

# TULCHIN RESEARCH

To: Interested Parties

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## Polling Finds Strong Statewide Opposition to Newly Proposed Tax on Drinking Water

Tulchin Research recently conducted a statewide survey among 1,000 likely 2018 voters in California on behalf of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) to gauge public sentiment toward a proposed statewide drinking water tax. The poll found that there is overwhelming opposition among likely voters for legislation that would create this new tax on drinking water, both initially and even after voters hear more information about it. These results also hold true among every group of voters across the state. We provide details from this recent poll below.

### Strong Opposition to Statewide Drinking Water Tax

With voters expressing a concern about the state's high cost of living and a plurality of water ratepayers (44%) indicating their water rates are already high or very high, the survey also asked voters a basic question about whether they would support or oppose a new tax on drinking water that has been recently proposed in the State Legislature. Nearly three quarters of voters (73% total oppose) oppose the legislation, including a majority of voters who strongly opposing it. Conversely, barely one out of five voters (21%) supports the legislation while 6 percent are undecided.

#### Support/Opposition to Statewide Drinking Water Tax

*As you may know, a California legislator has proposed a new statewide tax on drinking water. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose paying this new tax on drinking water?*

<b>Total Support</b>	<b>21%</b>
<i>Strongly Support</i>	8%
<i>Somewhat Support</i>	13%
<b>Total Oppose</b>	<b>73%</b>
<i>Strongly Oppose</i>	53%
<i>Somewhat Oppose</i>	20%
Undecided	6%
<b>Support – Oppose</b>	<b>-52</b>

Opposition to this proposed statewide tax on drinking water holds true among every major demographic group in the state. In a rare display of bipartisanship, Democrats and Republicans oppose the tax by nearly identical margins as do voters in both Northern and Southern California and voters in all ethnic groups. The table below illustrates the broad opposition across these groups:

**Support/Opposition to Statewide Drinking Water Tax by Demographic Group**

	<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Support - Oppose</u>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	21%	73%	-52
<b><i>Party</i></b>			
Democrat	23%	69%	-46
Republican	25%	73%	-47
NPP/Other	13%	80%	-67
<b><i>Region</i></b>			
North	20%	73%	-53
South	22%	72%	-50
<b><i>Race</i></b>			
White	18%	77%	-59
Latino	28%	63%	-35
Black	27%	68%	-41
Asian	27%	64%	-37

**Voters Want to Use Existing Resources and Not Tax Drinking Water to Provide Safe Drinking Water to Disadvantaged Communities**

Similar to the high levels of opposition to the proposed drinking water tax, when voters are asked a preference for how to fund providing safe drinking water to disadvantaged communities, nearly three quarters (74%) prefer using “existing funding sources” rather than establishing a new tax on drinking water as just one-in-five voters (20%) prefer a new tax on drinking water.

**Drinking Water Funding Preference (Basic)**

<i>Here’s a pair of statements about the proposed statewide tax on drinking water. Please indicate which statement is closer to your opinion:</i>	
<i>Establish a new tax on drinking water that would be paid by households across the state to provide safe drinking water to disadvantaged communities that need it.</i>	20%
<b><i>Use existing funding sources for providing safe drinking water to disadvantaged communities that need it.</i></b>	<b>74%</b>
Don’t Know	6%
<b><i>New Tax – Existing Funds</i></b>	<b>-54</b>

Going somewhat further in trying to uncover these preferential sentiments, we provided both sides on this issue with a balanced description of the arguments each side has made about this legislation. Again, and with nearly identical results to the initial question we note above, nearly three-quarters of likely voters (74%) prefer the opponent’s argument for using existing funds for providing safe drinking water to low-

income communities in need while just 21 percent of voters prefer a new tax and five percent of voters remain undecided.

**Support/Opposition to Statewide Drinking Water Tax After Arguments**

<i>Here's a pair of statements about the proposed statewide tax on drinking water. Please indicate which statement is closer to your opinion:</i>	
<i><b>Supporters</b> of this bill say there are communities throughout the state without access to safe drinking water. These communities are often in agricultural areas, where pollution from farms make their drinking water unsafe and include lower income communities that can't afford to pay to clean up their drinking water. This small fee will help provide these communities with safe and clean drinking water for no more than a dollar a month to ratepayers throughout the state.</i>	21%
<i><b>Opponents</b> of this bill agree with the goal of providing funding to those disadvantaged communities that need safe drinking water. But they believe imposing a new statewide tax on drinking water is NOT the right solution. They believe we should be using existing funds, such as the state's general fund, available federal funds, voter-approved water bonds and agricultural assessments intended for this purpose instead of levying a new drinking water tax to help communities without access to safe drinking water.</i>	74%
Don't Know	5%
<b>Supporters – Opponents</b>	<b>-53</b>

**Conclusion**

Voters across California overwhelmingly oppose proposed legislation to tax drinking water statewide. The opposition is consistent among demographic groups across the state and does not waver at all, even when voters hear more information about the tax and that it would provide safe drinking water to low-income communities. Clearly, voters want elected officials in Sacramento to use existing resources such as the state's general fund, available federal funds, voter-approved water bonds and agricultural assessments intended for this purpose to fund the objective of this policy.

**Survey Methodology:** From January 25-28, 2018, Tulchin Research conducted an online survey among 1,000 likely November 2018 election voters in California. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1 percentage points.