

Call for Action: Voters React to Explosion and Oil Spill in Gulf of Mexico

Poll Commissioned by The Natural Resources Defense Council

Introduction

On April 20, an explosion and oil spill occurred at the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The Natural Resources Defense Council asked Belden Russonello & Stewart to conduct opinion research on Americans' reactions to the accident. BRS conducted a national telephone survey among 803 registered voters from May 4 to 6, 2010. The survey examined voters' general attitudes about the spill and what actions, if any, Congress should take in response.

Overview

In the aftermath of the explosion and oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, American voters want action:

- Voters clearly want Congress to fast-track legislation that will require greater emphasis on renewable forms of energy and quickly move the country off our dependence on oil. Seven in ten (71%) support this move, with four in ten (44%) *strongly* in favor.
- When asked about specific approaches to promoting renewable energy and reducing oil dependence, voters express *strong* support for passage of a clean energy and climate change bill, with more than six in ten agreeing the Senate should pass the bill and four in ten saying so *strongly*.
- Nearly seven in ten voters also want to see a halt to any new offshore drilling until a full investigation of the accident is complete and safeguards are put in place.

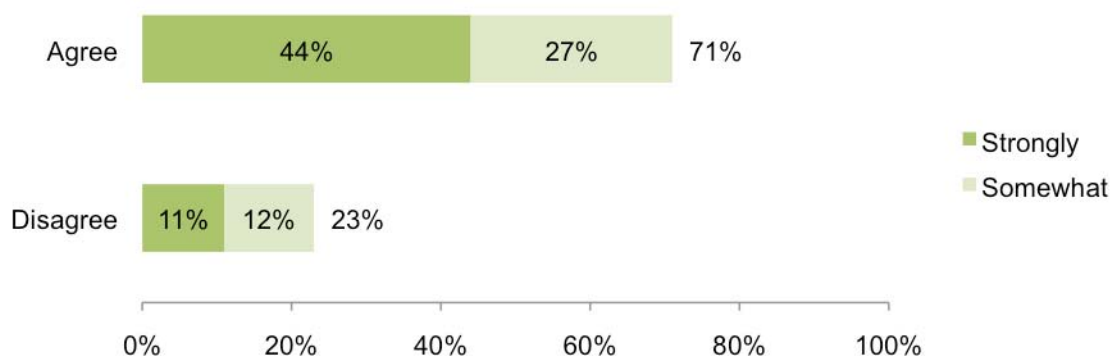
Large majorities of the public are *very* concerned about the impact of the spill, *especially* the impact on beaches and wildlife and on the cost of fish and seafood and the local fishing industry.

Details on Key Questions

Support for fast-track legislation to place greater emphasis on renewable energy

In response to the accident, voters want to see some action. Most popular is for Congress to fast-track legislation that will require greater emphasis on renewable forms of energy and quickly move the country off our dependence on oil. Seven in ten voters (71%) support this move, with four in ten (44%) *strongly* in favor. We find very little opposition with only two in ten (23%) saying they oppose fast-track legislation. We also find support across the political spectrum among Democrats (76%), Independents (75%), and Republicans (61%).

Fast-track Legislation for Renewables



Please tell me if you favor or oppose each of the following actions Congress could take in response to the oil spill. (READ ITEM) Do you favor or oppose? (WAIT FOR RESPONSE) Is that strongly or somewhat? (RANDOMIZE) Q. Fast-track legislation that will require greater emphasis on renewable forms of energy and quickly move the country off our dependence on oil.

SOURCE: Belden Russonello & Stewart conducted for NRDC, n=803 registered voters nationally, May 4-6, 2010

Those most supportive of the fast-track legislation include:

- Liberals (84% support);
- Democrats (76%); and
- Voters in the Northeast (79%).

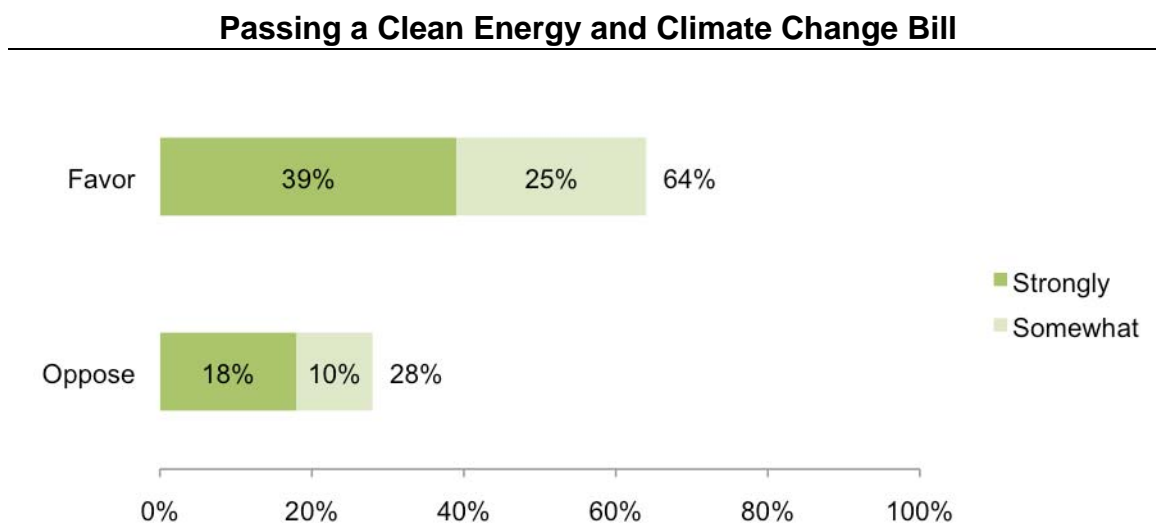
Strong support for a clean energy and climate change bill

When asked about specific legislation, strong support exists for passing a clean energy and climate change bill. Over six in ten (64%) support passage with four in ten (39%) *strongly* supporting. Less than three in ten (28%) oppose the bill.

Those most likely to support the bill include:

- African American voters (79% support);
- Hispanic voters (77%);
- Liberals (80%);
- Democrats (82%); and
- Voters in the Northeast (72%).

Republicans are more likely to oppose the bill than favor it, but neither side garners a majority (48% oppose; 41% support).



Q. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: Now is the time for the Senate to pass the comprehensive Clean Energy and Climate Change bill and send it to President Obama to sign. Do you agree or disagree? (WAIT FOR RESPONSE) Is that strongly or somewhat?

SOURCE: Belden Russonello & Stewart conducted for NRDC, n=803 registered voters nationally, May 4-6, 2010

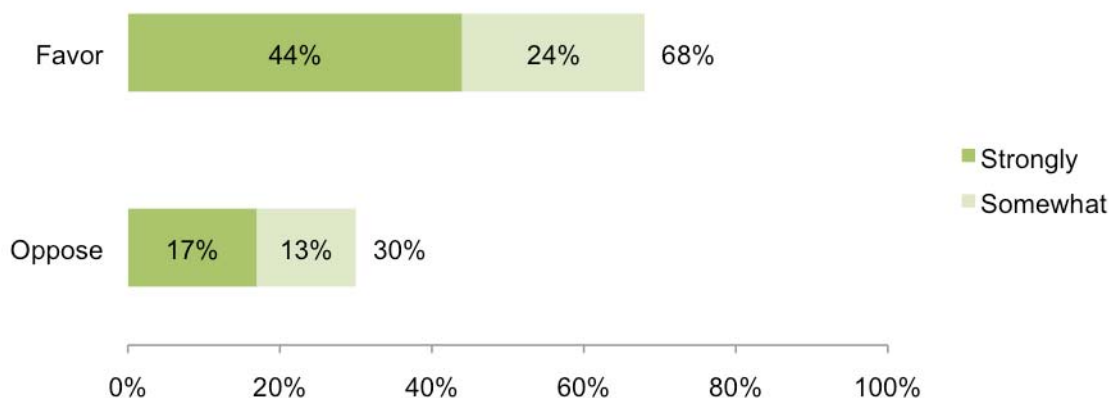
Support delaying new plans for drilling until investigation complete

Voters also strongly endorse delaying any new plans for offshore drilling until a full investigation of the oil spill is complete and safeguards can be put into place. Nearly seven in ten (68%) support the delay in drilling with over four in ten (44%) saying they *strongly* support it. Three in ten (30%) oppose delaying new plans for drilling offshore. A majority of all subgroups support the delay, including Republicans (59%), Independents (69%), and conservatives (60%).

Those most supportive of delaying new plans for offshore drilling until an investigation is complete include:

- Liberals (75% support);
- Moderates (73%); and
- Democrats (75%).

Delay New Offshore Drilling



Please tell me if you favor or oppose each of the following actions Congress could take in response to the oil spill. (READ ITEM) Do you favor or oppose? (WAIT FOR RESPONSE) Is that strongly or somewhat? (RANDOMIZE) Q. Delay any plans for new drilling off the U.S. Atlantic and Pacific Coasts until a full investigation of the oil spill is complete and safeguards can be put into place.

SOURCE: Belden Russonello & Stewart conducted for NRDC, n=803 registered voters nationally, May 4-6, 2010

Impact on fishing and beaches top concerns

Voters express great concerns about the destruction caused by the current oil spill. The survey looked at voters' concerns regarding four impacts the oil spill will have on the U.S., especially local communities. The top two worries are:

"Oceans and beaches in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida will be impacted. Beaches will be closed, water unsafe for swimming, and wildlife lost." (93% concerned, 71% *very* concerned)

"One-third of the fish we eat comes from the Gulf region impacted by the spill. The cost of fish and seafood will increase in coming months and the cost to local fisherman is estimated at billions of dollars." (91% concerned, 66% *very* concerned)

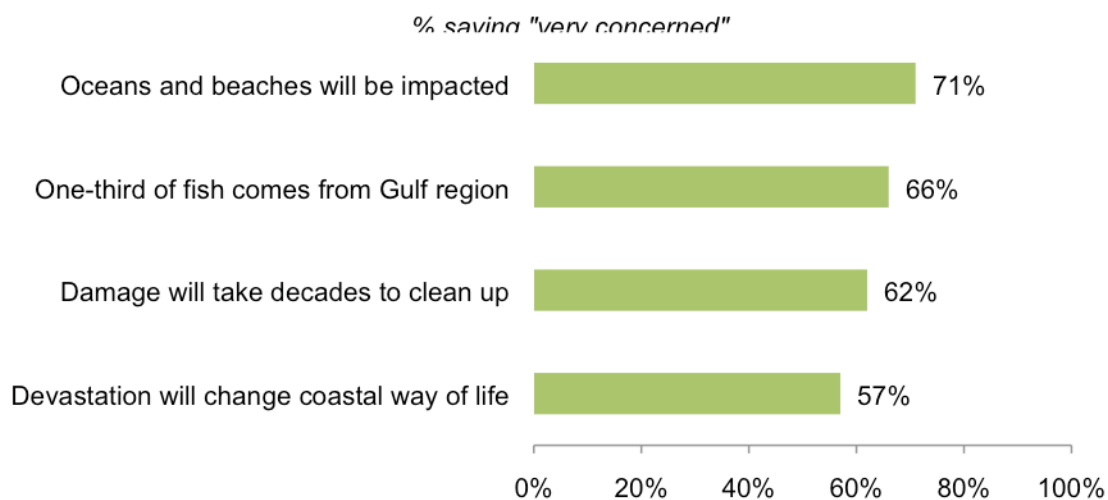
Also concerning are the following statements:

"The damage done in the Gulf will take decades to clean up. Some scientists predict it will be worse than the Exxon Valdez." (90%, 62% *very* concerned)

"The devastation caused by the oil spill will drastically change the way of life and traditions in these coastal communities." (90%, 57% *very* concerned)

For each statement, women, Hispanics, liberals, and Democrats express more concern than other voters. Younger voters (18-34) are especially concerned about the impact of the spill on the beaches and wildlife.

Concerns About Oil Spill



How concerned are you about each of the following outcomes of the oil spill - very concerned, somewhat, not very or not at all concerned? (RANDOMIZE) Q. Oceans and beaches in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida will be impacted. Beaches will be closed, water unsafe for swimming, and wildlife lost. Q. One-third of the fish we eat comes from the Gulf region impacted by the spill. The cost of fish and seafood will increase in coming months and the cost to local fisherman is estimated at billions of dollars. Q. The damage done in the Gulf will take decades to clean up. Some scientists predict it will be worse than the Exxon Valdez. Q15. The devastation caused by the oil spill will drastically change the way of life and traditions in these coastal communities.

SOURCE: Belden Russonello & Stewart conducted for NRDC, n=803 registered voters nationally, May 4-6, 2010