

Upper Saucon Township, PA
Public Opinion Survey
April 11, 2011
Key Points Summary

Overview

The Trust for Public Land commissioned a telephone survey of 300 randomly selected registered voters in Upper Saucon Township, Pennsylvania. The survey was conducted the week of April 4th by Barry Zepowitz and Associates of Buffalo, New York. The margin of error for this survey is plus/minus 5.7 percent.

Upon hearing sample ballot language, a slim majority of Upper Saucon Township voters would support an increase in the Earned Income Tax from 1% to 1.1% to acquire land or interests in land to preserve open space, natural areas and farmland. However, voters are divided on the measure when told the annual cost to the average household. Voters favor an increase in the Earned Income Tax over a \$7 million bond measure for these purposes.

Voters' top concerns are controlling spending, taxes and debt. Despite these concerns and mixed support for an earned income tax increase to fund land conservation efforts, voters are supportive of the possible uses of the funds presented. A number of accountability measures are likely to increase voter support for a ballot measure.

Earned Income Tax Proposal

- When presented with sample ballot language, a slim majority (51 percent) of voters would support a .10% increase in the Earned Income Tax to acquire lands or interests in lands, while 42 percent would oppose the increase and 7 percent are undecided.
- When told that the proposal would increase the local tax withheld from their salary or wages from 1% to 1.1% costing a household with the median income of \$92,000 annually \$92.00 a year, support decreased to 45 percent for the proposal, with 48 percent against it.
- Proposals for a smaller earned income tax increase of .05% and to establish a 10-year sunset on the tax increase had little effect on voter support.
- Neither pro nor con arguments on the proposal have a significant effect on the level of voter support. After hearing a series of arguments both for and against the proposal, support remains unchanged at 50 percent, with 39 percent opposed, and 11 percent undecided.

Voter Concerns

- 39 percent of voters said that controlling spending, taxes and debt is the most important issue facing Upper Saucon Township, followed by improving schools and education (18 percent), preserving open space and farmland (14 percent), and the weak economy/high unemployment (13 percent).

Voters Support Possible Uses of the Funds

Voters are quite supportive of the possible uses of funds. All receive at least a majority of support.

Proposed use	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure
Protect drinking water sources	86%	13%	2%
Protect water quality in rivers, lakes...	78%	16%	6%
Preserve farmland	76%	22%	3%
Preserve natural areas	75%	20%	5%
Preserve open space	72%	23%	5%
Protect wildlife habitat	67%	28%	5%
Develop parks and outdoor recreation	55%	39%	6%
Create new parks in township	51%	43%	8%

Accountability Provisions Increase Support

Respondents were more likely to support the proposal if it included the following accountability provisions.

Information	More likely	Less likely	No difference	Not sure
Citizens Advisory Committee to guide the township in their decision-making	64%	13%	17%	5%
Independent audit of how funds are spent	63%	11%	20%	7%
Land will be purchased on a strictly voluntary basis from willing landowners	60%	13%	19%	9%
Public will have access to land purchased	59%	13%	17%	11%
Funds raised locally would be matched	56%	18%	17%	9%