

A decorative graphic in the top left corner features a solid green square with a small yellow square at its bottom right corner. A thin grey line extends from the bottom right corner of the green square towards the center of the page.

Addressing the State Budget Deficit: A Survey of Minnesotans

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner features a thin grey horizontal line and a thin grey vertical line intersecting at a small yellow square. The text "March 2003" is positioned to the left of this intersection.

March 2003



Addressing the State Budget Deficit: A Survey of Minnesotans

**Data Collected by Woelfel Research, Inc.
Report Prepared by
Joanne Binette and Debbie Gann**

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Background

Minnesota, like most states, is experiencing an economic downturn characterized by lower state revenues and greater need for state services than projected. As a result, in the next two years Minnesota faces an estimated \$4.5 billion shortfall. In response, the governor recommended a plan to balance the state budget primarily with cuts to current state services.

In March of 2003, AARP conducted a telephone survey of 801 randomly selected Minnesota adults to explore their opinions about several aspects of the governor's proposed budget plan as well as potential ways to address the budget deficit.

Specifically *Addressing the State Budget Deficit: A Survey of Minnesotans* measures:

- Importance of maintaining current levels of funding for state services for low-income, older, and disabled persons
- Attitudes towards cutting aging and adult services as a way to balance the budget
- Attitudes towards cutting state aid for local government services as a way to balance the budget
- Support for maintaining the state's prescription drug program
- Support for generating revenues specifically for state services for low-income, older, and disabled persons
- Support for alternative methods to raise revenue to avoid cuts in state services for low-income, older, and disabled persons
- Support for generating revenues specifically for local government services
- Preference for using state taxes or local property taxes to fund local government services

Highlights

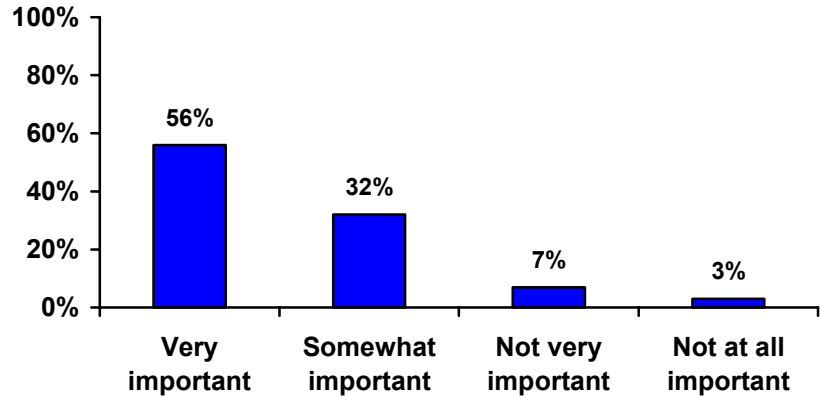
- Almost nine in ten (88%) Minnesotans age 18 or older say it is important to them that the state of Minnesota maintain current levels of funding for services for low-income, older, and disabled persons.
- Nearly nine in ten (88%) support the Governor's proposal to maintain the state prescription drug program that provides coverage for low-income Minnesotans who are over age 65 or disabled.
- Seventy percent of Minnesotans oppose cuts to aging and adult services.
- A large proportion of Minnesotans (83%) support finding ways to generate additional revenues if the money is spent on services for low-income, older, and disabled persons. The majority of respondents support:
 - increasing the tax on beer, wine, and liquor (78%);
 - increasing the cigarette tax by \$1.00 to \$1.48 per pack (76%);
 - adding a temporary surcharge on the income tax for households with annual incomes above \$200,000 (76%); and
 - closing loopholes and exemptions (76%).
- In contrast, the majority of Minnesotans oppose increasing the gasoline tax by 5 cents per gallon (59%) and charging a sales tax on clothing (55%) to avoid cuts in services for low-income, older, and disabled persons.
- Two-thirds (66%) of Minnesotans oppose cuts to state aid to local governments that pays for services such as police and firefighters. A large majority (82%) would accept an increase in taxes if the money is paid to local governments for these essential services.
 - By more than a four to one margin, Minnesotans feel these taxes should be raised at the state level through taxes on cigarettes, alcohol, and so forth rather than at the local level where property taxes likely would be raised (69% state vs. 16% local through property taxes).

Findings

Nearly nine in ten Minnesotans believe it is important that the state maintain current levels of funding for services for low-income, older, and disabled persons.

More than half of respondents think it is *very important* (56%) to maintain current funding levels for services for low-income, older, and disabled persons while another third (32%) think it is *somewhat important*.

Importance of Maintaining Current Funding Levels for Services for Low-Income, Older, and Disabled Persons (N=801)

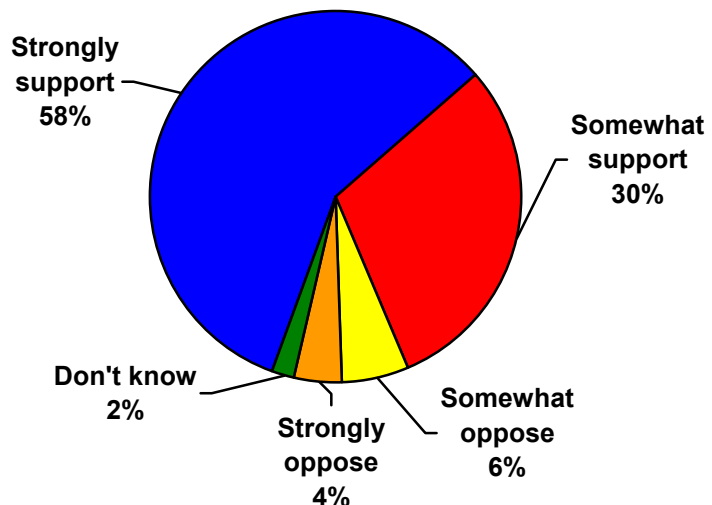


Almost nine in ten Minnesotans support maintaining the state prescription drug program that benefits low-income older or disabled residents.

As part of the budget plan, the governor has proposed maintaining the current state prescription drug program that provides prescription drug coverage for low-income Minnesotans who are over age 65 or disabled.

The majority of Minnesotans *strongly* (58%) or *somewhat* support (30%) maintaining the state prescription drug program.

Support for Maintaining Minnesota's Prescription Drug Program (N=801)

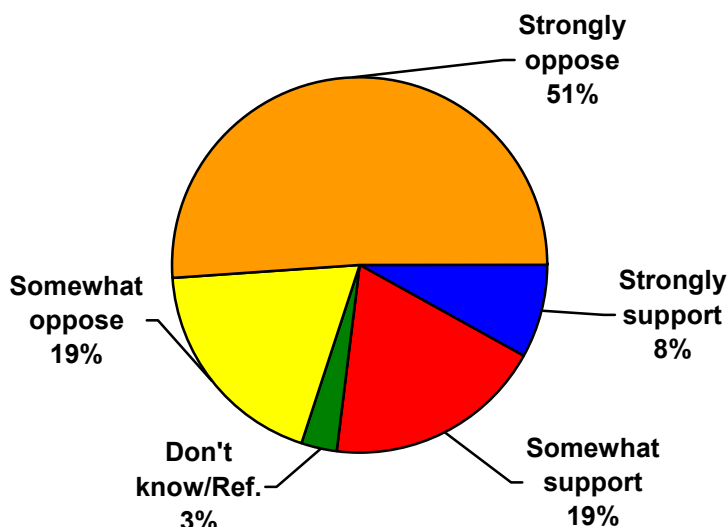


Minnesotans oppose cuts to aging and adult services.

The governor has proposed cuts to aging and adult services in the state. These cuts would eliminate one million meals per year to needy seniors and close approximately 100 dining sites. These cuts would also limit access to services that allow people to stay in their own homes as they age.

Seven in ten Minnesotans oppose cuts to aging and adult services: 51 percent *strongly oppose* these proposed cuts, and an additional 19 percent *somewhat oppose* them.

Opposition to Cuts in Aging and Adult Services
(N=801)

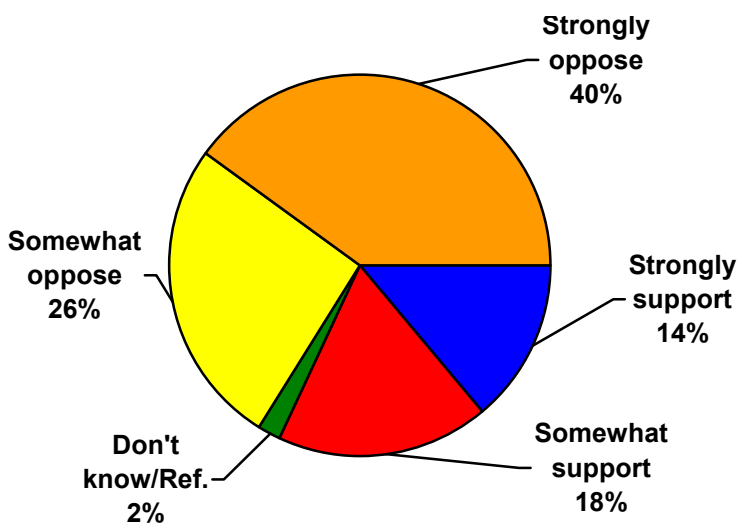


Two-thirds of Minnesotans oppose cuts to state aid for local government services.

Another part of the governor's budget plan includes cuts in the amount of state aid that is paid to local governments for services (LGA) such as police and firefighters.

Two-thirds oppose cuts in state aid to local government services: 40 percent *strongly oppose* these cuts, and another 26 percent *somewhat oppose* them.

Opposition to Cuts in State Aid for
Local Government Services
(N=801)

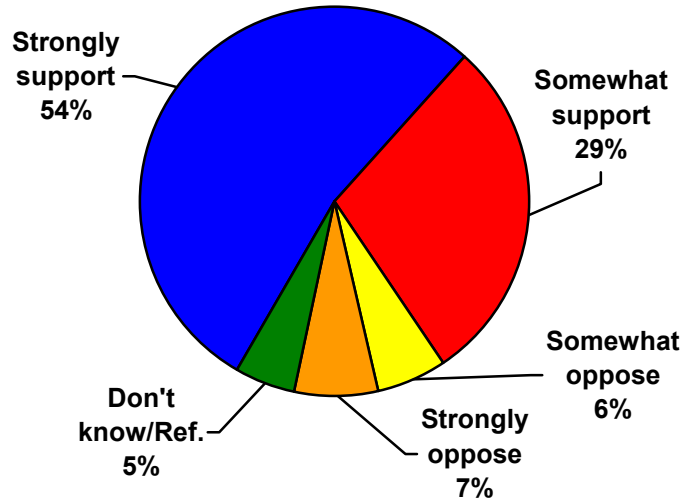


More than eight in ten Minnesotans support finding ways to generate additional revenue if the money would be spent on services for low-income, older, and disabled persons.

Minnesota respondents were asked whether they would support or oppose finding ways to generate additional revenues if the money would be spent on services for low-income, older, and disabled persons.

More than half of the respondents *strongly support* (54%) finding additional revenues for these services, and another three in ten (29%) *somewhat support* this action.

Support for Finding Additional Revenues Specifically for Services for Low-Income, Older, and Disabled Persons (N=801)



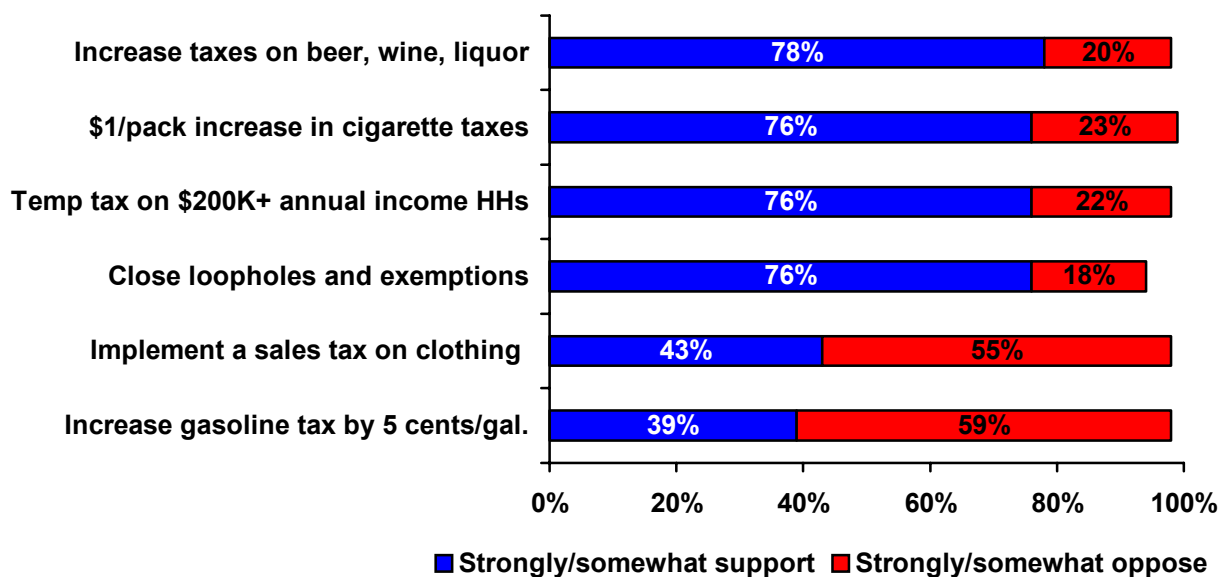
To avoid cuts in services for low-income, older, and disabled persons, most Minnesotans support increases in alcohol and cigarette taxes and temporary income taxes.

Minnesota residents were asked to consider six ways to balance the state budget and avoid cuts in services for low-income, older, and disabled persons. Generally speaking the methods to raise revenues include: sin taxes, broad-based personal taxes, temporary taxes, and closing loopholes and exemptions. Sin taxes include taxes on beer, wine, and liquor, and cigarettes. Broad-based personal taxes are taxes that affect a wide range of individuals. The survey explored a gasoline tax increase of 5 cents per gallon and implementing a sales tax on clothing. Temporary taxes include adding a temporary surcharge on the income tax for households with annual incomes of \$200,000 or more. The survey also explored closing loopholes and exemptions which some individuals or businesses use to their advantage to pay less in taxes.

When asked to consider ways to balance the state budget and avoid cuts in funding for services for low-income, older, and disabled persons, the majority of Minnesotans support four varied types of taxes. More than three-quarters support an increased tax on beer, wine, and liquor; a \$1 increase in the cigarette tax (to \$1.48 per pack); a temporary income tax for households with incomes of \$200,000 or more; or closing loopholes and exemptions.

In contrast, the majority of Minnesotans oppose increasing the gasoline tax by 5 cents per gallon (59%) and charging a sales tax on clothing (55%).

Support for Specific Revenues for Services that Benefit Low-Income, Older, and Disabled Persons (N=801)



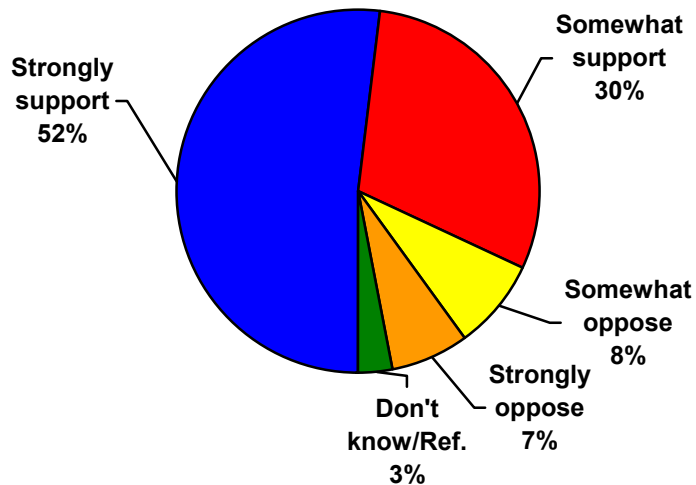
*Percentages may be slightly different than those in the annotated survey due to rounding.

More than eight in ten Minnesotans support finding ways to generate additional revenue to avoid cuts to state aid for local government services.

Earlier we noted that two-thirds (66%) of Minnesotans oppose cuts to state aid for local government programs.

When asked whether they support or oppose finding ways to generate additional revenue if the money is spent on local government services, over half (52%) *strongly support* finding ways, and an additional three in ten *somewhat support* this action.

Support for Finding Additional Revenue Specifically for State Aid to Local Government Services (N=801)

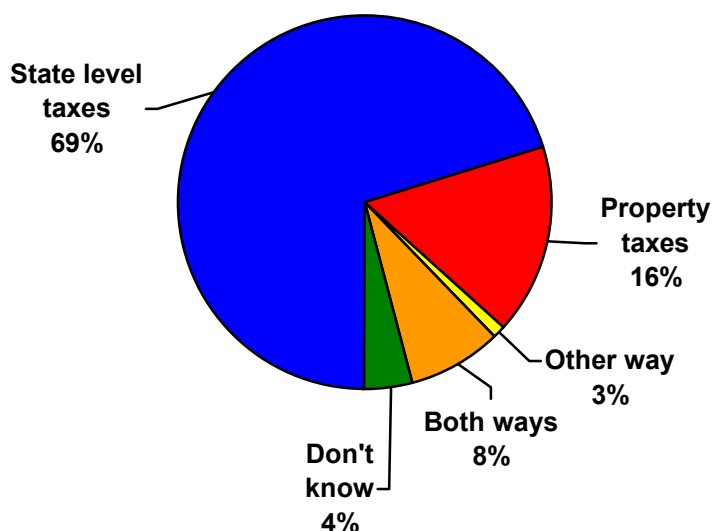


By more than a four to one margin, Minnesotans who support generating revenue for local government services prefer that the money come from increases in state level taxes rather than from property taxes.

Minnesotans who support finding ways to raise revenue for local government services were asked whether the revenue should be generated at the state level -- through taxes such as sin taxes, gasoline, clothing and so forth -- or whether the monies should be generated at the local level -- mostly through increased property taxes.

More than four times as many Minnesotans support generating state level revenues (69%) if earmarked for local government services compared to those who support generating revenues from increased property taxes (16%).

Source for Local Government Funding (Those Who Support Finding Revenue Sources for Local Government Services n=678)



*The base also includes the few people who said they did not know, or refused to answer Q. 6

A Profile of Minnesota Respondents

A total of 801 Minnesotans aged 18 and older participated in the survey. An overwhelming majority (90%) of respondents are regular voters. Seven in ten of those surveyed report they *always vote* while another 20 percent say they *sometimes miss a vote*.

Respondents are almost evenly divided between males (49%) and females (51%). Almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents are married. Most respondents are college graduates (42%) or have some college or technical training beyond high school (30%). Seven in ten respondents are employed either full-or part-time. Almost one-quarter of Minnesota respondents have an annual household income below \$30,000. Two in ten survey respondents are members of AARP.

Conclusions

As Governor Pawlenty and the Minnesota State Legislators move forward to balance the budget, lawmakers should consider the following opinions of Minnesota residents.

Survey results indicate that Minnesotans have strong opinions about maintaining services for low-income, older and disabled persons. Minnesotans believe it is important to maintain current levels of funding for the prescription drug program and they are opposed to cuts in aging and adult services.

When given the choice, Minnesotans support finding ways to generate additional revenue if the money is spent on services for low-income, older and disabled persons. While they oppose a sales tax on clothing and a gas tax increase, they support increasing other revenue sources, such as a dollar per pack cigarette tax increase, a temporary income tax surcharge on high-income households, increases in taxes on liquor, beer and wine, and closing loopholes and exemptions.

While Minnesotans are opposed to cuts in local government services, they are clear in their dislike for increased property taxes as a way to avoid these cuts. They overwhelmingly prefer increases in state level taxes in order to raise revenue for local government services.

From across the state, Minnesotans have provided insight into their priorities. With specific examples of priorities and preferred sources of revenue, citizens have given their elected leaders suggestions on how to proceed.

Methodology

AARP commissioned Woelfel Research to conduct a random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey of adults age 18 or older in Minnesota. A total of 801 interviews were completed. The survey was conducted between March 10 - 18, 2003, yielding a 15 percent response rate and 93 percent cooperation rate.¹ The survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percent. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would fall in a range of 3.5 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every adult in Minnesota had been surveyed. Survey responses were weighted to reflect the distribution of age and gender in the adult population of Minnesota. Weighted responses to all survey questions are in the attached annotated questionnaire.

¹ The response rate is Response Rate 3 and the cooperation rate is Cooperation Rate 3 from the following publication: The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2000. *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: AAPOR. *Addressing the State Budget Deficit: A Survey of Minnesotans*

Annotated Questionnaire

Addressing the State Budget Deficit:
A Telephone Survey of Minnesotans
Unweighted N=801 Minnesotans Age 18+, Response Rate 15%,
Sampling Error= $\pm 3.5\%$
Weighted N=801
(Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.)

Introduction

Hello, this is _____ calling from Woelfel Research, Inc., a national opinion research firm. We are not telemarketers and are not trying to sell you anything. We would like to find out your opinions on proposed cuts to services in Minnesota in response to the state budget deficit. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation. All of your responses are kept entirely confidential. The survey should take less than 10 minutes of your time.

I1. RECORD GENDER OF PERSON WHO ANSWERED PHONE:

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

I2. To make our study more representative of those living throughout Minnesota, I need to speak with the youngest male who is at home right now and is at least 18 years old.

- 1) Person on phone is youngest male [**SKIP TO Q1**]
- 2) Other person is youngest male and is coming to phone [**SKIP TO I4**]
- 3) Person is not available
- 4) REFUSED [**SKIP TO R1**]

I3. Then may I speak to the oldest female who is at home right now and is at least 18 years old?

- 1) Person on phone is oldest female [**SKIP TO Q1**]
- 2) Other person is oldest female and is coming to the phone [**SKIP TO I4**]
- 3) Person is not available [**TERMINATE**]
- 4) REFUSED [**SKIP TO R1**]

I4. Hello, this is _____ calling from Woelfel Research, Inc., a national opinion research firm. We are not telemarketers and are not trying to sell you anything. We would like to find out your opinions on proposed cuts to services in Minnesota in response to the state budget deficit. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation. All of your responses are kept entirely confidential. The survey should only take less than 10 minutes of your time.

- 1) CONTINUE
- 2) REFUSED [**SKIP TO R1**]

MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Minnesota is facing difficult economic choices in the coming months as the governor and legislature try to balance the state budget. The state has an estimated \$4.5 billion shortfall in the budget in the next two years. There are three major approaches to balancing the budget: cutting current services, increasing state revenues, or a combination of service cuts and revenue increases. I would like to ask your opinion on how you think Minnesota should balance its budget and what programs are important to you.**

Governor Pawlenty's proposal to balance the state budget mostly calls for cuts to state services. These include services for low-income people, older persons, and people with disabilities.

How important is it to you for Minnesota to maintain current levels of funding for services for low-income people, older persons and people with disabilities? Would you say it is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or would you say it is not at all important for Minnesota to maintain current levels of funding for services for low-income people, older persons, and people with disabilities?

<u>%</u>	
56	Very important
32	Somewhat important
7	Not very important
3	Not at all important
3	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5	Refused [DO NOT READ]

2. **The Governor's budget proposal calls for cuts to aging and adult services in the state. These cuts would eliminate 1 million meals per year to needy seniors and would close approximately 100 dining sites. The cuts also would limit access to services that allow people to stay in their own homes as they age. How strongly do you support or oppose these cuts as a way to balance the budget? Do you.....**

<u>%</u>	
8	Strongly support these cuts to aging and adult services
19	Somewhat support these cuts
19	Somewhat oppose these cuts
51	Strongly oppose these cuts to aging and adult services
3	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5	Refused [DO NOT READ]

3. **The Governor’s proposal calls for cuts in the amount of state aid that is paid to many local governments for programs such as police, firefighters and other local services. How strongly do you support or oppose cuts in state aid that helps pay for these local government services? Do you**

%

- 14 Strongly support these cuts in the amount of state aid
- 18 Somewhat support these cuts
- 26 Somewhat oppose these cuts
- 40 Strongly oppose these cuts in the amount of state aid
- 2 Don’t know [DO NOT READ]
- <.5 Refused [DO NOT READ]

4. **The previous questions had to do with the Governor’s proposed cuts. Now I’d like to ask you about something he has proposed maintaining, which is the State Prescription Drug program that provides prescription drug coverage for low-income Minnesotans who are over age 65 or disabled. How strongly do you support or oppose maintaining this program? [INTERVIEWER: SINCE WE’VE SWITCHED FROM ASKING ABOUT CUTS TO ASKING ABOUT KEEPING SOMETHING, CLARIFY.]**

%

- 58 Strongly support maintaining this program
- 30 Somewhat support maintaining it
- 6 Somewhat oppose maintaining it
- 4 Strongly oppose maintaining this program
- 2 Don’t know [DO NOT READ]
- <.5 Refused [DO NOT READ]

5. **Now I’d like to focus on the proposed cuts that would affect services specifically for low-income people, older persons, and people with disabilities. One approach to balance the state budget and avoid cuts in those services is to look for new ways to raise money. How strongly do you support or oppose finding ways to generate additional revenues if the money would be spent specifically on services that help low-income people, older persons, and people with disabilities? Do you.....**

%

- 54 Strongly support
- 29 Somewhat support
- 6 Somewhat oppose
- 7 Strongly oppose
- 4 Don’t know [DO NOT READ]
- 1 Refused [DO NOT READ]

6. **[READ THE FOLLOWING LEAD-IN BEFORE EACH ITEM] To avoid cuts in funding for services for low-income people, older persons, and people with disabilities, how strongly would you support or oppose ...**

ROTATE Q6a-6f

Q6a. Charging a sales tax on clothing? Do you...

%
16 Strongly support
27 Somewhat support
16 Somewhat oppose
39 Strongly oppose
2 Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5 Refused [DO NOT READ]

Q6b. Increasing the cigarette tax by \$1.00 to \$1.48 per pack? Do you...

%
61 Strongly support
15 Somewhat support
5 Somewhat oppose
17 Strongly oppose
1 Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5 Refused [DO NOT READ]

Q6c. Increasing the tax on beer, wine, and liquor? Do you...

%
52 Strongly support
26 Somewhat support
7 Somewhat oppose
13 Strongly oppose
2 Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5 Refused [DO NOT READ]

Q6d. Adding a temporary surcharge on the income tax for higher income households. This temporary tax on income would only apply to those households with annual incomes of \$200,000 or more. Do you...

%
55 Strongly support
21 Somewhat support
7 Somewhat oppose
15 Strongly oppose
1 Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5 Refused [DO NOT READ]

Q6e. Increasing the gasoline tax by 5 cents per gallon? Do you...

<u>%</u>	
18	Strongly support
22	Somewhat support
17	Somewhat oppose
42	Strongly oppose
2	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5	Refused [DO NOT READ]

Q6f. Closing loopholes and exemptions in taxes which some individuals or businesses use to their advantage to pay less in taxes? Do you...

<u>%</u>	
58	Strongly support
18	Somewhat support
8	Somewhat oppose
11	Strongly oppose
6	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5	Refused [DO NOT READ]

7. My next few questions focus only on the proposed cuts in the state aid that is paid to local governments for services such as police, firefighters, and other local services. How strongly do you support or oppose finding ways to generate additional revenues if the money would be spent on those types of local services? Do you.....

<u>%</u>	
52	Strongly support [ASK Q8]
30	Somewhat support [ASK Q8]
8	Somewhat oppose [SKIP TO CLASSIFICATION D1]
7	Strongly oppose [SKIP TO CLASSIFICATION D1]
2	Don't know [DO NOT READ] [ASK Q6A]
1	Refused [DO NOT READ]

8. There are basically two approaches to generating additional revenue to avoid cuts in local government services such as police, firefighters, and so forth.

One approach is to generate the revenue at the state level -- through approaches we just talked about such as sales tax on clothing; increased taxes on beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, or gasoline; a temporary income tax surcharge for higher income households, or closing loopholes and exemptions.

Another approach is to generate the revenue at the local level, which most likely would be done through increased property taxes. Therefore, in order to avoid cuts in local government services such as police, firefighters, and so forth, do you think the revenue should be generated locally, which mostly would be through increased property taxes, or at the state level by some of the other kinds of taxes we had talked about?

[DO NOT READ ANSWERS BELOW]

[REPEAT ANSWER 1 OR 2 FULLY AS SHOWN BELOW TO BE SURE IT'S CLARIFIED AFTER RESPONDENT HAS ANSWERED] (n=678 weighted respondents who answered strongly or somewhat support, don't know, or refused in question 7).

%

- 16 Locally, mostly through property taxes [INTERVIEWER VERIFY: "NOW LET ME MAKE SURE I UNDERSTAND YOUR ANSWER, YOU THINK REVENUE FOR THESE SERVICES SHOULD BE GENERATED LOCALLY, MOSTLY THROUGH PROPERTY TAXES?"]
- 69 STATE level, through other taxes [INTERVIEWER VERIFY: "NOW LET ME MAKE SURE I UNDERSTAND YOUR ANSWER, YOU THINK REVENUE FOR THESE SERVICES SHOULD BE GENERATED AT THE STATE LEVEL THROUGH OTHER TAXES?"]
- 0 No preference [INTERVIEWER CLARIFY "CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE THINKING?"]
- 8 Both locally, mostly through property taxes and state level through other taxes [PROBE ONCE TO TRY TO GET OPINION ONE WAY OR THE OTHER; IF THEY INSIST, ACCEPT THIS ANSWER.]
- 3 Some other way
- 4 Don't know [DO NOT READ]

CLASSIFICATION

D1. What is your marital status? Are you currently.....

<u>%</u>	
65	Married
9	Divorced
1	Separated
6	Widowed
17	Or have you never been married?
1	Living with partner [VOLUNTEERED]
<.5	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
1	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D2. What is your age as of your last birthday? [RECORD IN YEARS]

<u>%</u>	
63	18-49
15	50-59
13	60-74
7	75+
2	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D3. Are you or your spouse a member of A-A-R-P formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons?

[IF NOT "MARRIED" ASK, "Are you a member..."]

<u>%</u>	
20	Yes
80	No
<.5	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
1	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D4. Thinking about your state elections for Minnesota Governor and Legislators in the last ten years, which of the following best describes your voting behavior? Would you say you always vote, sometimes miss one, rarely vote, or never vote?

<u>%</u>	
70	Always vote
20	Sometimes miss one
4	Rarely vote
5	Never vote
<.5	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<.5	Refused [DO NOT READ]
<.5	Depends [DO NOT READ]

D5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

[READ ANSWER CATEGORIES]

%

- 4 Less than high school
- 23 High school graduate or equivalent
- 30 Some college or technical training beyond high school
- 29 College graduate
- 13 Post-graduate or professional degree?
- 0 Don't know **[DO NOT READ]**
- 1 Refused **[DO NOT READ]**

D6. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

Are you currently....

%

- 58 Employed full-time
- 13 Employed part-time
- 16 Retired and not working
- 3 Unemployed and looking for work
- 4 Homemaker
- 5 Or something else? [Specify: _____]
- 0 Don't know **[DO NOT READ]**
- 1 Refused **[DO NOT READ]**

D7. Are you Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino?

%

- 3 Yes
- 93 No
- 1 Don't know **[DO NOT READ]**
- 4 Refused **[DO NOT READ]**

D8. What is your race?

%

- 91 White/Caucasian
- 1 Black/African American
- 1 Asian
- 1 Native American or Alaskan Native
- 1 Other
- 0 Don't know **[DO NOT READ]**
- 5 Refused **[DO NOT READ]**

**D9. Now, for statistical purposes only, please stop me when I get to the category that includes your household's income before taxes in 2002. Was it...
[READ ANSWER CATEGORIES]**

- %
- 4 Less than \$10,000
 - 8 \$10,000 but less than \$20,000
 - 10 \$20,000 but less than \$30,000
 - 13 \$30,000 but less than \$40,000
 - 12 \$40,000 but less than \$50,000
 - 19 \$50,000 but less than \$75,000
 - 19 \$75,000 or more
 - 2 Don't know **[DO NOT READ]**
 - 13 Refused **[DO NOT READ]**

D10. What is your 5-digit zip code? _ _ _ _ _

D11. In what county in Minnesota do you reside? _____

D12. And finally, may I verify that I reached you at: (____) _____

D13. Respondent gender:

- %
- 49 Male
 - 51 Female

AARP

Knowledge Management

For more information please contact Joanne Binette (202) 434-6303