

July 11, 2019

**To:** NRDC  
**Fr:** Anzalone Liszt Grove Research  
**Re:** Findings from New York Statewide Survey

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## **Executive Summary**

The Williams Pipeline is opposed by a plurality of respondents and a 20-point majority opposes the pipeline after hearing balanced information both for and against the project.

Governor Cuomo's favorable rating and positive job performance are both respectable but hovering just above the 50% mark. Additionally, while his support numbers are higher among Democrats, liberals and African Americans – fewer than half of these subgroups rate Cuomo “very favorably” or “strongly approving.” Furthermore, a majority of New Yorkers give Cuomo positive ratings on his environmental record, but this too is done with minimal enthusiasm among Democrats, liberals and African Americans.

These three demographics are the blocs most opposed to the pipeline proposal and most likely to say they'd view Governor Cuomo less favorably if he approves the project.

## **Lay of The Land**

Both President Trump (35% fav / 63% unfav) and Mayor de Blasio (33% fav / 60% unfav in NY Media Market) are deeply unpopular.

This deep and bipartisan dissatisfaction does not however extend to all elected officials as Senator Schumer is viewed favorably by a majority of the state (51% fav / 38% unfav) and Governor Cuomo's overall job performance is viewed positively by a majority of New Yorkers (55% approve / 42% disapprove). However, only 20% “strongly approve” of the job he's doing.

Not surprisingly, Governor Cuomo's job approval is highest among Democrats (78% approve / 19% disapprove), self-described “liberals” (79% approve / 19% disapprove), and African Americans (91% approve / 9% disapprove), but less than half of these groups “strongly approve.”

When evaluating the governor's performance specifically on environmental issues, views are less solidified (52% approve / 35% disapprove), as 13% say they don't know

ALG Research conducted an online survey of n=500 likely 2020 general election voters in New York state, from June 19-24, 2019.

enough to rate Cuomo's performance on environmental issues. Only 16% of the state strongly approves of his record in this area.

### **Impressions of the Pipeline and Environmental Priorities**

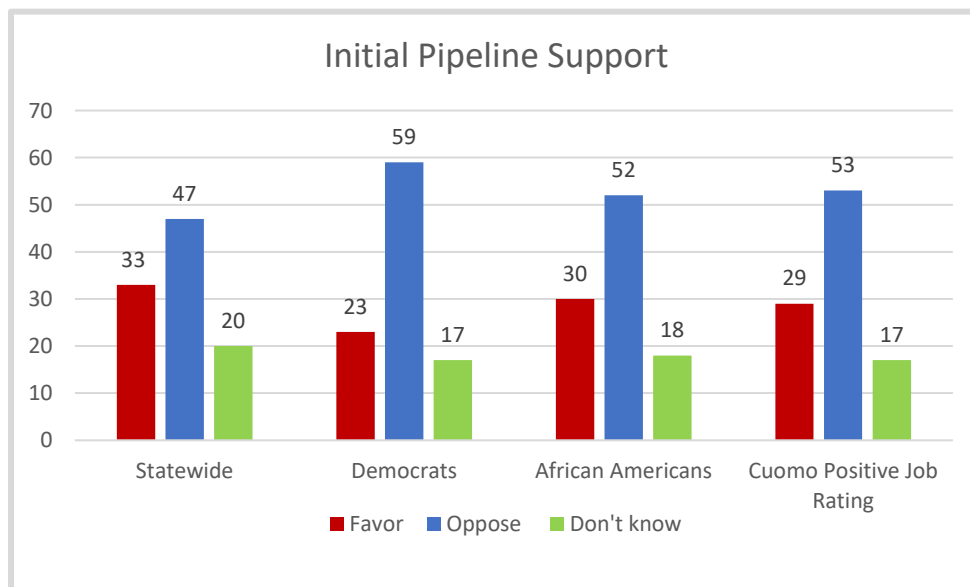
New Yorkers overwhelmingly want the state to prioritize renewables over fossil fuels – and accordingly have deep reservations about the Williams Pipeline, especially after they are exposed to both sides of the pipeline debate. By a margin of nearly 5-to-1, New Yorkers would rather the state government prioritize expanding renewable energy (71%) than fossil fuels (15%).

This preference is clearly manifested as we test New Yorker's opinions of the proposed Williams Transco Pipeline. Williams Transco is essentially unknown as 84% of the state says they have no opinion of the company. But despite the company's obscurity, their proposed pipeline is already unpopular.

To gauge initial impressions of the pipeline, it was impartially described to respondents as:

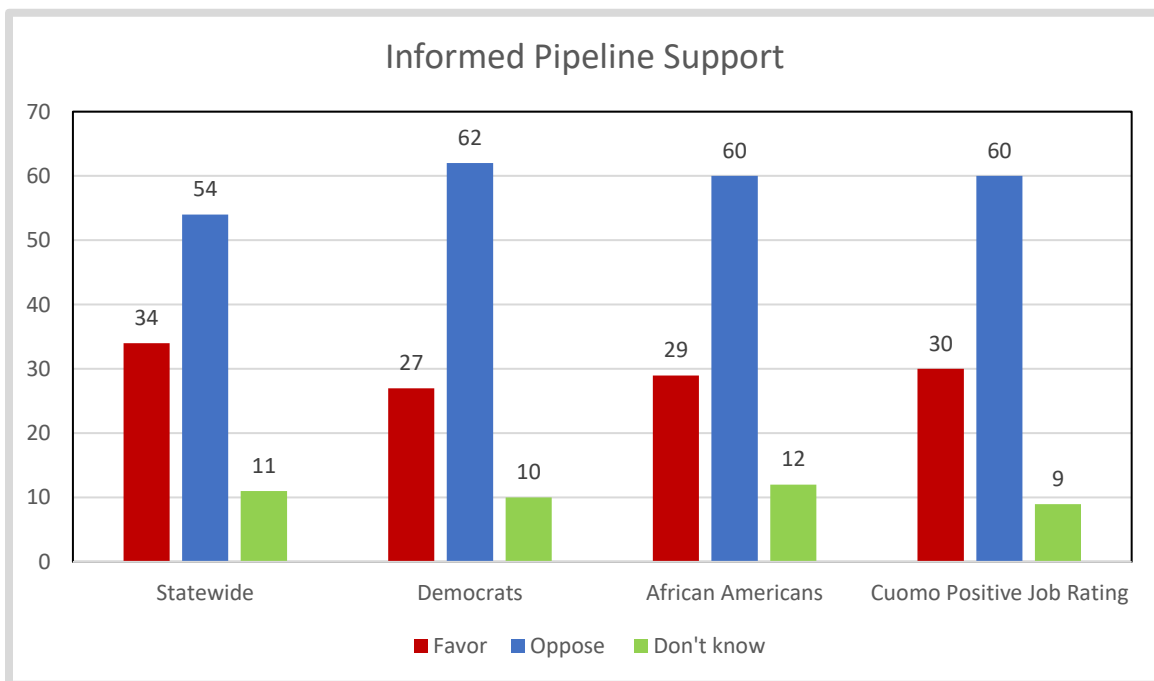
*"A new 23-mile long pipeline in New York to transport fracked gas. The proposed pipeline will originate in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, travel across New Jersey, cross underwater through Raritan Bay, New York Harbor, and the Atlantic Ocean, connecting off the shores of the Rockaway Peninsula in NYC"*

After hearing this description, a plurality is opposed (33% support / 47% opposed). Additionally, the intensity around this project is decidedly against the development as 26% are strongly opposed, compared to only 10% who strongly support the project.



After respondents are presented with balanced statements from both supporters and opponents of the project (*exact language included at end of memo*) opposition to the pipeline increases. Armed with the opinions of both sides, support for the pipeline stays flat while opposition intensifies (34% support / 54% opposed). Even after hearing the benefits supporters believe the project will deliver, only 12% of respondents strongly support the pipeline, while nearly a third (31%) is “strongly opposed.” The vast majority of support the pipeline does receive is from Republicans (48% support / 40% oppose) and “very conservative” (53% support / 39% oppose) respondents, while Democrats (27% support / 62% oppose) and African Americans (29% support / 60% oppose) overwhelmingly object to the project.

And among those who initially stated they had a positive opinion of Governor Cuomo’s job performance, there’s a 2-to-1 majority that doesn’t want the pipeline as 60% oppose the project versus 30% who support it. And among this bloc, only 9% are strongly supportive of the project – compared to 35% who strongly oppose it.



The final question posed to respondents informs them that Governor Cuomo will decide the fate of the proposed pipeline and asks if they would view him more or less favorably if he approves it. By a 23-point margin, Governor Cuomo would be viewed less favorably statewide if he approves this project (45% less favorably – 22% more favorably). The sentiment against Cuomo approving pipeline is driven largely by Democrats, who responded 53% less favorably – 15% more favorably. And more than one-third of Democrats (38%) stated they’d view Cuomo “much less favorably” if he approves the pipeline.

Approving this project would be unwelcomed by African Americans who are 2-to-1 more likely to say they’d view him less favorably if he approves this proposal (19% more

favorable / 40% less favorable), with 24% responding they'd view him "much less favorably"

## **Conclusions**

Though this is not currently a top-of-mind issue, when the issue is raised, New Yorkers oppose this pipeline. And the more they hear about this debate, even when hearing equally from both sides, the more that opposition intensifies.

This is especially true among Democrats, liberals, and African Americans. The only blocs of New Yorkers with even mild support for this project are strong conservatives and Republicans.

Given this data, it's difficult to envision how this project could be approved without inciting widespread opposition. The only way this project can be approved without massive opposition is for it to happen in darkness. The way to ensure this project doesn't move forward is simply to raise its profile. As soon as people hear of the project, even before learning the benefits and harms, respondents oppose the pipeline. And running up the score among pipeline opponents is not difficult. Opponents of this project need not massively outspend the project's backers. Simply sharing the facts is sufficient to coalesce a motivated majority of New Yorkers to call for denying the pipeline.

And it's the finding of this research that Governor Cuomo would be well-served to listen to the overwhelming consensus of his constituents who oppose the Williams Pipeline or else risking being on the wrong side on what could become a deeply contentious issue.

## **Appendix**

### *Language from Opponent and Support Statements:*

"Opponents of this pipeline say it would pollute our air and water, harm marine animals, and make us more reliant on fossil fuels that are contributing to climate change. And if the pipeline leaks, thousands of pounds of greenhouse gases could be released in New York, just like what happened recently in California."

"Supporters say this project will increase domestic energy production and help make American more energy independent and less reliant on foreign sources of energy. Additionally, approving this pipeline would lower the cost of our energy bills, saving New York families more money, and create new, good-paying jobs in New York."