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SURVEY: CONSTITUENTS OPPOSE REP. BENISHEK'S VOTES LAST WEEK TO BLOCK HEALTH PROTECTIONS

Survey Conducted in MI-1st Congressional District Tracks With National Survey Findings; Clear Local Message: Let the Environmental Protection Agency Do Its Job of Protecting Public Health and the Environment.

WASHINGTON (February 23, 2011) – A clear majority of registered voters in the Michigan 1st Congressional District oppose the votes last week by Rep. Daniel Benishek to block the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from updating clean air safeguards needed to protect the health of Americans, according to major new Public Policy Polling (PPP) survey released today by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

The survey results track with national poll findings and those from 18 other Congressional Districts across the United States indicating that Rep. Benishek and others in the U.S. House who supported blocking the EPA are out of step with their constituents.

In the Michigan 1st Congressional District, 62 percent of registered voters– including 55 percent of Independents and 42 percent of Republicans – oppose the vote by Rep. Benishek to “block the EPA from limiting carbon dioxide pollution,” according to the survey of 1,135 registered voters conducted February 20-21st by PPP for NRDC. Additionally, 66 percent of Rep. Benishek’s constituents – including 52 percent of Republicans and 57 percent of Independents -- said the EPA should move ahead to “reduce carbon pollution without delay.”

The full survey findings for the Michigan-1st Congressional District are available online at <http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/paltman/2-23%20Poll%20Table.pdf>. For comparison purposes, the national survey findings also conducted by PPP for NRDC are available online at the same location.

“Politicians who are considering blocking the EPA and updates to Clean Air Act safeguards should understand that doing so is very unpopular. Americans know where these actions will lead and they want their kids to be able to grow up breathing clean air,” said Peter Altman, Climate Campaign director for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

“Americans are clearly persuaded that their health needs should take priority over the profits of polluters” said Tom Jensen, director of Public Policy Polling. “Political affiliation doesn’t appear to count for much when constituents are asked whether their representatives in Congress should be siding with the public’s health or the political clout of polluters.”

The poll was timed to ask several questions about positions lawmakers took during last week’s debate over the federal budget. During that debate, House members cast a number of votes that would severely limit the Environmental Protection Action’s ability to protect public health from water and air pollution. The Continuing Resolution (CR) itself cut 30 percent of the EPA’s

budget. The CR also contained policy provisions to block EPA from setting limits for carbon dioxide pollution. In addition, several amendments were passed that also would block the EPA from doing its job of protecting public health, including Representative Ted Poe's (R-TX) amendment to bar the EPA from taking any actions to reduce carbon dioxide pollution for any reason, Representative John Carter's (R-TX) amendment to prevent the EPA from reducing toxic pollution such as arsenic and mercury from cement kilns and Representative Mike Pompeo's amendment to prevent EPA from collecting data about carbon and other pollution.

For more information on how individual members voted and how the votes put public health at risk, see <http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/paltman/19%20Member%20Votes%20on%20CR.pdf> and http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/paltman/strong_opposition_nationally_a.html.

FINDINGS FROM MICHIGAN-1ST SURVEY

The survey of registered voters in the 1st Congressional District in Michigan also showed the following:

- 74 percent – including 63 percent of Republicans and 67 percent of Independents -- think EPA scientists, not Congress, should decide what pollution limits are needed.
- 69 percent of Americans – including 56 percent of Republicans and 60 percent of Independents -- think “Congress should let the EPA do its job” versus “Congress should decide when and how greenhouse gases should be regulated,” which was favored by only 31 percent.
- 78 percent – including 69 percent of Republicans and 73 percent of Independents -- support the EPA's mission of “protect(ing) the air we breathe and the water we drink with safeguards that hold corporate polluters accountable for the pollution they release into our environment.”
- 70 percent support “requiring stricter limits on the amount of toxic chemicals such as mercury, lead, and arsenic that coal power plants and other industrial facilities release.”
- 65 percent support “limiting the amount of carbon pollution that big power plants and other industrial facilities release.”
- 65 percent favor “requiring stricter limits on the amount of smog that vehicles and industrial facilities release.”

The Michigan-1st survey by PPP for NRDC was conducted February 20-21, 2011, with a sample size of 1,135 and a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percent. PPP conducted automated telephone surveys of registered voters using voter lists provided by Aristotle Inc. At least three attempts were made to reach every potential respondent.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio replay of the news event will be available on the Web at <http://www.nrdc.org> as of 5 p.m. EST on February 23, 2011.

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 1.3 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Livingston, Montana, and Beijing. Visit us at www.nrdc.org

Public Policy Polling is a national survey research firm located in Raleigh, North Carolina. It was named by the Wall Street Journal as one of the two most accurate polling companies in the country for its swing state polling in 2008. More recently it was recognized by the Washington Post and Politico for its pinpoint polling of the surprising results in the Delaware Republican Senate primary and the Massachusetts Senate special election.