constituents think about a few hot button transportation issues, according to AAA Idaho.

The telephone survey of 400 Idaho voters shows there is strong support for legislative action to address distracted driving. Thirty-five states have enacted laws to address texting while driving.

"The vast majority of Idaho voters support prohibiting texting while driving (87%), with more than three out of four saying it is something they would strongly support," said AAA Idaho President Jim Manion.

There is strong bipartisan support to write a new law or amend the existing law to ban the practice (79% support among Republicans, and 85% support among Democrats). In addition, no less than 83 percent of the respondents representing District 1 in North Idaho support such an action. Ninety-four (94) percent of the respondents in District 4 in South central Idaho support the idea.

Survey sponsor AAA Idaho supports legislation to specifically ban the act of sending and receiving text messages for drivers. Six Idaho communities have already enacted municipal ordinances, some in response to the legislature's failure to act on a number of bills introduced in the past two years.

Conducted in late November by Riley Research Associates of Portland, the scientific survey is representative of Idaho's 'likely' voting public, qualified as those having voted in at least two of the past four major elections. Sample demographics are comparable to Idaho's likely voting population, including proportions for gender, age and geographic region. The sample is accurate to +/-5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

The survey shows that a smaller majority (59%) support legislative action prohibiting cell phones for any purpose while driving. Thirty-seven (37) percent of respondents statewide strongly support that action.

The survey also indicates that nearly 8 in 10 Idahoans (79%) support legislative action to use enhanced penalties to deal with distracted drivers who use a cell phone or electronic device while driving.

"A good example of an enhanced penalty law is the one Idaho uses for motorists cited for speeding in construction work zones," Manion said. An enhanced penalty could include a significantly higher fine for drivers cited for a moving violation while being distracted by a cell phone or other electronic device.

Transportation Funding Options

The AAA survey shows that Idahoans don't have a stomach for higher user fees or gas taxes, regardless of whether they're used for roads, bridges or public transportation.

Despite findings and conclusions a year ago by Governor Butch Otter's Task Force on Modernizing

Transportation that showed that Idaho currently faces more than a \$500 million annual deficiency to pay for its transportation needs, fewer than four in ten voters (38%) support higher use fees, including vehicle registration fees and gas taxes, to pay for the shortage.

Fifty-five (55) percent of the respondents said they oppose higher user fees, including vehicle registration fees and gas taxes to pay for the shortage, even if such action is not taken until the economy improves. Four in ten respondents strongly oppose raising fees and taxes.

Voters are more likely to support higher gas taxes and registration fees (52%) if all user groups are required to pay their fair share. Forty-one (41) percent said they would not be willing to pay more, even if increases are equitably distributed. AAA supports fair share taxes based on cost responsibility.

AAA Idaho supported some, though not all of the funding proposals brought by the Governor's office and other legislators during the 2008 and 2009 sessions. The motoring organization opposed proposals that shifted a disproportionate share of the proposed increases for registration fees to cars and light trucks.

AAA cited the findings from an Idaho Transportation Department-funded 2007 cost allocation study when it testified against several registration fee proposals during prior sessions. That study showed the largest combination trucks on Idaho roads were underpaying their equitable share of transportation fees and taxes, while cars were already paying more.

Later, the department tossed the results of the 2007, and a subsequent 2010 study authorized by the Governor's Task Force verified the prior study results, illustrating the gap between cars and long-haul interstate trucks had continued to widen. A year ago AAA provided its recommendations to the Idaho Transportation Board and to the Governor's task force.

Local Option Taxes

The AAA Idaho survey shows there is more support for legislative action to give voters local option tax authority for transportation funding purposes (53 percent favor, 33 percent oppose, and 14 percent undecided). The Idaho legislature has authorized limited local option taxing authority previously, but has been hesitant to extend that authority to all Idaho cities.

Given the choice of where and how the additional revenues from local option taxes could be used, 59 percent of voters indicate their preference to use sales tax receipts to pay for roads and bridges infrastructure. Nineteen (19) percent said they should be used for public transportation, including buses, vans, and rail. Twenty-two (22) percent of survey respondents were undecided.

"By giving Idahoans the option to decide where to spend their money, the survey provides a broader, more specific, and likely more accurate taxpayer perspective," said AAA Idaho Public Affairs Director Dave Carlson. AAA Idaho has not taken an official policy on local option taxing.

Statewide responses for all questions in the survey can also be broken out in each of the state's six transportation regions.

"Showing legislators and policymakers what their constituents back home are thinking makes for a more positive approach to governing," Carlson said.

Idahoans Say No to Driver Education Changes

Just 12 percent of the survey respondents said they support a measure to remove driver training from the public schools. That's at odds with legislation drafted late during the 2011 session (HB314) that would have eliminated driver education oversight through the Department of Education, in effect, removing driver

education training from more than 100 high schools throughout the state. The bill was pulled following floor debate in the House late in the 2011 session.

AAA Idaho and others argued that removing \$2.2 million in funding to the Department of Education would have essentially put 10,000 Idaho families without affordable driver education options in their communities.

Nearly eight in ten likely voters (79%) support the current use of a portion of drivers licenses and other fees to help cover the cost of making driver training available in local schools. No less than 75 percent of respondents in each of the state's six transportation regions support that position. In addition, the concept was supported by no less than 81 percent of the voters who identified themselves as Republicans or Democrats.

Asked which of four statements best reflects their opinion about driver training, the top two responses were: "Rural communities depend on the driver training programs administered through the schools because private driving schools are not available," (37%); and "The state has an obligation to the safety of all drivers to require sufficient oversight, proficient training, and adequate time behind the wheel" (35%).

The other responses include: "Commercial schools do a better job of preparing teens to drive than programs offered through the public schools (11%); and "Parents are best suited to train their teens how to drive," 7%). Eleven (11) percent of voters were undecided.

About the Survey

The survey was conducted by Riley Research Associates, a nationally recognized public opinion research company in Portland, OR. A total of 400 interviews among a representative sample of Idaho voters was used. The survey was conducted Nov. 23-30, 2011. Respondents represent 41 of Idaho's 44 counties. The scientific telephone survey is representative of Idaho's likely voting public, qualified as those having voted in at least two of the past four major elections. The sampling error associated with this survey is +/-5% at the 95% confidence level. That means if the survey was repeated 100 times, in 95 of those cases, the question response would not vary more than the sampling error.

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AAA Idaho is affiliated with AAA Oregon/Idaho, providing more than 744,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive related services. AAA serves 52 million member motorists in North America.

Editor: An audio version of this news release is available on the AAA News Hotline. In Boise, call 342-9391. Outside Boise, call toll free, 1-800-999-9391. Ask for the AAA News Hotline.

The complete survey, including question wording and breakouts of all voter responses based on six Idaho transportation districts is available upon request. The transportation district graphics show how voters in each of the transportation districts responded, relative to the state numbers.