

**TO: Interested Parties**

**FROM: Hart Research Associates**

**DATE: October 21, 2013**

**RE: Voters' Attitudes about EPA Carbon Regulations and Climate Change**

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*On behalf of the League of Conservation Voters, Hart Research Associates conducted quantitative research on public opinion about new EPA regulations on power plant carbon pollution and its impact on 2014 swing Senate races. This survey consisted of 1,113 interviews with likely voters living in 11 states with swing Senate races in the 2014 election.<sup>1</sup> The interviews were conducted by telephone, including both landline and cell, from October 9 to 13, 2013. The margin of error is  $\pm 2.9$  percentage points and higher among subgroups. This memo reviews the survey's key findings.*

**1) There is solid majority support for new EPA regulations that are being proposed, that would set limits on the amount of carbon pollution released by power plants.**

- Three in four (74%) voters in swing Senate states favor the EPA's proposed regulations to limit the amount of carbon pollution that power plants can release into the air. There is strong consensus in favor of the new regulations in Obama states (73%) and Romney states (73%) and across party lines, including Democrats (92%), independents (72%), and Republicans (58%).
- While women (81%) and 18-to 34-year-olds (87%) are especially favorable toward the new regulations that are being proposed, majorities across demographic groups agree: 65% of men favor the new regulations, as do 68% of voters ages 65 and over.

**2) Voters trust the EPA, not Congress, to set regulations on carbon pollution.**

- By a ratio of five to one, voters say they have more trust in the EPA to decide whether there should be regulations on carbon pollution (66%) than the United States Congress (12%, a difference of 54 points). The EPA enjoys greater public trust than Congress among Democrats (by 82 points), independents (by 49 points), and Republicans (by 30 points).

**3) Nearly half of voters are less likely to vote for an elected official who opposes the EPA regulations.**

- When asked how a candidate's position on the EPA regulations would affect their vote, 48% say they would be *less* likely to vote for a candidate who opposed the new regulations. Only 17% said learning that a candidate opposed the regulations would make them more likely to vote for that candidate. Candidates who oppose the regulations take a hit in support among key groups, including independents (42% less likely to vote for the candidate, 16% more likely) and voters who are undecided about the 2014 Senate race (43% less likely, 11% more likely).

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<sup>1</sup> The sample included approximately 150 interviews in Georgia (159), Michigan (151), and North Carolina (154) as well as approximately 80 interviews in Alaska (80), Arkansas (81), Colorado (82), Iowa (82), Louisiana (80), Montana (81), New Hampshire (81), and Virginia (82). The sample is weighted to include each state relative to the size of its actual registered electorate.

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- In contrast, candidates who support the new regulations gain support among voters. Forty-four percent (44%) of voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported the new regulations, whereas just 18% say they would be less likely. Independents (38%) and undecided voters (39%) are among those who would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported the EPA's regulations.

### **4) After voters hear arguments for and against the regulations, support for them holds strong, with greater than three in five voters wanting their senator to support the regulations.**

- The survey tested arguments in favor and against the new EPA regulations. On the opposition side, voters heard the most frequent arguments against the new regulations including that it is part of the war on coal, would raise electricity rates, and that it would kill jobs. On the proponents' side, voters heard the most common arguments in favor of the regulations, including our moral obligation to protect the planet for future generations, the importance of reducing climate change for public health, and competing messages about innovation and job growth. After hearing both sides, voters overwhelmingly say they want their U.S. senator to support the new regulations (64% compared with 24% who want their senator to oppose).

### **5) A majority of voters recognize that climate change is a serious problem and penalize candidates who deny this scientific consensus.**

- Two in three (65%) voters say that climate change is a serious problem, including 39% who say it is a very serious problem and 26% who say it is a somewhat serious problem. This is the majority view in states that Obama won in 2012 (64%) as well as states that Romney won (67%). Furthermore, it could prove to be an important tipping point as 71% of likely voters who are undecided about the Senate race in their state say that climate change is a serious problem.
- Denying climate change is a major liability for candidates. Three in five voters (63%) say that it would make them less favorable to a candidate for U.S. Senate in their state if they heard the candidate denied basic science and said that climate change is not occurring. Majorities in Obama states (64%), Romney states (63%), and among undecided voters (60%) say they would be less favorable to climate change deniers.