

Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll

Minnesota's Transportation Challenges: Disapproval of Molnau and Division on Gas Tax

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance

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January 29, 2008

Minnesotans are unsettled when it comes to getting the state's transportation system working, according to a Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute poll conducted between January 20 and January 27, 2008.

Public Disapproval of Molnau's Job Performance: A representative sample of Minnesotan residents disapprove rather than approve of Transportation Commissioner Carol Molnau's job performance by a nearly 2 to 1 margin. While 25 percent approve of her performance, 43 percent disapprove. A third did not offer an evaluation, which may reflect her obscurity among some Minnesotans.

Transportation Commissioner Carol Molnau Job Approval

Strongly Approve	Somewhat Approve	Somewhat Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove	Don't Know / Other
7%	18%	20%	23%	32%

Number of Minnesotan residents interviewed, 917; Margin of Error, 3.2 points

Divisions on Transportation Taxes: Minnesotans are evenly split on raising gas taxes to generate revenues that would be dedicated to road and bridge construction. Forty-nine percent of Minnesotans approve of a 5 cent gas tax increase and an equal percent oppose it. Even tax supporters seem ambivalent: When the 49 percent who approved a 5 cent gas hike were asked if they would support a 10 cent increase, only 46 percent continued to back a rise while 52 percent opposed the higher rate.

Division on Tax Hikes

	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know / Other
5 cent a gallon increase for roads and bridges	49%	49%	2%
10 cent a gallon for roads and bridges (among 49% who approved 5 cent increase)	46%	52%	2%

Number of Minnesotan residents interviewed, 917; Margin of Error, 3.2 points

Even a Falling Bridge Can't Catapult Transportation to the top of the state's agenda: Minnesotans rank the economy and jobs, health care, taxes, and education as more pressing state problems than transportation. Only 8 percent of Minnesotans identified it as the single most important problem facing the state, placing it in a tie with immigration toward the bottom of the public's agenda in the fifth spot.

Minnesotans Fail to Rank Transportation as its Most Important Problem

Rank		
1	The economy and jobs	33%
2	Health Care	18%
3	Taxes	15%
4	Education	12%
5	Immigration	8%
5	Transportation	8%
7	Global warming	2%
	Don't Know / Other	3%

Number of Minnesotan residents interviewed, 917; Margin of Error, 3.2 points

About the Survey

The survey is a collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (director) and Joanne M. Miller (Department of Political Science). Melanie Burns was the team's research and data analyst.

The survey was fielded by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut, which has extensive national and state experience conducting non-partisan surveys on politics and government policy. CSRA called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within the State of Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. The sample was designed to represent different regions of the state in proportion to the number of adults living in each region. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

The results have been weighted to reflect the number of adults in a household and the number of telephone lines reaching the household as well as the demographic characteristics of Minnesota based on region, sex, age, education, and race.

917 residents of Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between January 20 and January 27, 2008; the margin of error is 3.2 percentage points. In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minnesota residents will differ by no more than 3.2 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the state. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.