

Public Opinion & Environmental Policy in the Commonwealth



Views of Virginia Voters in 2017



Study Background

- Research supported by a grant from the Virginia Environmental Endowment.
- Survey conducted Jan. 29-Feb. 12, 2017 of registered Virginia voters.
- Sample size = 826 (382 L / 443 C) and the data were weighted on sex, age, race, and region of state.
- Goal of the project is to revisit questions and issues examined in past studies and to look at public opinion on current environmental issues.

Virginians...

- ✓ Have become increasingly optimistic about the quality of the Commonwealth's natural environment;
- ✓ Are most concerned about issues related to water quality;
- ✓ Are strongly supportive of continued restoration of the Chesapeake Bay;
- ✓ Do not generally see a conflict between the environment and the economy, but favor environment when pushed;

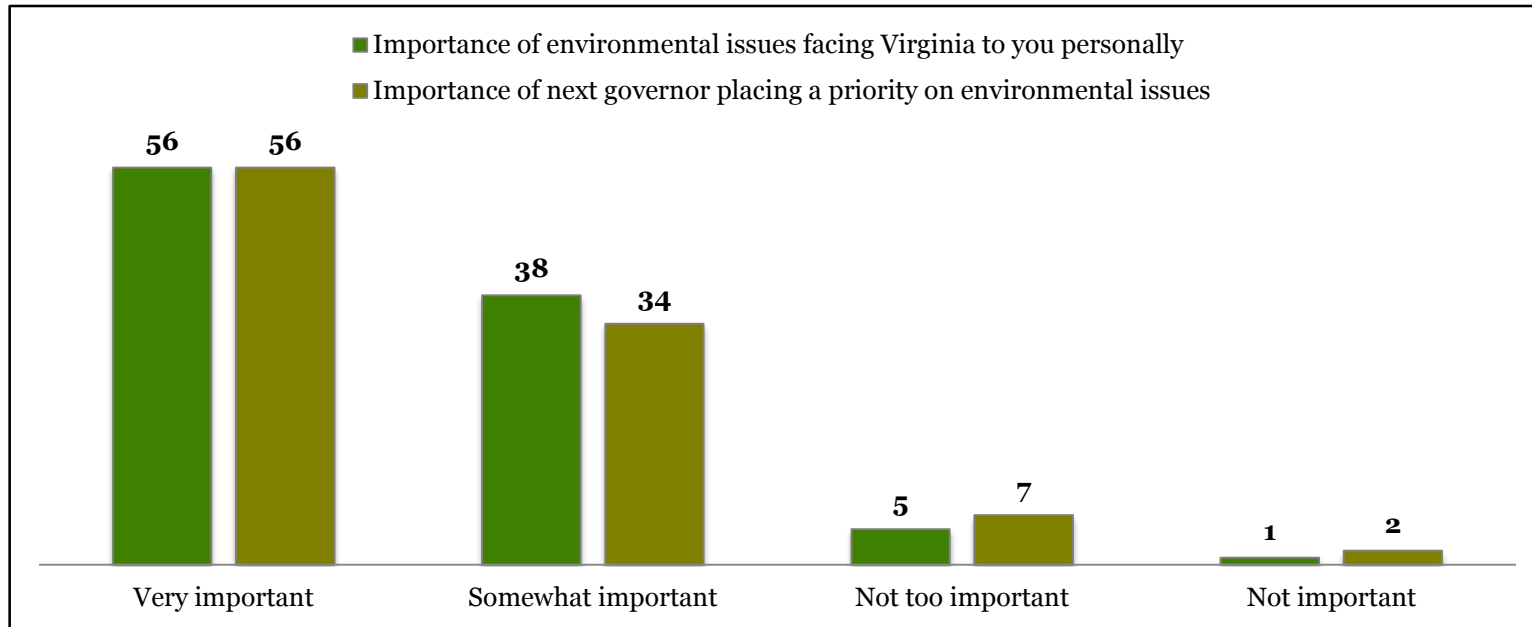
Virginians...

- ✓ Do not favor rolling back environmental protections & want federal government to play a bigger role;
- ✓ Support continued state action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and tax credits for land preservation;
- ✓ Generally lack enough information to evaluate progress on some policy issues.

Grading the Natural Environment

				<u>2017</u>
		<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	B
<u>1997</u>	<u>2009</u>	C+	C+	
C	C			

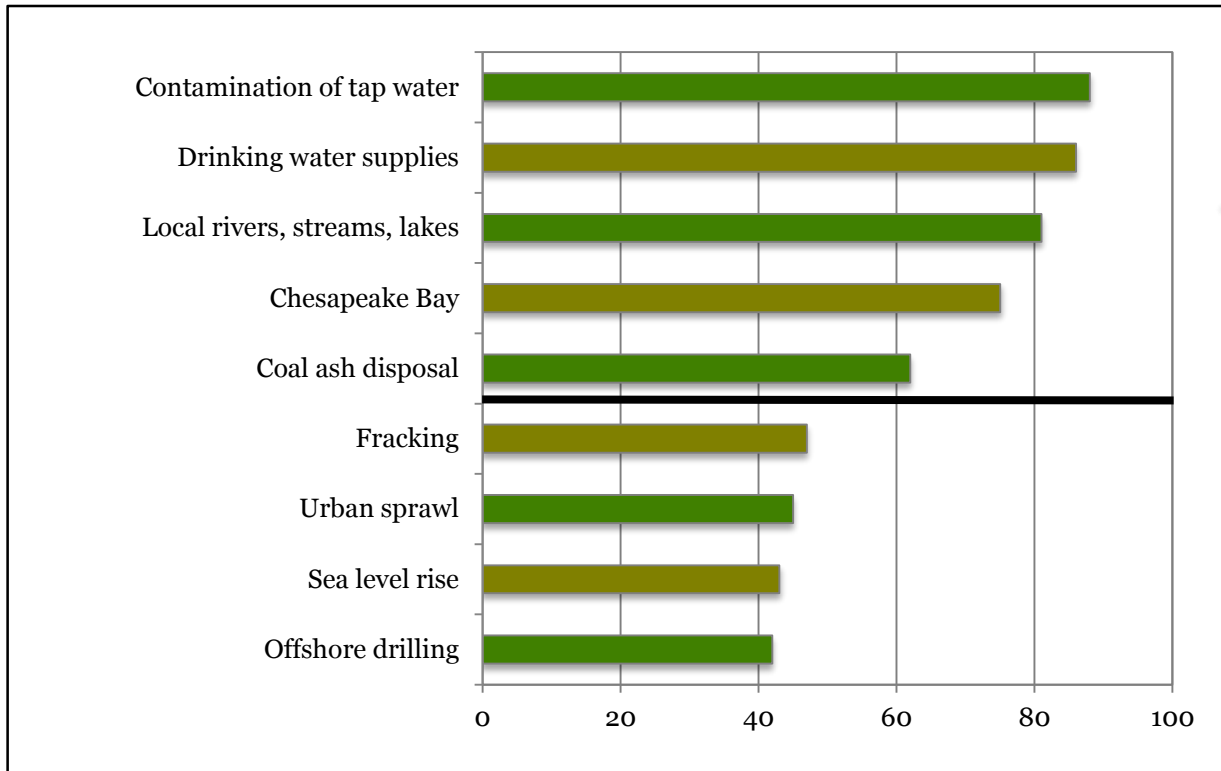
Importance of Natural Environment



Differences between:

- *men & women*
- *white & black*
- *partisan/ideology*

Very Important Environmental Issues



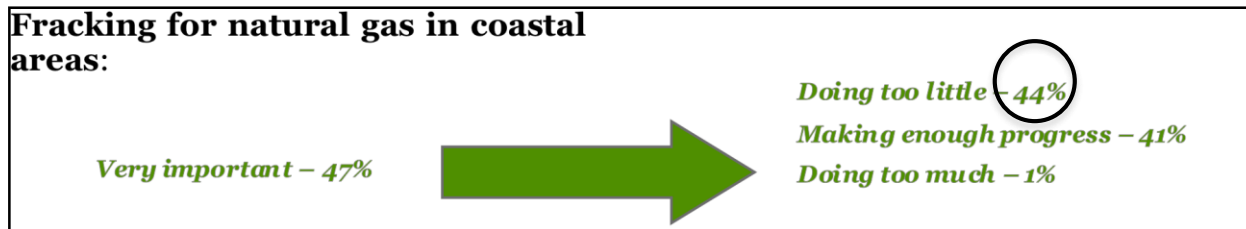
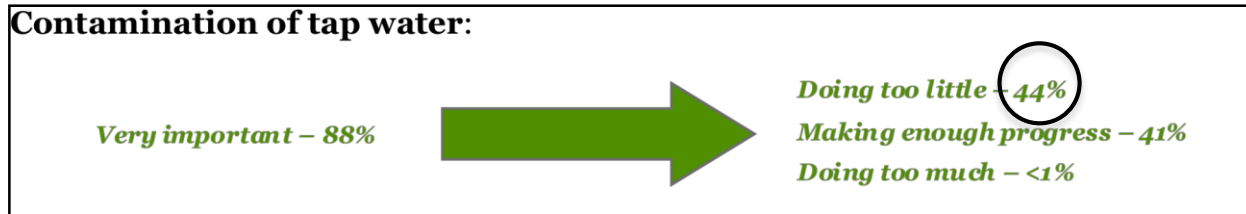
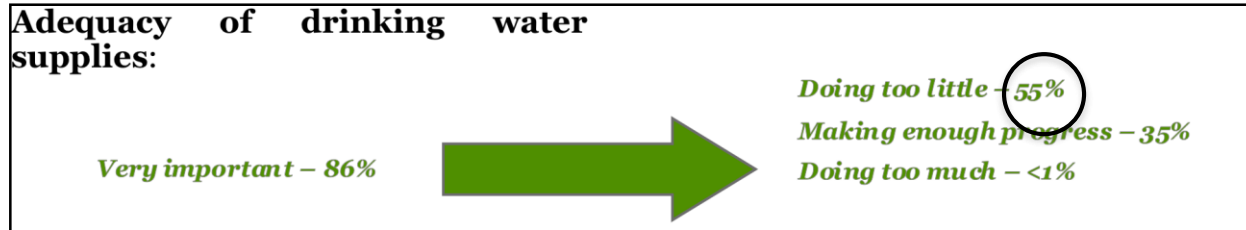
Significant deviation:

** Conservative / Republican generally*

** South / SW on Chesapeake Bay*

** NOVA on drinking water*

Progress on “very important” issues



Progress on “very important” issues

Health of the Chesapeake Bay:

Very important – 75%



Doing too little – 43%

Making enough progress – 47%

Doing too much – <1%



Pollution of local rivers, streams, and lakes:

Very important – 81%



Doing too little – 32%

Making enough progress – 59%

Doing too much – <1%



Safe disposal of coal ash from power plants:

Very important – 62%



Doing too little – 23%

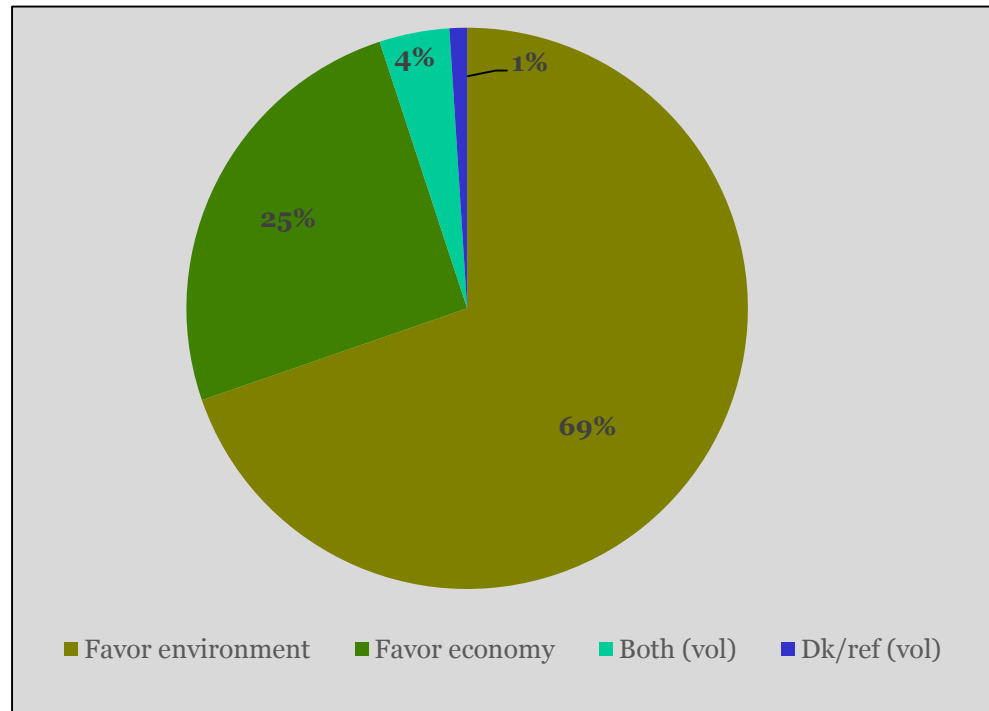
Making enough progress – 45%

Doing too much – <1%



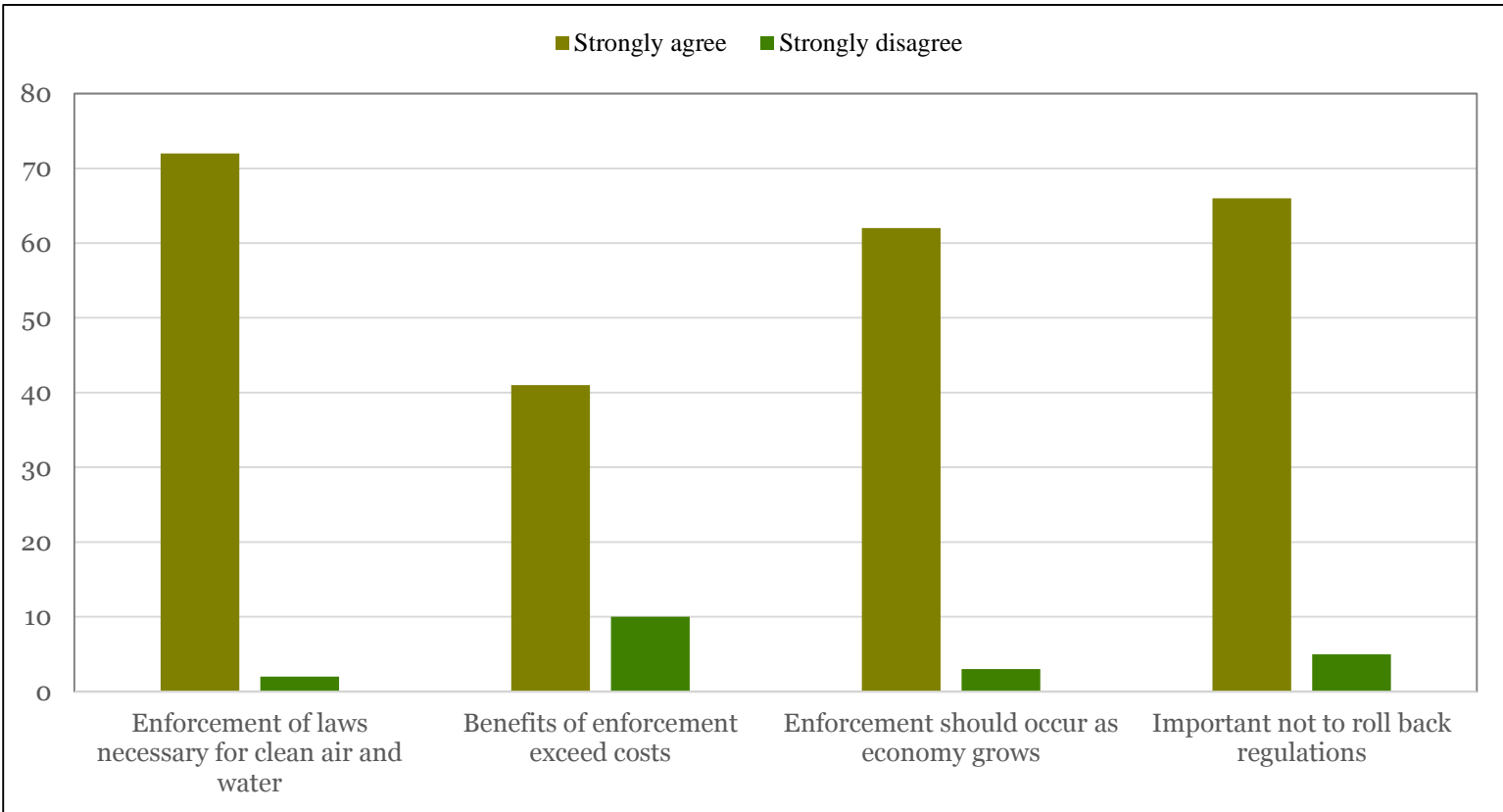
Environment vs. Economic Growth

I'm going to read two statements about the environment and the economy and I want you to tell me which one comes closest to your view. [Randomize: "Protection of the environment should be given priority, even if it curbs economic growth a little" OR "Economic growth should be given priority, even if Virginia's environment suffers a little because of it."]

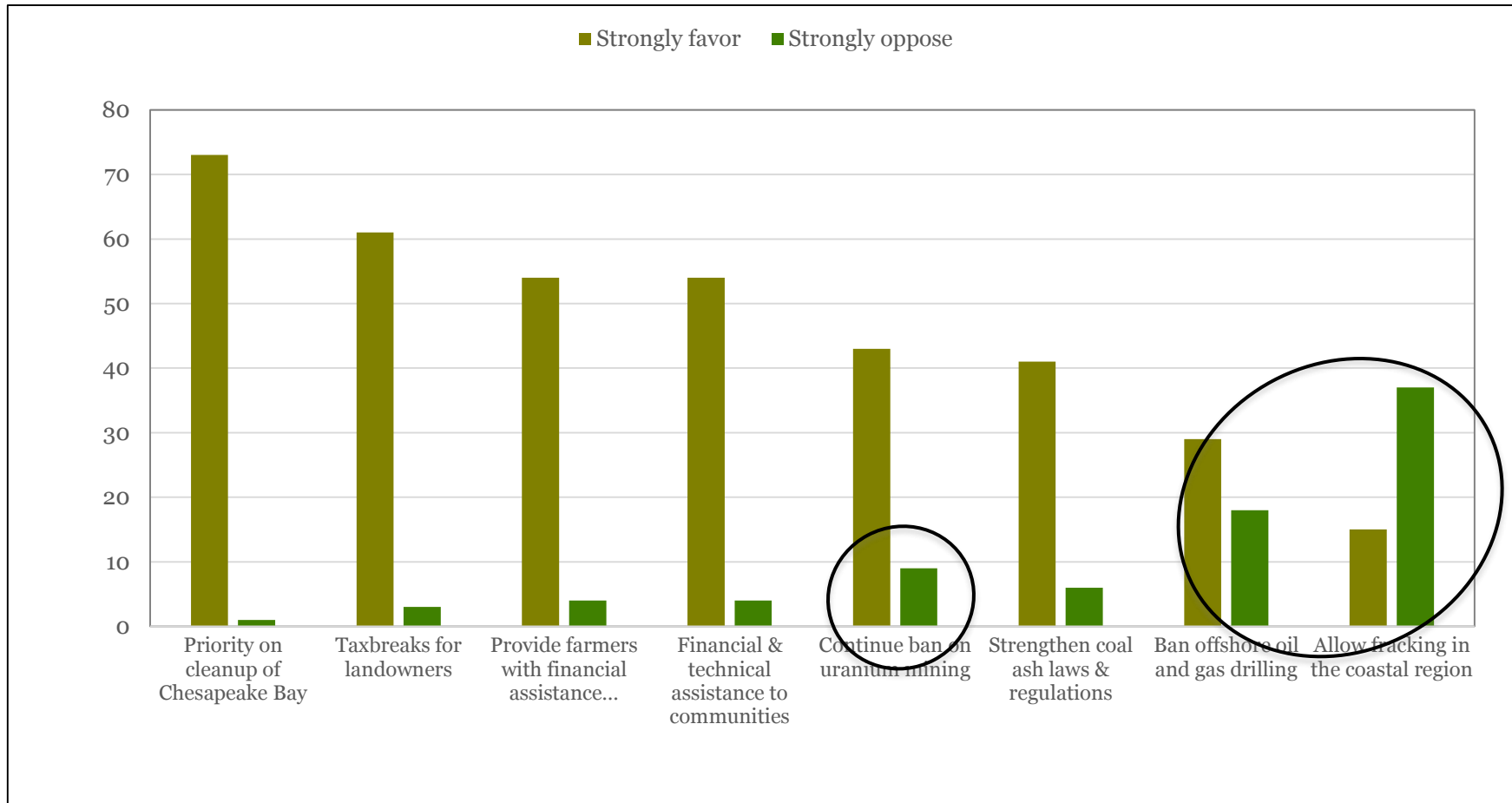


** Both Conservatives and Republicans favor economic growth over environmental protection by a slight bit.*

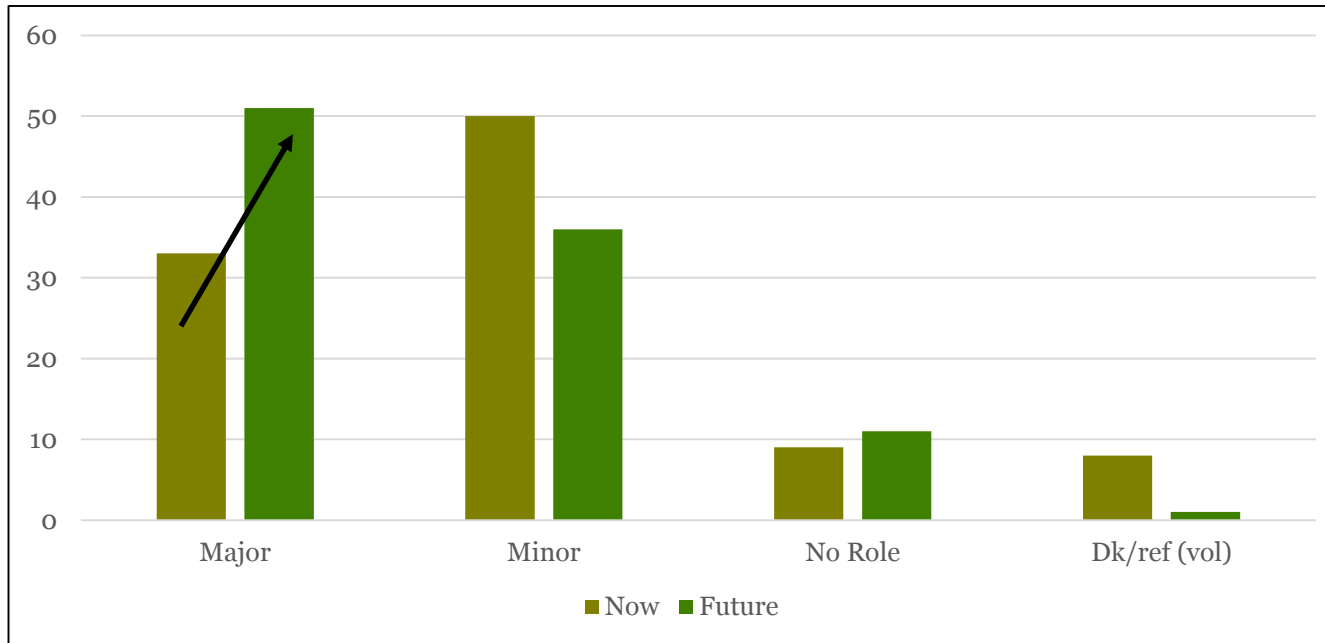
Enforcement of Clean Air & Water



Environmental Policy



Role of Federal Government

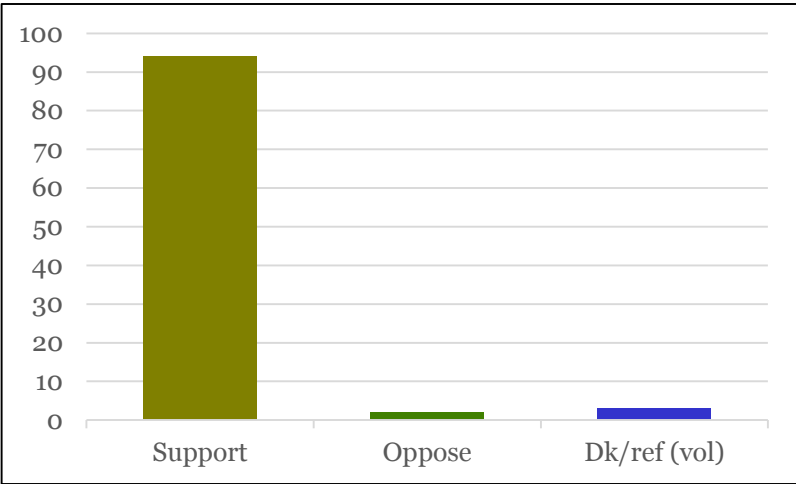


Biggest increase: Women (+28), black (+39), Hampton Roads (+28), 18-44 (+24), Liberals (+39), Democrats (+40)

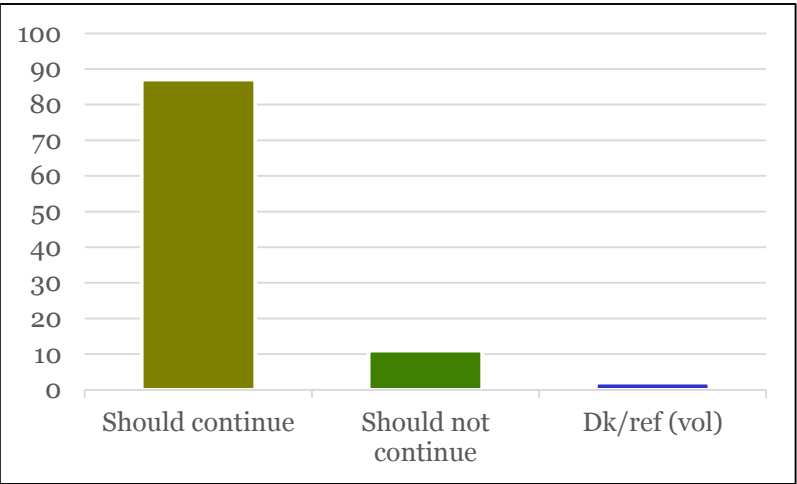
Decrease: Republicans (-1)

Federal Programs/Mandates

Chesapeake Bay "Blueprint"...

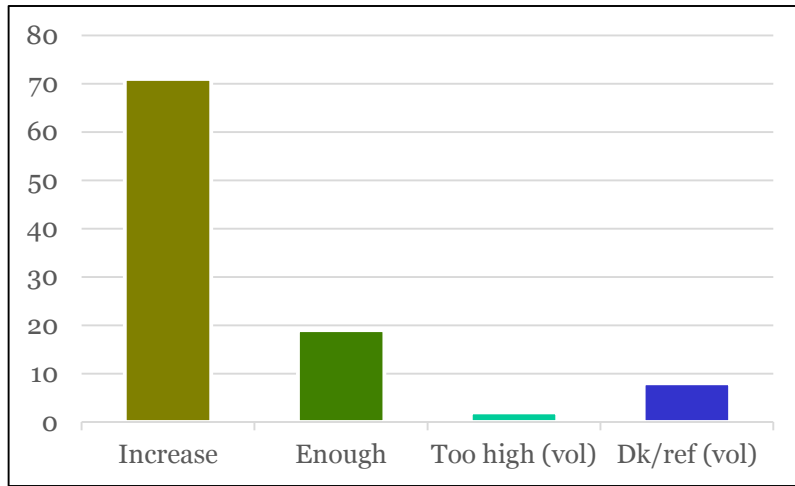


Carbon dioxide emissions...

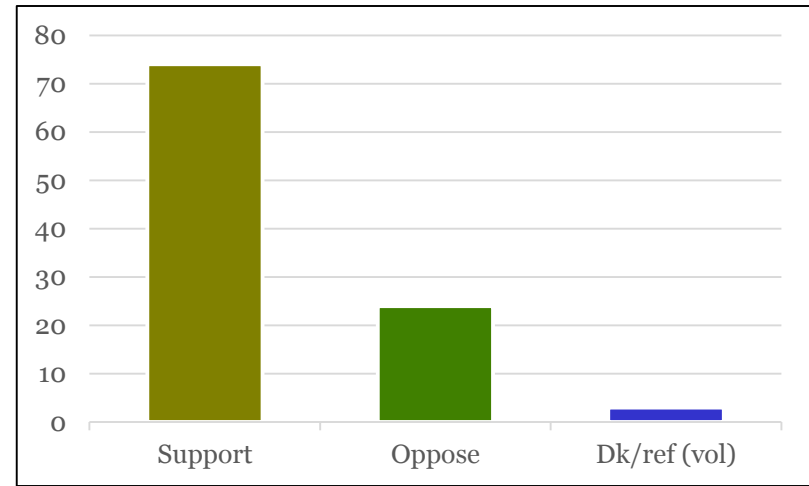


And...Couple other Policy Areas

Spending...



Environmental literacy...



Take away

Virginians are proud of the natural environment, it's important to them and **they want it to be important** to public officials, including the next governor.

Most important environmental policy issues relate to **water**: drinking, tap water contamination, & health of bay & local rivers and streams

Virginians favor **action** on the environment

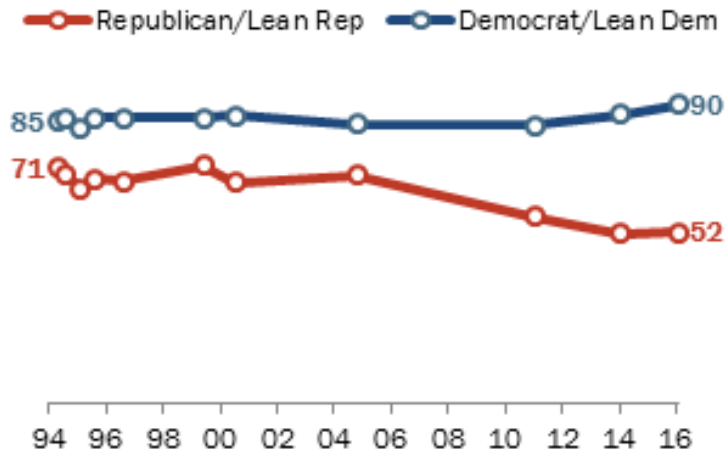
Virginians generally **don't see a conflict** between environmental protection and economic growth

Virginians support a range of environmental policies, but views vary on some such as fracking and banning offshore drilling

Marketing Environmental Stewardship

Should the country do whatever it takes to protect the environment? Most say yes, but party divisions grow wider

% of U.S. adults who say the country should do whatever it takes to protect the environment



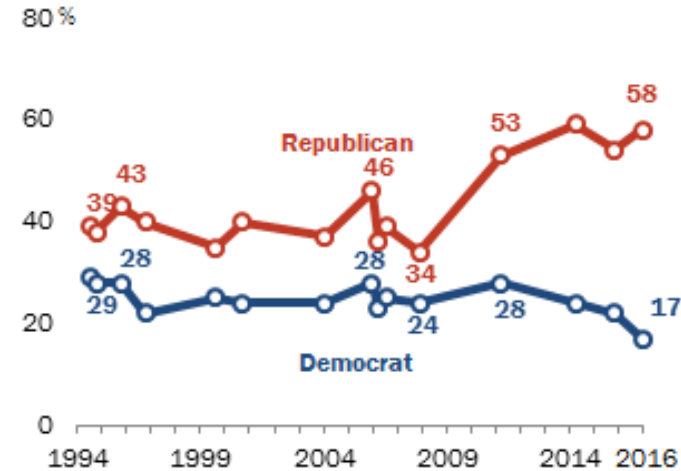
Note: Republicans and Democrats include independents and others who "lean" toward one of the parties. Respondents who do not lean toward a political party, gave other responses or did not give answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Mar. 17-27, 2016. Trend data from previous Pew Research Center surveys.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Political parties grow farther apart on impact of environmental regulations

% of U.S. adults who say stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy



Note: Republicans and Democrats include independents and others who "lean" toward one of the parties. Respondents who do not lean toward a political party, gave other responses or did not give answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 5, 2016; trend data from previous Pew Research Center surveys.

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Partisan Cues in a Polarized Environment



Partisan Cues in a Polarized Environment

Some people propose passing federal legislation that requires energy companies to use an emissions trading system to reduce CO2 output. Do you support or oppose this proposal?

% of Republicans supporting: 52

Democrats in Congress propose passing federal legislation that requires energy companies to use an emissions trading system to reduce CO2 output. Do you support or oppose this proposal?

% of Republicans supporting: 43%

Republicans in Congress propose passing federal legislation that requires energy companies to use an emissions trading system to reduce CO2 output. Do you support or oppose this proposal?

% of Republicans supporting: 75%

President Donald Trump proposes passing federal legislation that requires energy companies to use an emissions trading system to reduce CO2 output. Do you support or oppose this proposal?

% of Republican supporting: 83%