



THE COLORADO COLLEGE  
STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT

Conservation in the West Poll

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# KEY FINDINGS

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THE 2016 SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF VOTERS IN SEVEN WESTERN STATES



JANUARY 2016



CONDUCTED BY: LORI WEIGEL / PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES  
DAVE METZ / FAIRBANK, MASLIN, MAULLIN, METZ & ASSOCIATES

# Methodology

- ❖ 2,800 telephone (cell and landline) interviews with 400 registered voters in seven states: Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, and for the first time, Nevada.
- ❖ Interviews conducted December 5-6 and 9-15, 2015, in Spanish and English.
- ❖ The margin of overall sampling error is + 2.74% at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample; and + 4.9% for each state.
- ❖ The total numbers have been statistically weighted to reflect the true geographic distribution of voters throughout the region. Interviews within each state were distributed proportionally by region and each sample is demographically representative of their electorate.
- ❖ Comparisons made to similarly conducted surveys in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, & 2015; any trend data is based on six states, rather than seven.
- ❖ Bi-partisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies (R) and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D).

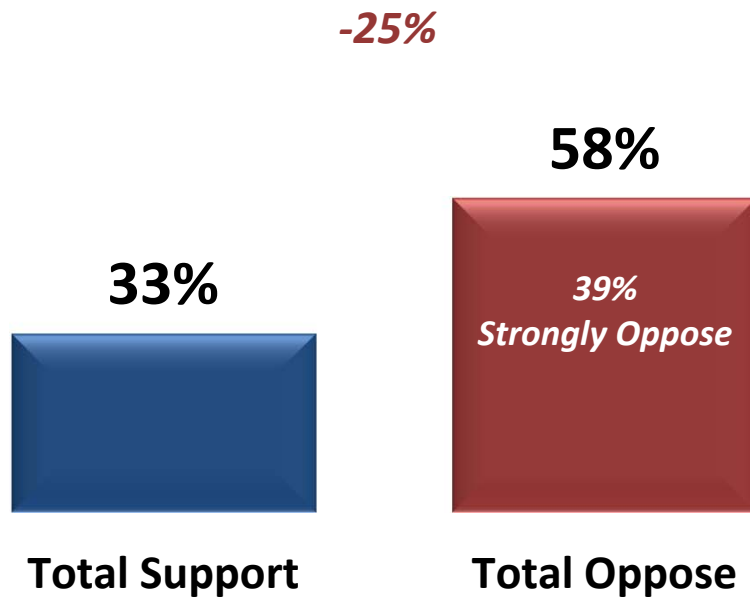




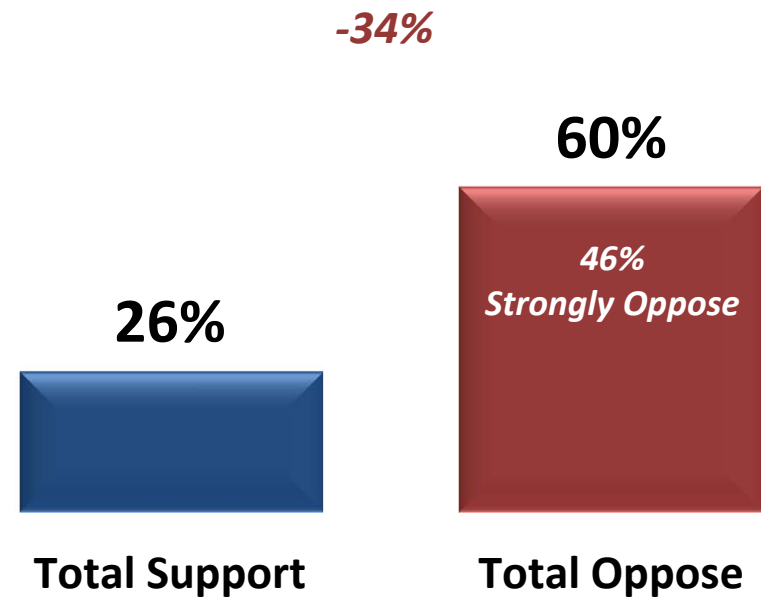


# Majorities of voters reject both the sale of significant holding of public lands and state transfers.

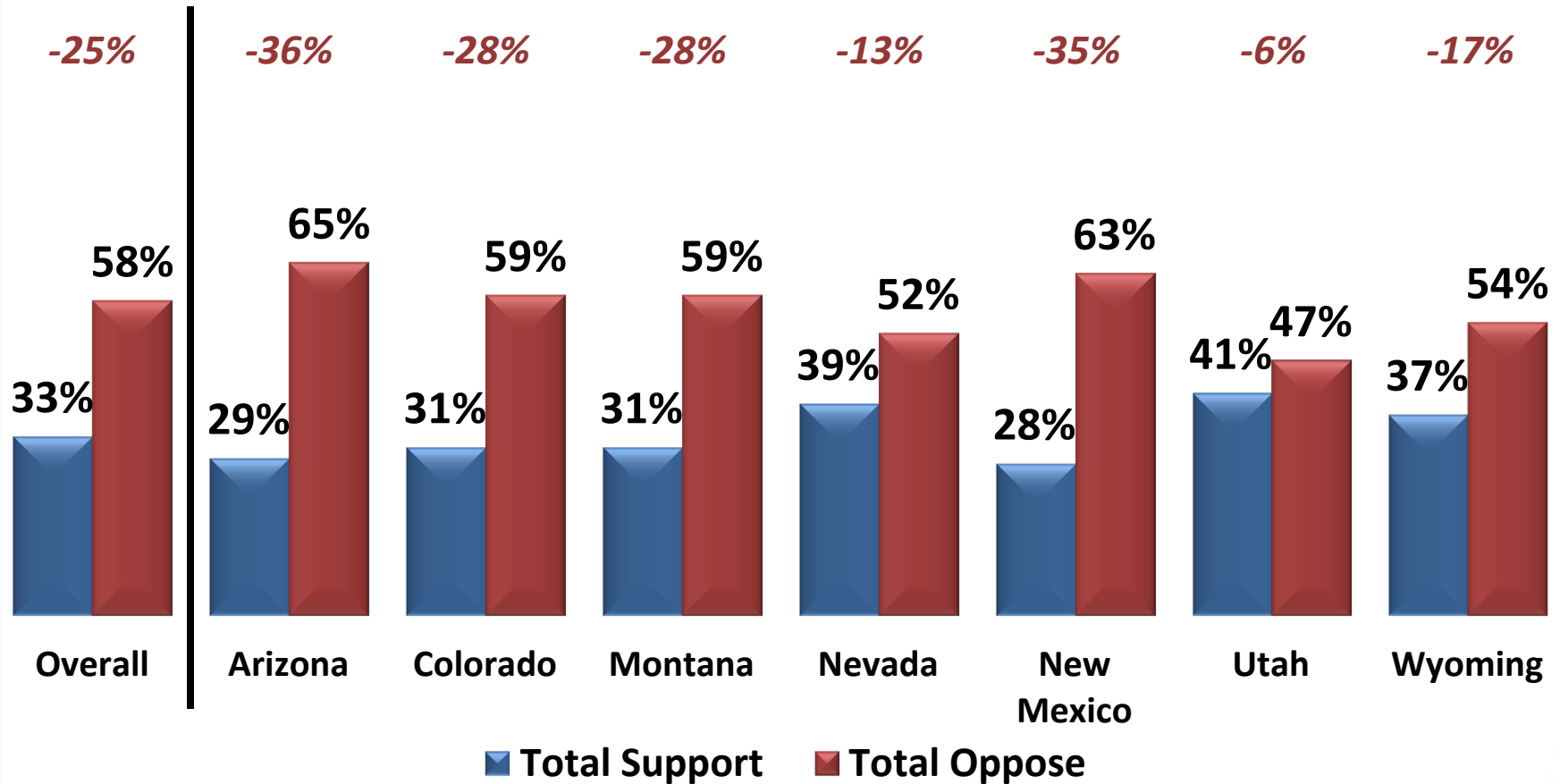
*Giving state government control over national public lands, such as national forests, national monuments, and national wildlife refuges in its borders. The state government would decide the future management of the lands, but state taxpayers would pay all costs, including the cost of maintenance and preventing and fighting wildfires.*



*Sell significant holdings of public lands like national forests to reduce the budget deficit*

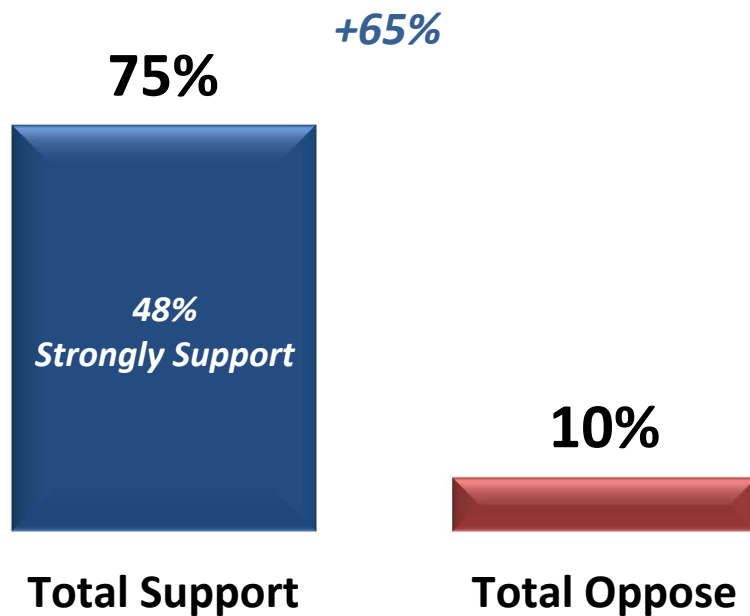


# Transferring control of national public lands to state government is more likely to be opposed in every state.

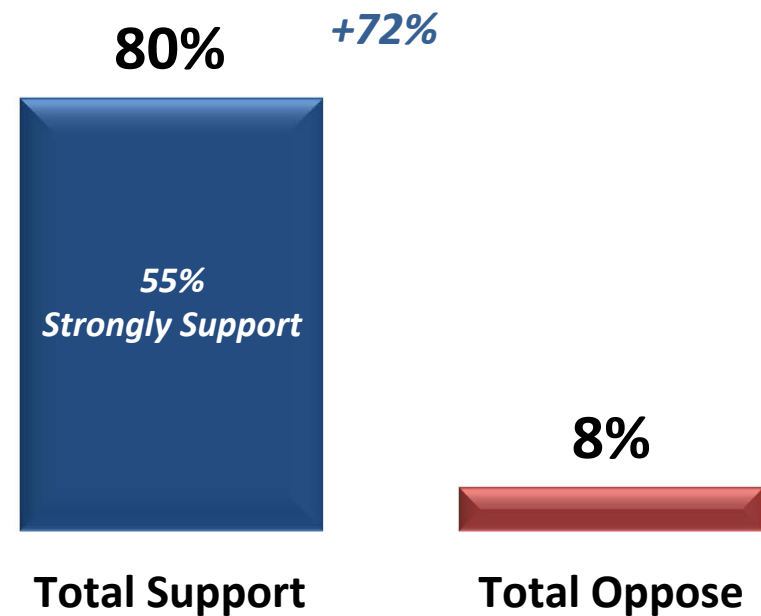


# Renewing the Land & Water Conservation Fund\* and treating wildfires as natural disasters in budgeting are policies that receive overwhelming support.

*Renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which uses some of the money from fees charged to oil and gas companies that drill offshore to protect natural areas, clean water, parks and access to outdoor recreation across the country*

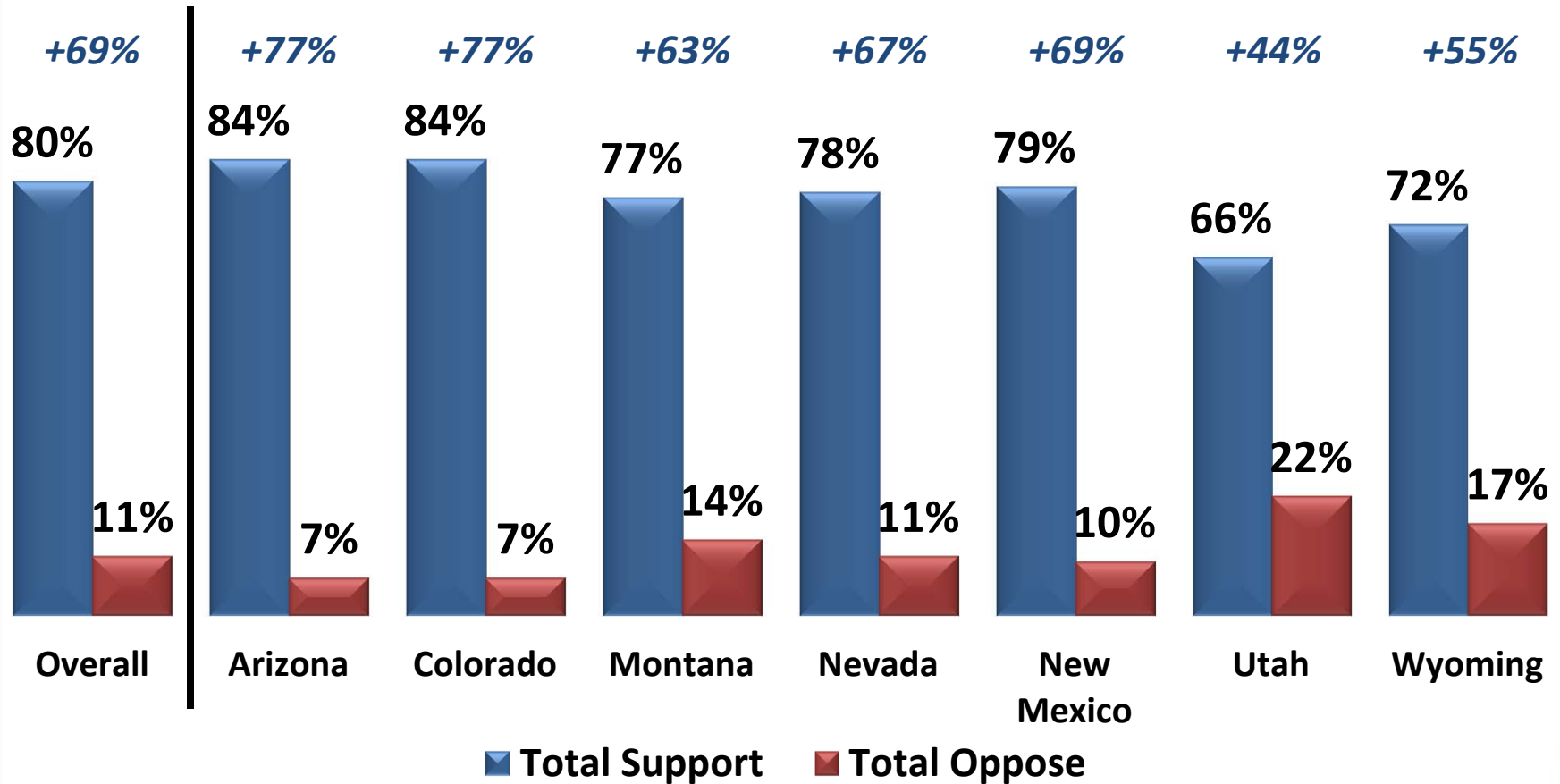


*Allow the US Forest Service to treat the largest and most expensive wildfires as natural disasters in order to have access to emergency disaster funding, like the government handles other natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornadoes*



\*survey was conducted just prior to the budget vote which included a three year renewal of LWCF

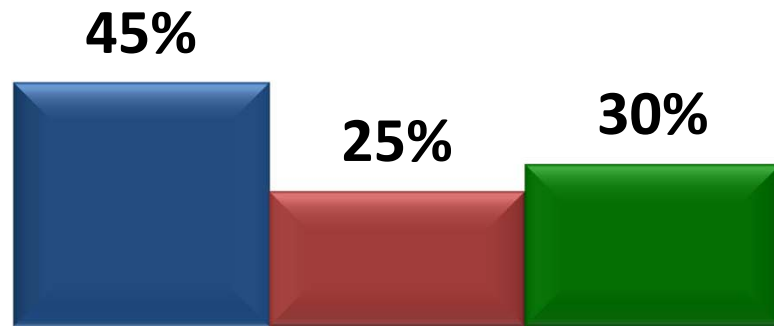
# Four-in-five Western voters overall – and two-thirds or greater in every state - support future Presidents having the ability to designate national monuments.



# Voters in two states where there were past national monument designations say they have been a positive for their state.

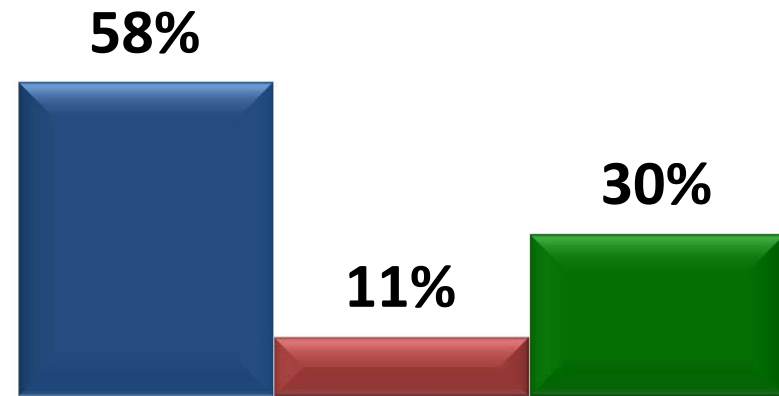
*Utah – Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument*

**+20%**



*Montana – Missouri River Breaks National Monument*

**+47%**



■ Total Good Thing   ■ Total Bad Thing   ■ Don't Know



**Some of this good will may be connected to voters' strong sense that public lands benefit their economy.**

*When you think about the presence of national public lands, such as national forests, national monuments, or wildlife refuges in your state -do you think that having such lands...*

**Helps our economy**

**72%**

**Has little impact  
on our economy**

**19%**

**Hurts our economy**

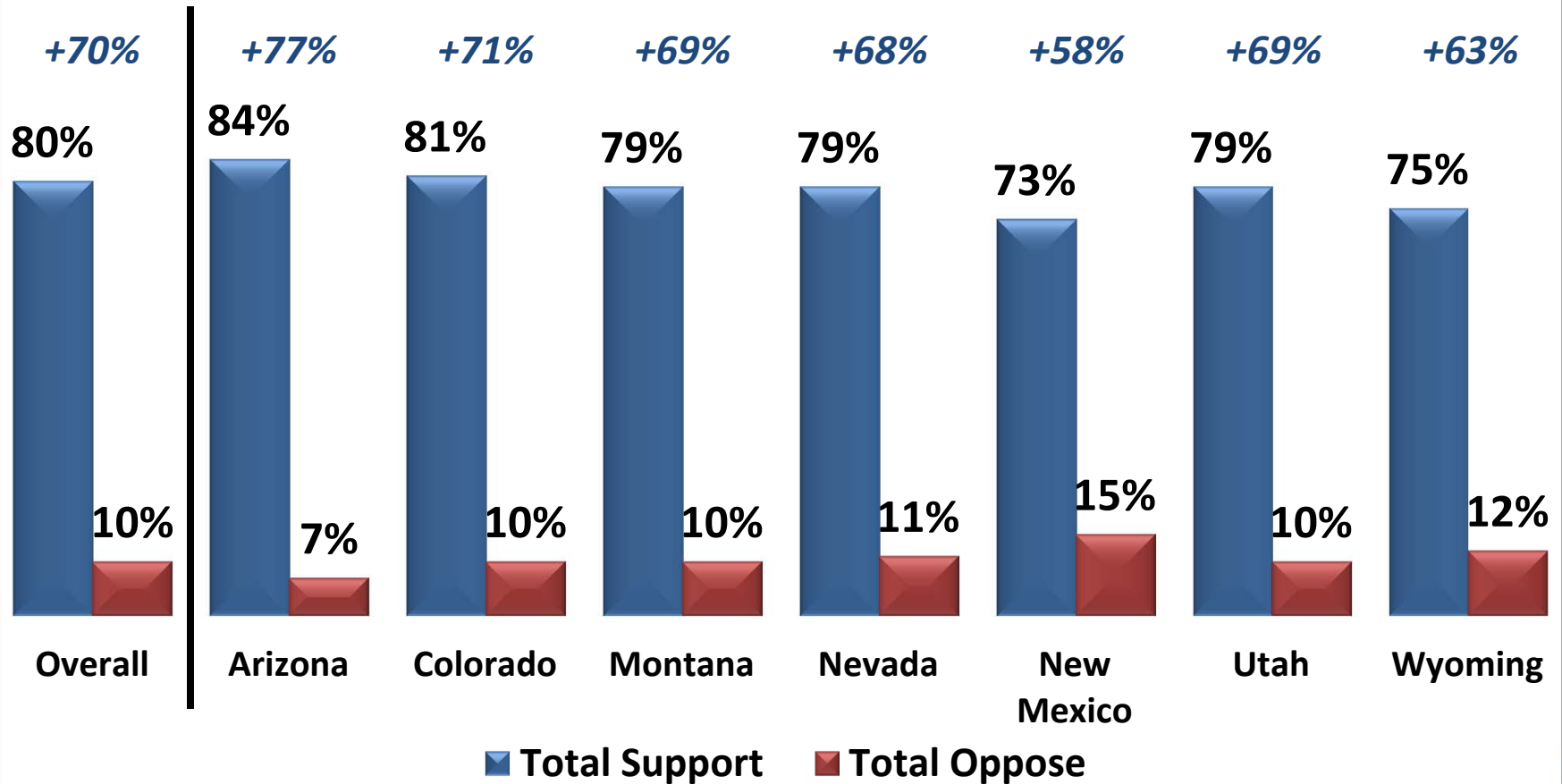
**6%**

# Western voters express strong support for reducing emissions from drilling & tax incentives for renewables; more mixed on rest.

*Potential Congressional Actions Ranked By Support*

	Total Support	Total Oppose	D/S
Require oil and gas producers who operate on national public lands to use updated equipment and technology to prevent leaks of methane gas during the extraction process and reduce the need to burn off excess natural gas into the air	80%	10%	+70%
Continue tax incentives for solar and wind energy production	76%	16%	+60%
Increase the royalty fees paid by companies which drill for oil and gas or mine for coal and minerals on national public lands	58%	25%	+33%
Gradually reduce the amount of new coal mines allowed to operate on national public lands	48%	31%	+17%
Make it easier for oil companies to export American crude oil to buyers overseas	42%	41%	+1%

# There is overwhelming support in every state for requiring upgrades to reduce flaring and methane leaks.



# Voters support energy production on public lands, *if* safeguards are increased.

*Thinking about the government practice of companies leasing the right to drill and mine for oil, natural gas, coal and other minerals on national public lands - What would you tell the next Administration to do in your state -*

Increase drilling and mining on national public lands

10%

Continue drilling and mining at the current pace  
WITHOUT any changes in safeguards for land and water

10%

Continue drilling and mining at the current pace, BUT  
WITH increased safeguards for land and water

52%

Stop all drilling and mining on national public lands

22%

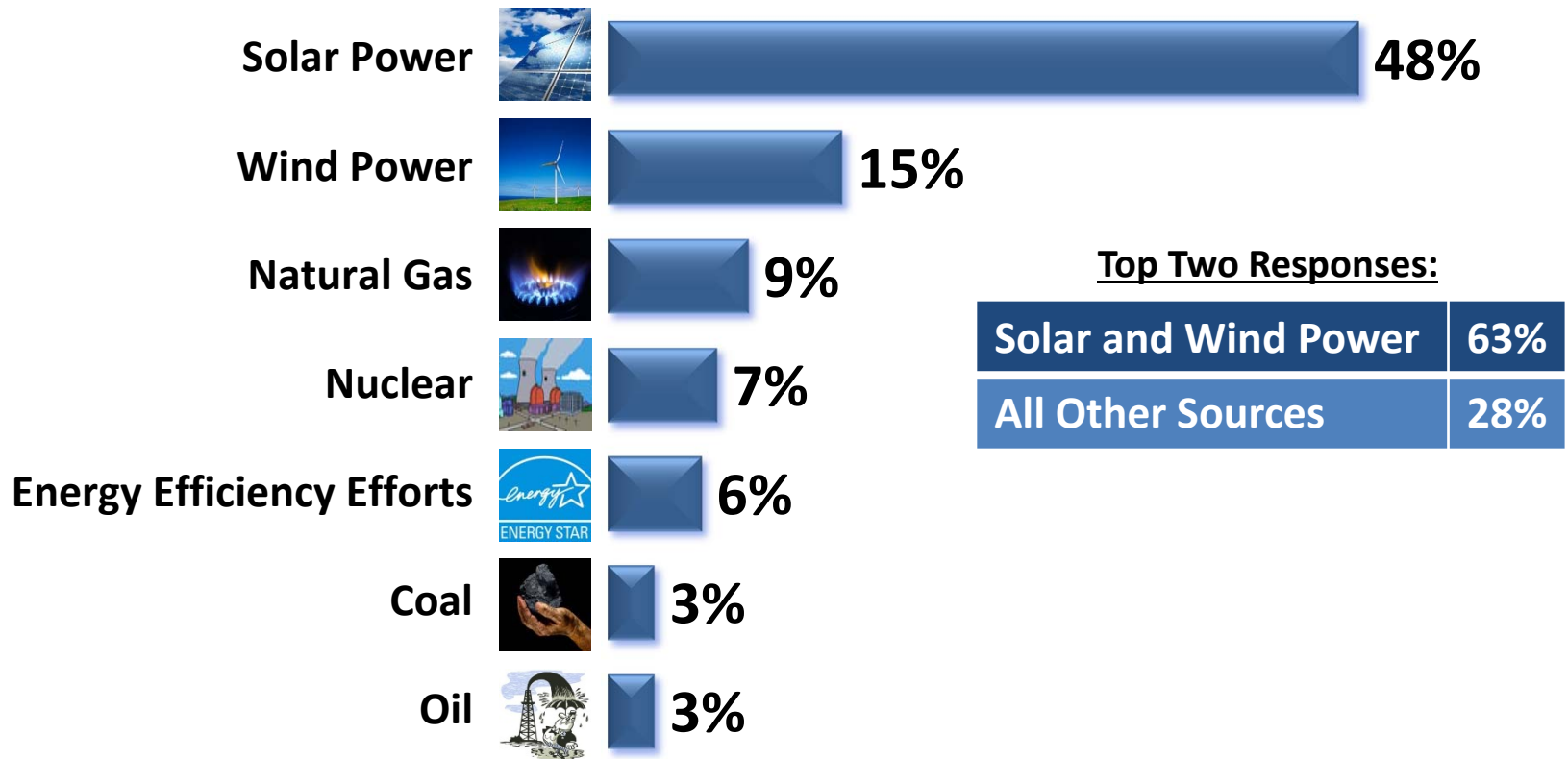
# Significantly, voters across the political spectrum prefer increased safeguards for continued drilling.

Republicans (36%)	Independents (32%)	Democrats (31%)
<p>Continue drilling and mining at the current pace, BUT WITH increased safeguards for land and water</p> <p><b>54%</b></p>	<p>Continue drilling and mining at the current pace, BUT WITH increased safeguards for land and water</p> <p><b>54%</b></p>	<p>Continue drilling and mining at the current pace, BUT WITH increased safeguards for land and water</p> <p><b>50%</b></p>
<p>Stop all drilling and mining on national public lands</p> <p><b>9%</b></p>	<p>Stop all drilling and mining on national public lands</p> <p><b>23%</b></p>	<p>Stop all drilling and mining on national public lands</p> <p><b>37%</b></p>
<p>Continue drilling and mining at the current pace WITHOUT any changes in safeguards for land and water</p> <p><b>15%</b></p>	<p>Continue drilling and mining at the current pace WITHOUT any changes in safeguards for land and water</p> <p><b>10%</b></p>	<p>Continue drilling and mining at the current pace WITHOUT any changes in safeguards for land and water</p> <p><b>5%</b></p>
<p>Increase drilling and mining on national public lands</p> <p><b>17%</b></p>	<p>Increase drilling and mining on national public lands</p> <p><b>8%</b></p>	<p>Increase drilling and mining on national public lands</p> <p><b>4%</b></p>



# Solar and wind continue to be the energy sources Westerners most want to encourage in their state.

*“Which one of the following sources of energy would you want to encourage the use of here in your state?”*



# Seven-in-ten Western voters say the western economy benefits more from lower gas prices; The exception is Wyoming.

*As you may know, the drop in gasoline prices, which is saving drivers and consumers money at the pump, has also meant a decline in oil and gas production in the West, leading to job losses. Would you say the western economy benefits more from -*

**Lower gas prices which help consumers**

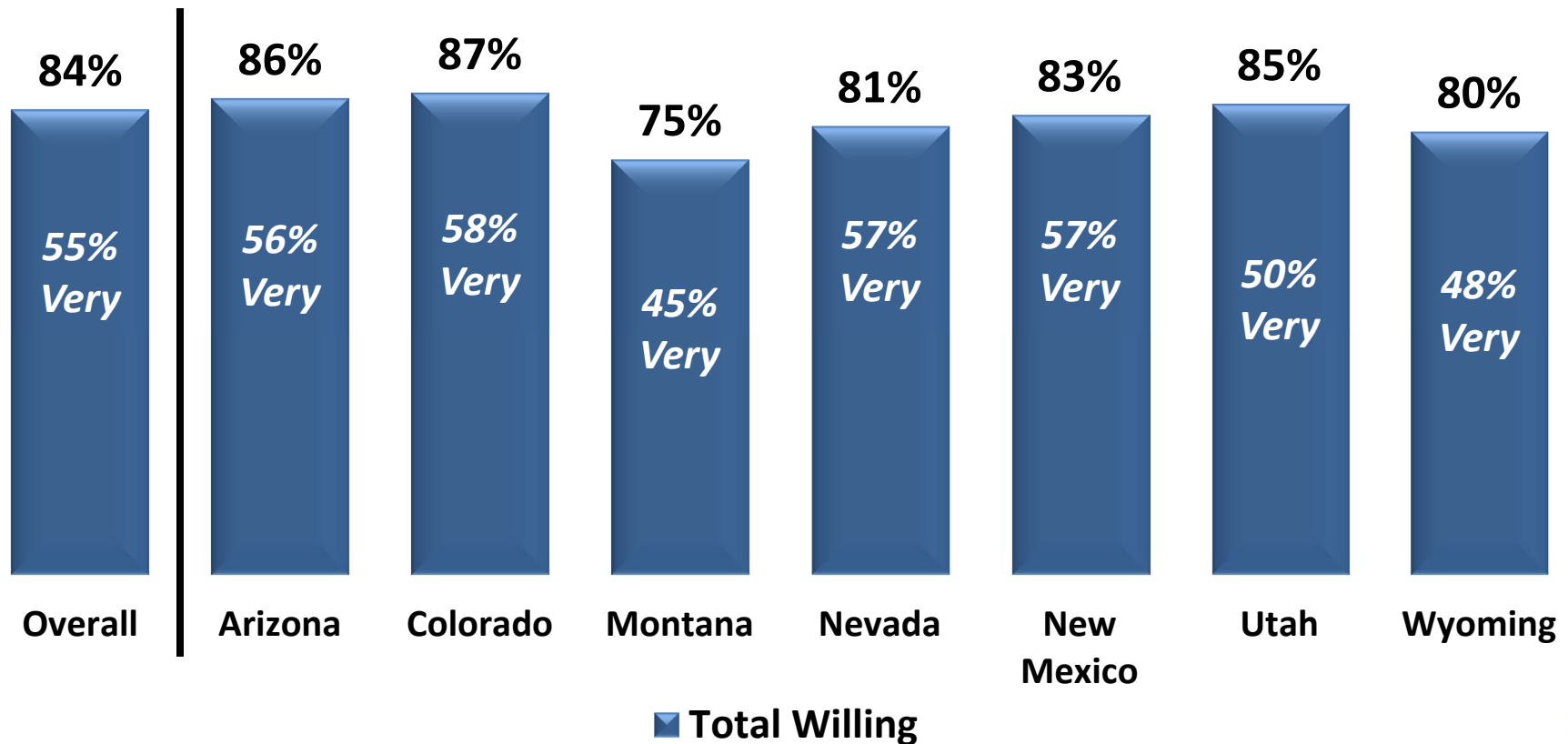
<u>Overall</u>	<u>Wyoming</u>
71%	31%

**Higher gas prices which help the oil and gas economy?**

16%	53%
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## There is also strong support for helping farmers to modernize and be more efficient.

*“Provide funding for low cost loans or other programs to help modernize irrigation used for farms and ranches to make more efficient use of existing water supplies”*



## Two-thirds or more in affected states say that they prefer using existing water supplies efficiently, rather than diversions.

*“Many experts say that (STATE) will likely face water shortage situations in the future. They say that we face a choice in how we address that shortage. So, which one of the following would you prefer state water officials invest more time and resources in pursuing?”*

Using our current water supply more wisely, by encouraging more water conservation, reducing use, and increasing recycling of water

<u>Colorado</u>	<u>Nevada</u>	<u>New Mexico</u>	<u>Utah</u>
77%	68%	78%	75%

Diverting more water from rivers in less populated areas of the state to communities where more people live

15%	18%	10%	14%
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# Conservation in 2016

***Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official?***





# Three-quarters of Western voters say that conservation is an important issue in deciding whether or not to support a candidate.

*Three-in-ten regard it as a “primary factor” in their decision.*

**75%**



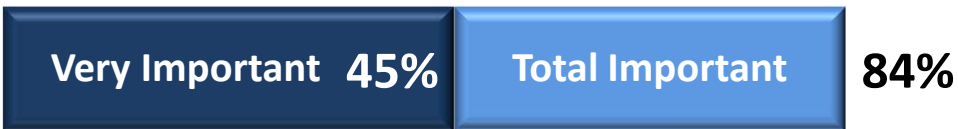
■ **Total Important**

*Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official?*

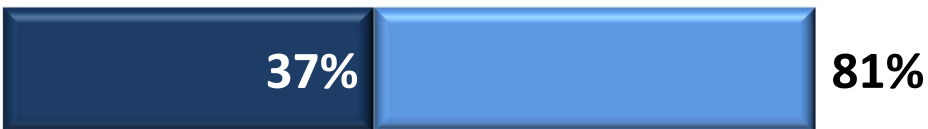
# Conservation issues are deemed important by many of the most critical “swing” sub-groups...



**Latinos (16%)**



**Sportsmen (38%)**



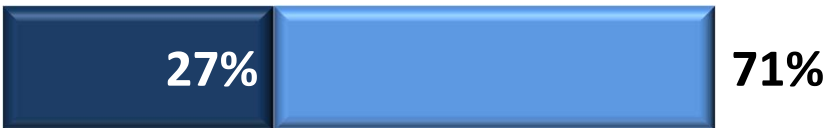
**Millenials (24%)**



**Moderates (33%)**



**Suburban Women (18%)**



*Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official?*

# Conservation issues are seen as ones where leaders ought to be able to find common ground.

*When you think about these issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife in your state - do you think those should be...*

Issues where elected officials and state leaders should work together and seek to find common ground

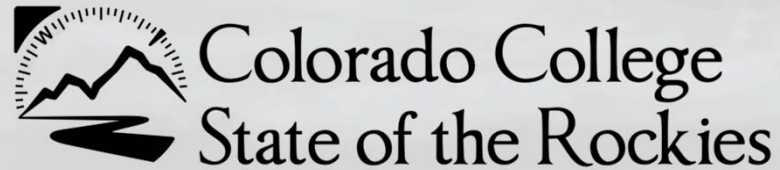
85%

Issues where elected officials and state leaders should not compromise if there are differences

10%



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