

Environmental Regulations

Western voters are more likely to view environmental laws as important safeguards rather than burdens on business; in many cases they support strengthening laws and reject reducing or suspending them, even when reductions are placed in a pro-jobs context.

Western voters are twice as likely to view environmental laws as “important safeguards” than to perceive them as costly and burdensome regulations. Respondents were asked “when you hear about the laws that govern industry's responsibility for your state's clean water, clean air, natural areas and wildlife do you think those are more likely to be...”



63%

Important safeguards to protect private property owners, public health and taxpayers from toxic pollution and costly clean-ups



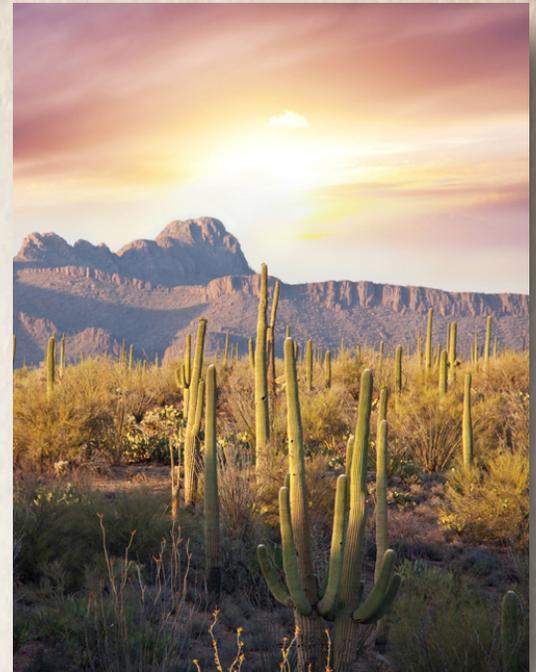
29%

Burdensome regulations that tie up industry in red tape, hurt them too much financially, and cost jobs

Western voters are twice as likely to view environmental laws as “important safeguards”

The responses across the states are remarkably similar:

	<i>Safeguards and Protections</i>	<i>Burdensome Regulations</i>
Arizona	61%	31%
Colorado	63%	29%
Montana	58%	33%
New Mexico	61%	31%
Utah	69%	23%
Wyoming	62%	27%



Predictably, there is a partisan distinction in views of regulation on industry. Three-quarters (78%) of Democrats and 64% of Independents view regulations as “important safeguards,” but Republicans are more divided (48% safeguards, 42% burdensome regulations). The division among GOP voters masks an internal schism: the 20% of the electorate in these states who identify as Tea Party Republicans (38% safeguards, 54% burdensome regulations) compared to the 15% of the electorate who are non-Tea Party Republicans (62% important safeguards, 29% burdensome regulations). The latter’s perceptions of environmental laws are far closer to Independent voters.



Voters overwhelmingly believe that regulations will have a positive impact on different features of life in the West -- their quality of life, public health, recreational opportunities -- and even jobs. By 17 point margin, voters are more likely to say that environmental regulations are positive for jobs in their state rather than negative. Respondents were asked whether “regulations on industry a that are designed to protect land, air, water and wildlife” in their state have a positive impact, a negative impact or almost no impact on each of the following:

	Positive	Negative	No Impact	Difference Score
Natural beauty of our state	79%	7%	12%	+72
Public safety	70%	10%	16%	+60
Quality of life	72%	13%	12%	+59
Public health	66%	14%	16%	+52
Outdoor recreation	60%	17%	20%	+43
Hunting and fishing	55%	18%	20%	+37
Jobs	47%	30%	18%	+17

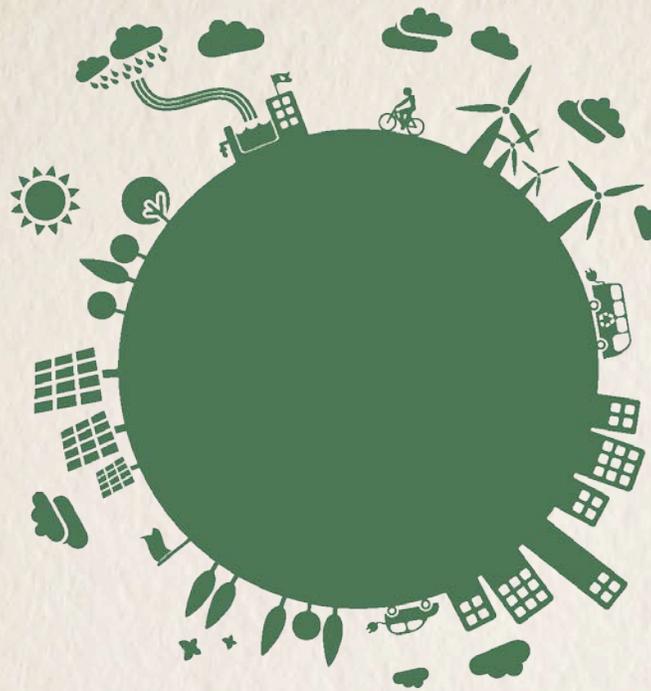
The proportion of voters saying regulations have a positive impact on jobs in their state exceeds the number saying it has a negative impact in every single state, with very few variations.

That surprising response to how voters perceive the impact of regulations on jobs is reinforced in Western voters’ rejection of the idea that cutting regulations is a job creator. Three-in-five voters in the region (60%) disagree that “One of the best ways to create jobs is to cut back environmental regulations that are weighing down your state’s businesses,” while 38% agree. Voters in every state are more likely to reject this idea than agree with it. The exceptions: Tea Party supporters (69% agree) and those who say they get most of their information about politics and current events from Fox News (70%). Majorities of non-Tea Party voters, swing voters, and self-described moderates, as well as all other news, viewers reject this view on job creation.

Similarly, even when provided with an economic rationale for doing so, three-quarters of voters say they prefer to maintain protections for land, air and water rather than reduce those standards. *“As part of efforts to improve the state economy and generate jobs as quickly as possible, some people have proposed reducing protections for land, air and water that apply to major industries. Would you prefer that your state...”*

75%

Maintain protections for land, air and water that apply to major industries



19%

Reduce protections for land, air and water that apply to major industries



Views of regulation may be founded in voters’ response to a separate survey question that asked about the absence of regulation. Only 21% agree that *“We can trust companies to act responsibly to protect your state’s land, water and wildlife on their own, without laws and regulations that require them to do so.”* Fully 78% reject this idea. Again, this view was widely held with no more than 27% agreement in any state.



Even when the suspensions of environmental standards are for a different purpose – reducing illegal immigration – voters still side with maintaining current protections. Respondents were told that *“Some members of Congress have said that, in order to help stop the flow of illegal immigrants into the US, it is necessary to suspend all environmental protections within one hundred miles of the US-Mexico and US-Canadian border, including in National Parks and other protected public lands.”* Only one-in-five voters (21%) across the West indicated that they believe it is necessary to suspend these environmental protections in order to help stop the flow of illegal immigrations into the U.S. Voters in both border and interior states tended to have the same reaction to the proposal:

	<i>Arizona</i>	<i>Colorado</i>	<i>Montana</i>	<i>New Mexico</i>	<i>Utah</i>	<i>Wyoming</i>
Necessary	22%	22%	21%	25%	20%	22%
Unnecessary	73%	68%	66%	65%	72%	69%

The survey also found support for *strengthening* some regulations:

- Seven-in-ten (70%) support “the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency continuing to implement the Clean Air Act by updating the standards for air quality, including for smog, dust, and emissions from power plants, factories and cars, based on the latest science.” More than six-in-ten in every state indicate support, as does a majority of Republicans (51%), Independents (72%) and Democrats (91%).
- A specific proposal to designate some public lands in the Arkansas River Canyon as a National Monument is overwhelmingly supported by Colorado voters (66% support, 22% oppose).
- A solid majority of Utah voters (76%) supports “requiring developers to meet updated standards to reduce energy waste and reduce home owners’ utility bills, even if it increases the price of brand new homes by somewhere between” \$1,000-\$8,000.

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For the complete 2012 Conservation in the West Poll findings and more information visit: www.stateoftherockies.com.

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