

MEMORANDUM

TO: THE FERRARO GROUP

FROM: DAVE SACKETT

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF VOTER ATTITUDES IN WASHOE COUNTY

DATE: FEBRUARY 23, 2018

The Tarrance Group is pleased to present the Ferraro Group with the key findings from a survey of voter attitudes in Washoe County, Nevada. These key findings are based on telephone interviews with N=609 “likely” registered voters throughout the county. Responses to this survey were gathered February 20-22, 2018 and the margin of error associated with a sample of this type is $\pm 4.1\%$ in 95 out of 100 cases.

KEY FINDINGS

Direction of County:

	Dec '16	Jan '18	Feb '18
Right direction	56%	52%	54%
Wrong track	32%	33%	30%
Unsure	12%	15%	16%

- Views of the direction of the country remain stable with a majority positive view. There is no gender gap on this measure, but the positive view of the direction of the county is highest among younger voters and declines with age. While 57% of 18-44 voters believe things in the county are going in the right direction, this view falls to forty-nine percent (49%) among seniors.
- Partisanship only has a small impact on views of the direction of the county, with a majority of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents indicating they believe things in Washoe County are going in the right direction. Registered Democrats are more optimistic, with 61% of Democrats indicating they believe things in the county are going in the right direction.
- Among those voters who favor the flood protection plan, fully sixty-four percent (64%) believe that things in the county are going in the right direction. However, voters who oppose the flood protection plan are evenly split in their views of the direction of the county.

Issue Matrix:

	Dec '16	Jan '18	Feb '18
Education	37%	28%	35%
Infrastructure	14%	14%	14%
Taxes	12%	7%	8%
Economy/jobs	10%	8%	7%
Crime	10%	10%	10%

- Concern about the issue of education has elevated again to the point where education now dominates the issue matrix. As you can see from the chart above, fully thirty-five percent (35%) of voters in the county now believe that education is the most important issue.
- The issue of education dominates across the electorate with thirty-five percent (35%) of both Reno and Sparks voters indicating it is the most important issue. There are 40% of women voters and fully fifty percent (50%) of 18-44 voters who indicate that education is the most important issue, but it is also the top issue among men and seniors.
- Approximately forty percent (40%) of both Democrats and Independents believe that education is the most important issue, but it is also the top issue among Republicans, with 23% of Republican voters indicating that education is the most important issue.
- Republicans, union household voters, and 55+ men are the segments of the electorate that are most concerned about the issue of infrastructure, while GOP women and 55+ Republicans are the voter groups that have a higher level of concern about the issue of crime.
- Approximately 42% of supporters of the flood protection plan and those who are undecided on the plan indicate that education is the most important issue. The issue matrix among those who oppose the flood protection plan is more diffuse, with 26% focused on education, 15% focused on infrastructure, and 12% focused on the issues of crime or taxes.

Importance of Flood Control:

	Dec '16	Jan '18	Feb '18
Mean	4.53	5.46	5.10
Extremely important	10%	15%	11%
Very important	14%	32%	27%
Somewhat important	37%	23%	29%
Not important	38%	30%	32%

- The importance of the issue of flood control has declined somewhat over the past month, and there are now thirty-eight percent (38%) who indicate they believe this is a very important issue. The view that flood control is a very important issue has declined by -9 points over the past month.

- This decline has been most pronounced among younger voters and Democrats. The view that flood control is a very important issue among 18-44 voters has dropped from forty-nine percent (49%) in January to only thirty-four percent (34%) now.
- Among registered Democrats, the view that flood control is a very important issue has dropped from fifty-eight percent (58%) in January to forty-three percent (43%) now. There are now only 39% of Democrat men who believe that flood control is a very important issue.
- The view that flood control is a very important issue now stands at 38% among Reno voters and thirty-five percent (35%) among Sparks voters. This issue continues to have a higher level of importance among women voters (42% very important) than it does among men (33% very important.)
- Having resided in Washoe County during the 1997 flood has no impact on the level of importance that voters ascribe to the issue of flood control. However, flood control is a significantly more important issue among voters who live in the Truckee River flood plain (52% very important) than it is to voters who do not live in the flood plain (35% very important.)
- Among those voters who indicate that they favor the flood control plan, and those who are undecided, approximately 47% indicate they believe flood control to be a very important issue. This view drops to only 23% among those who are opposed to the flood control plan, and 45% of these voters believe this issue is not at all important

Awareness of Flood Control Proposal:

	Dec '16	Jan '18	Feb '18
Aware	31%	35%	42%
Not aware	69%	65%	58%

- Awareness of the flood control proposal has increased by +7 points over the past month, and now stands at forty-two percent (42%.) Virtually all of this increase has come from voters in Sparks, where awareness of the proposal has increased by +25 points to forty-five percent (45%.) Awareness has also increased by +10 points among seniors to fifty-two percent (52%) and increased by +16 points among Republicans to fifty percent (50%.)
- Awareness of the flood control proposal now stands at just over 40% among voters in every region of the county but is still significantly higher among men (47% aware) than it is among women votes (37% aware.)
- Awareness of the proposal rises with the age of the voter, with awareness of the proposal at twenty-nine percent (29%) among 18-44 voters and rising to a high of fifty-two percent (52%) among seniors.

- There is also now a gap in the level of awareness between registered Republicans (50% aware) and registered Democrats and Independents (36% aware.) There are 55% of GOP men and 55+ Republicans who are aware of the proposal.
- Finally, it is worth noting that there is no difference in the level of awareness of the flood control proposal between those voters who reside in the Truckee River Flood Plain, and those voters who are outside of the flood plain.

View of Flood Protection Plan:

	Dec '16	Jan '18	Feb '18
Favor	43%	49%	50%
Oppose	45%	41%	40%
Unsure	12%	10%	10%

- While the movement in support for the flood protection plan has been very minor, there are now a bare majority of Washoe County voters who indicate that they favor the plan, and opposition is down to forty percent (40%.) However, intensity of opposition (29% strongly oppose) remains greater than intensity of support (19% strongly favor.)

	Favor	Unsure	Oppose
All	50%	10%	40%
Reno	52%	10%	37%
Sparks	45%	7%	48%
Rest of County	48%	14%	39%
Men	48%	8%	44%
Women	52%	11%	36%
18-44	51%	10%	39%
45-64	46%	9%	45%
65+	53%	10%	38%
GOP	43%	9%	48%
DEM	58%	10%	32%
IND	49%	11%	41%
Lived in County in 1997	48%	9%	42%
Did not live in County in 1997	53%	10%	37%
Flood control proposal - aware	58%	5%	37%
Flood control proposal – not aware	45%	13%	43%

- The resistance among Republicans comes from Republican men and 55+ GOP voters. There are approximately fifty-one percent (51%) of both GOP men and 55+ GOP voters that indicate that they oppose this flood control plan. While not at majority support yet, approximately 47% of GOP women and 18-54 GOP voters indicate that they favor the flood control proposal.

Views on Funding Mechanisms:

- As you can see from the chart below, providing specific details about the size and scope of the tax increases has a significant positive impact on the willingness of voters to consider them. This is particularly true of the property tax proposal, which now enjoys majority support among Washoe County voters when they understand the exact nature of the proposed increase.

Increase Property Tax	Dec '16	Jan '18	Feb '18
Favor	25%	22%	56%
Oppose	73%	73%	41%
Unsure	2%	5%	3%
Increase Vehicle Registration Tax			
Favor	35%	27%	36%
Oppose	62%	71%	60%
Unsure	4%	2%	4%
Increase Property Transfer Tax			
Favor	30%	31%	40%
Oppose	64%	55%	55%
Unsure	6%	14%	6%

- While almost three-quarters of Washoe County voters have consistently rejected the “concept” of a property tax increase as a way to fund this program in the past, when voters were exposed to the specific details of the proposal – a 0.02% increase or \$20.00 a year for the average homeowner – there is now majority support.
- Support for this property tax increase to fund the flood protection plan stands at 59% among Reno voters and 50% among Sparks voters but drops to only 44% among voters in the rest of the county, and a majority of out-county voters are opposed.
- There is majority support for this property tax increase proposal among both men and women voters, as well as among voters of all ages, and support rises to approximately 60% among both women and 18-44 voters.
- Support for this specific property tax increase to fund the flood protection plan stands at sixty-seven percent (67%) among registered Democrats and fifty-seven percent (57%) among Independent voters.

- There are forty-four percent (44%) of GOP voters who indicate that they would support this specific property tax increase, while fifty-four percent (54%) of GOP voters would still oppose it.
- This opposition among Republicans is age-based, not gender based. A majority of 18-54 GOP voters would support this specific property tax increase proposal, but opposition stands at fifty-nine percent (59%) among 55+ Republicans.
- While a majority now indicate they would support the specific property tax increase proposal, there continues to be strong opposition to both the vehicle registration tax and the property transfer tax, with a mean average of fifty-seven percent (57%) of voters indicating they would oppose both of these options.
- Approximately 60% of Independent voters would oppose both of these other alternatives, while 45% of Democrats would be opposed to property transfer tax and fifty percent (50%) are opposed to the vehicle tax proposal.

Federal Funding:

- In the final substantive portion of the interview, respondents were exposed to information about the federal funds that would be available for this project and the fact that those funds have a “sunset” and asked if that would make them more likely or less likely to support at least one of these tax increase options.
- The specific information that respondents were exposed to was – “*Washoe County would permanently lose the federal pledge of \$182 million in funding after 2021 unless Washoe County approves a tax increase.*”
- As you can see from the chart below, this information increased support for at least one of the tax increases options by +6 points from the current support for the property tax increase proposal.

Yes	62%
No	32%
Unsure	6%

- Among those who oppose the flood protection plan, thirty-four percent (34%) indicate that this information would cause them to support at least one of the tax increase options. This is also true of 47% of 55+ GOP voters and a majority of self-identified conservative voters.

- As you can see from the chart below, this new information “potentially converts” a third of voters that are opposed to the flood protection plan overall, as well as a third of those who oppose the property tax proposal. It also potentially converts almost half of those who are opposed to the vehicle tax and property transfer tax options.

	Yes – would consider
Flood plan - oppose	34%
Property tax - oppose	34%
Property tax - unsure	37%
Vehicle tax - oppose	49%
Vehicle tax - unsure	44%
Property transfer tax - oppose	47%
Property transfer tax - unsure	48%

###