

The Politics of Conservation

Westerners have a conservation agenda for the new Congress that includes protection of land and water and implementation of renewable energy, but rejects the selling of public lands. Few are confident their Member of Congress places as high a priority on these issues as they themselves do.

Given a series of actions the federal government could take, the survey found three-quarters overall support Congress continuing to fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund through oil and gas fees, and seven in ten support Congress continuing taxpayer support for renewable energy production. Eight in ten support future presidents maintaining their prerogative under the Antiquities Act to establish national monuments as other presidents have. Majorities in all six states support all three of these actions.

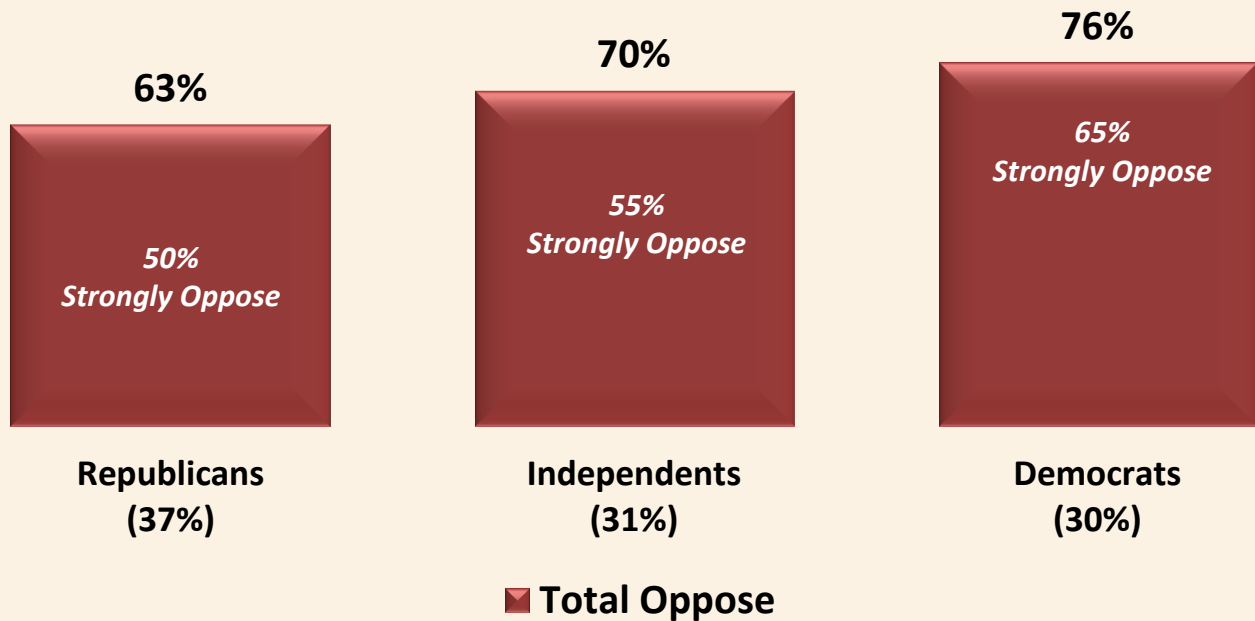


Congressional Actions By State (% Support)

	AZ	CO	MT	NM	UT	WY
Future Presidents continuing to protect existing public lands as national monuments	84%	84%	73%	78%	70%	69%
Continue to use some of the money from fees charged to oil and gas companies that drill offshore for conservation of natural areas and clean water, and to ensure access to outdoor recreation	75%	77%	75%	72%	75%	74%
Continue taxpayer support for solar and wind energy production	71%	68%	59%	69%	69%	53%

In contrast to the broad support for the policies, Westerners are clear in their opposition to selling public lands. Only 17% across the West would support selling significant holdings of public lands, while 69% express opposition. This opposition cuts across state lines as well as other divisions such as gender, age, ethnicity, and political party.

Attitude Toward Selling Public Lands By Party



Westerners are less unified over whether companies should be allowed to sell American oil overseas. 42% support a proposal to “remove the ban that keeps companies from selling American oil overseas,” while 34% want to keep the ban, and two in ten are neutral or unsure.

Top-Groups: Dependence on Foreign Oil
(Decrease in Ext./ Very Serious from 2012)

Rural Men	-43%
Wyoming	-39%
Ages 55-64	-39%
Men Ages 45-64	-36%
Democratic Men	-36%
White Men	-35%
Independent Men Ages 45+	-35%
White	-34%
Suburban Men	-34%
Moderates	-33%
Montana	-32%
New Mexico	-32%
Women Ages 65+	-32%
White Women	-32%
Republican Men	-32%
Democratic Men Ages 18-44	-32%
Moderate/Liberal Democrats	-32%
Suburbs	-32%
Town Women	-32%

Notably, concern about dependence on foreign oil, while still significant, has declined substantially over the last three years. 46% say that this is an extremely or very serious issue in their state, down from 74% in 2012.



Few are certain that they are being well-represented in Congress on conservation issues. Asked about the priority their Member of Congress places on protecting the land, air and water, a plurality (47%) is unsure.

However, those who believe their Member of Congress places a lower priority on these issues (27%) outnumber those who believe he or she places higher (6%) or the same priority on them (18%).

“Would you say that your Member of Congress probably...”

	Overall	Arizona	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Higher	6%	4%	5%	11%	11%	5%	9%
Same	18%	14%	18%	24%	16%	21%	34%
Lower	27%	29%	29%	23%	22%	25%	22%
Not Sure	47%	51%	44%	39%	50%	47%	35%



Additionally, the number worried that their Member places a lower priority on conservation has grown – and grown in every state – since 2013.

	2013	2015	D/S
Places a HIGHER priority on protecting land, air and water than you do	6%	6%	0%
Places the SAME priority on protecting land, air and water than you do	17%	18%	+1%
Places a LOWER priority on protecting land, air and water than you do	22%	27%	+5%
Not really sure of the positions your Member of Congress has taken	54%	47%	-7%

