

Poll results from David Binder Research  
Commissioned by Oceana – (907) 586-4050



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To: Interested Parties  
From: David Binder Research  
Date: September 10, 2008  
Re: Western state voters reluctant to support offshore oil drilling in the Arctic

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In the face of record high gas prices and a Presidential campaign where expanding oil drilling has become a major issue, voters in California, Oregon and Washington continue to be reluctant to support offshore oil drilling in the Arctic.<sup>1</sup> In addition to being reluctant to support offshore oil drilling, these western state voters strongly support the implementation of a science based plan to minimize the impact before any oil drilling begins.

Key findings, with the full wording of the questions and the topline results, appear below:

**Without any prior information, voters are less supportive of offshore oil drilling in the Arctic, compared to offshore oil drilling in their own state. Whereas 50% of voters support offshore oil drilling in their own state, 45% support and 41% oppose offshore oil drilling in the Arctic.**

- a. Now, turning to the issue of oil drilling... Do you generally support or oppose ocean offshore oil drilling in (READ STATE: CALIFORNIA / OREGON / WASHINGTON)? (IF SUPPORT/OPOSE, FOLLOW-UP: Is that strongly support/oppose or somewhat support/oppose?)

STRONGLY SUPPORT	33	→50%
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	17	
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	11	→38%
STRONGLY OPPOSE	27	
DON'T KNOW	12	

- b. And do you generally support or oppose ocean offshore oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean? (IF SUPPORT/OPOSE, FOLLOW-UP: Is that strongly support/oppose or somewhat support/oppose?)

STRONGLY SUPPORT	29	→45%
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	16	
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	11	→41%
STRONGLY OPPOSE	30	
DON'T KNOW	14	

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<sup>1</sup> David Binder Research surveyed 1152 likely voters in California, Oregon and Washington between August 16<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, with a margin of error of ±2.9%. For each piece of information, please refer to the question in reference, denoted by a letter, and appearing at the end of the document.

**Nearly half of voters (46%) say they are very concerned – an unusually high level of intensity on any issue – about the impact of the loss of Arctic sea ice threatening polar bears and other animals, as well as the people who live in the Arctic. Also, voters express strong concern about the possible impacts of ocean acidification. While ocean acidification is less of a concern to western state voters, for 40% of voters to say they are “very concerned” demonstrates a high level of intensity.**

- c. Scientists and the federal government say that C-O-2 and other greenhouse gas emissions are causing our oceans to become more acidic, which threatens ocean ecosystems and marine life.

Based on that information and what you already know, how concerned are you about the possible impacts of ocean acidification... Are you very concerned, somewhat, a little, or not at all concerned?

VERY CONCERNED	40	→71%
SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	31	
ONLY A LITTLE CONCERNED	11	
NOT AT ALL CONCERNED	15	→26%
STATEMENT IS FALSE (VOL)	1	
DON'T KNOW	2	

- d. Scientists and the federal government say that C-O-2 and other greenhouse gas emissions are causing the melting of Arctic sea ice, which threatens polar bears and other animals as well as the people who live in the Arctic.

Based on that information and what you already know, how concerned are you about the impacts of the loss of Arctic sea ice? Are you very concerned, somewhat, a little, or not at all concerned?

VERY CONCERNED	46	→72%
SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	26	
ONLY A LITTLE CONCERNED	11	
NOT AT ALL CONCERNED	14	→25%
STATEMENT IS FALSE (VOL)	2	
DON'T KNOW	1	

**A strong majority of voters (56%) agree that we should tax oil profits as part of a strategy to move us towards renewable energy, as opposed to just one-third that oppose taxing oil profits because it will raise gas prices and slow the transition to renewable energy.**

- e. (ROTATE)

(Some / other) people point out that oil companies are enjoying record profits while Americans struggle to make ends meet because of high gas prices. As a result we should tax oil profits as part of a strategy to move us away from Big Oil and towards renewable energy.

(Some / other) people say that it will take record investments by our energy companies to help America move us towards renewable energy, and taxing oil profits will only slow the process, while raising gas prices for consumers.

With whom do you agree more... those that say we should tax oil profits or those that say we should not tax oil profits?

IF CHOICE: Is that agree much more, or just somewhat?

TAX, MUCH MORE	38	→56%
TAX, SOMEWHAT MORE	18	
NO TAX, SOMEWHAT MORE	13	→33%
NO TAX, MUCH MORE	20	

NEITHER (VOL)	3
BOTH (VOL)	1
DON'T KNOW	7

**When given various choices about oil drilling in the Arctic, ranging from drilling everywhere to not drilling at all, a majority of voters support no drilling at all or drilling only onshore not in ANWR. A total of 55% say “don’t drill for oil anywhere in the Arctic” or “Drill for oil only onshore but not in the ANWR”.**

- f. Much of the debate about oil drilling in the Arctic has been focused on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, known as ANWR (An-war – rhymes with tar), which is onshore drilling. Now there is a push to drill for oil offshore in the waters of the Arctic Ocean, which scientists and the federal government say would be riskier than drilling onshore.

Based on that information and what you know today, which would you prefer... (READ CHOICES)..?

Drill for oil everywhere in the Arctic	18
Drill for oil only offshore in the Arctic Ocean	5
Drill for oil only onshore to protect the ocean environment	13
Drill for oil only onshore but not in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge	22
Don't drill for oil anywhere in the Arctic	33
DON'T KNOW	9

**Two-thirds of voters (66%) are very or somewhat concerned about the risks of offshore oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean, twice as many that say they are only a little or not at all concerned.**

- g. How concerned are you about the risks off offshore oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean?

VERY CONCERED	33	→66%
SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	33	
ONLY A LITTLE CONCERNED	15	→32%
NOT AT ALL CONCERNED	17	
DON'T KNOW	2	

**The degree to which Western state voters agree on the importance of a science-based plan is remarkable. A strong majority (57%) say it is very important for there to be a science based approach and response capabilities in place to minimize the consequences of oil development before any drilling occurs, even if it slows the timeframe for oil drilling. For over half to express such intensity in stating it is very important is unusual.**

- h. And how important do you think it is for there to be a science based approach and response capabilities in place to minimize the consequences of oil development before any drilling occurs, even if it slows the timeframe for oil drilling -- Is it very important, somewhat, not very, or not at all important?

VERY IMPORTANT	57	→81%
SOMEWHAT	24	
JUST A LITTLE	6	→17%
NOT AT ALL	11	
DON'T KNOW	2	



**After hearing that any oil from offshore drilling today would not impact gasoline prices for 7 to 10 years, if at all, only 21% of voters continue to support the “drill here, drill now” approach. The vast majority of voters fit into the categories of not drilling at all, only drilling onshore where it can be done safely for the environment, or only drilling for oil offshore if there a science based plan and response capabilities in place.**

i. Many people are saying that any oil from offshore drilling today would not impact gasoline prices for 7 to 10 years, if at all. Based on that information and what we’ve been discussing, which of the following statements best reflects your feelings? (RANDOMIZE, READ CHOICES)

We should take a “drill here, drill now” approach and drill everywhere we can.	21
We should only drill offshore once there’s a science-based plan and response capabilities in place to protect our ocean environment.	30
We should not drill offshore at all, but only drill onshore in those places where it can be done without harming our environment	30
We shouldn’t drill for oil anywhere	13
DON’T KNOW	6

**What is striking is that the “center” of the debate, beyond the overall agreement that we should move towards renewable energy, rests with a focus on a science based approach and a cautious approach to drilling. As many voters say we should not drill offshore at all (27%) as voters that say, for now, we must drill offshore (28%). The center of the debate – where one-third of voters lie – is that we should only drill offshore once there is a science-based approach and response capabilities in place to prevent harm to ocean environments.**

j. Some political and economic leaders are saying that the push for offshore ocean oil drilling is distracting the country from the necessary shift to renewable energy. Which of the following statement best reflects your feelings? (RANDOMIZE, READ CHOICES)

Renewable energy is not the answer. We need to drill offshore immediately.	7
We should move to renewable energy, but for now, we must drill offshore.	28
We should move to renewable energy and only drill offshore once there is a science-based approach and response capabilities in place to prevent harm to ocean environments.	33
We should move to renewable energy and not drill offshore at all.	27
DON’T KNOW	5

**When given a choice between drilling sooner or waiting for more information, three-fifths of voters agree that more information about the impacts of oil drilling offshore is needed, even if it means a delay in drilling that might lower gas prices. Only one-fifth say we should drill offshore regardless of the risks to the Arctic because it might lower gas prices. The remaining one-fifth do not pick a statement. (Ref: H)**

k. Based on what we've discussed, which of the following statements best reflects your feelings with regards to oil drilling and gas prices... (ROTATE)

We should drill for oil offshore now regardless of the risks to our oceans and Arctic because I think it might lower gas prices

I need more information about the impacts of oil drilling offshore, even if it means a delay in drilling that might lower gas prices.

DRILL OIL NOW REGARDLESS	22
NEED MORE INFORMATION	60
BOTH (VOL)	1
NEITHER (VOL)	14
DON'T KNOW	3

**After hearing information about the possible impacts of offshore oil drilling, western state voters become more opposed to offshore drilling, both in their own state and offshore in the Arctic Ocean. After information, a majority (53%) of voters oppose drilling for oil offshore in the Arctic. Voters continue to be less opposed towards offshore oil drilling in their own state, divided with 48% opposed and 46% supportive.**

l. (SECOND ASK) Now that you have heard more... Do you generally support or oppose ocean offshore oil drilling in (READ STATE: CALIFORNIA / OREGON / WASHINGTON? (IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, FOLLOW-UP: Is that strongly support/oppose or somewhat support/oppose?)

STRONGLY SUPPORT	26	→46%
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	20	
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	13	
STRONGLY OPPOSE	35	→48%
DON'T KNOW	6	

m. (SECOND ASK) And do you generally support or oppose drilling for oil offshore in the Arctic Ocean? (IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, FOLLOW-UP: Is that strongly support/oppose or somewhat support/oppose?)

STRONGLY SUPPORT	23	→40%
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	17	
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	15	
STRONGLY OPPOSE	38	→53%
DON'T KNOW	7	