



*Public Opinion Research
& Strategy*



TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Oil and Gas Drilling in Colorado – 6 in 10 voters support tighter regulation

DATE: September 13, 2010

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) and Public Opinion Strategies (POS) recently carried out a statewide telephone survey of Colorado voters to assess their attitudes toward oil and gas drilling in the state.ⁱ The results show that more than **six in ten voters support tighter controls over oil and gas drilling in the state**, and holding these companies accountable by making safe drilling practices mandatory. Additionally, two-thirds of voters support requiring oil and gas companies to use the latest technology to ensure that drilling is safer and has a reduced impact on the land.

Key specific findings of the survey include the following:

- **Coloradans support greater oversight and accountability over oil and gas drilling in the state.** Each survey respondent was asked to choose between two statements about oil and gas drilling in Colorado, representing the positions taken by industry leaders and those favoring tougher standards for health and safety protections. Half the respondents were offered the choice of statements shown in **Figure 1**, and half were offered the choice in **Figure 2**. Each pair offered the same articulation of the industry position, but the alternative statement varied, with one focusing on the inevitability of accidents (**Figure 1**) and the other focusing on the industry's questionable record in self-policing. (**Figure 2**).

In each case, **by a two-to-one margin Colorado voters support a strong standards to ensure that drilling is done in a safe and healthy fashion.**

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FIGURE 1:
Attitudes Regarding Oil and Gas Drilling Safety in Colorado
(Split Sample)

Statement	% of Voters in Agreement
The oil and gas industry continually strives to build upon its record of safety and to develop the advanced technology necessary to supply Americans with the energy they need - safely, efficiently and with the least environmental impact possible. Adding new regulations or slowing down permitting will only end up costing jobs and raising prices.	33%
Oil and gas drilling can be done safely, but not if we simply trust oil and gas companies to police themselves. Whether drilling occurs in our oceans or here in Colorado, accidents happen. In fact, in Colorado there have been nearly 1,000 spills and accidents since 2008. It's simply common sense to end industry shortcuts and require careful, independent review to hold oil companies accountable before permitting drilling.	62%
Both/Neither/Unsure	5%

FIGURE 2:
Attitudes Regarding Oil and Gas Drilling Safety in Colorado
(Split Sample)

Statement	% of Voters in Agreement
The oil and gas industry continually strives to build upon its record of safety and to develop the advanced technology necessary to supply Americans with the energy they need - safely, efficiently and with the least environmental impact possible. Adding new regulations or slowing down permitting will only end up costing jobs and raising prices.	34%
We can no longer allow oil and gas companies to decide for themselves whether or not to use the best equipment or safest drilling practices. We've seen what happens when safety decisions are left to the companies in the Gulf of Mexico. Here in the West, we've seen drinking water contaminated with cancer causing chemicals. It's time to hold the oil and gas industry accountable and make sure drilling practices are mandatory rather than voluntary.	62%
Both/Neither/Unsure	4%

- **Support for higher standards cuts across almost all segments of the Colorado electorate.** Combining both versions of the choices outlined in **Figures 1** and **2**, there is

consistent agreement among nearly all segments of the electorate that higher standards for drilling should be upheld. This position is taken by:

- ✓ 77% of Democrats, 62% of independents, and 57% of Republicans;
 - ✓ 57% of men and 68% of women;
 - ✓ At least 52% of voters in each region of the state – Denver and its suburbs, the Colorado Springs area, the Eastern plains and the Western slope.
- **Two thirds of respondents think we should require oil and gas companies to use the latest technologies for safer drilling.** As shown in **Figure 3**, respondents were also offered a choice between two other statements: one calling for oil and gas companies to use the latest technologies to ensure drilling is “done right and cleaned up afterwards” even at the cost of slower production, and a second calling for reducing regulations to give energy companies the “greatest flexibility.” Two-thirds (67%) of those polled supported the former choice, demonstrating a strong voter preference for safer drilling practices.

FIGURE 3:
Attitudes Regarding Safety Standards for Oil and Gas Drilling in Colorado

Statement	% of Voters in Agreement
We should require oil and gas companies to use the latest technologies in order to reduce the impact they have on our land, air and water, and make sure drilling is done right and cleaned up afterward even if it means production proceeds more slowly.	67%
We should reduce regulations on oil and gas drilling in Colorado in order to allow these companies the greatest flexibility so they can speed up production, keep their costs low, and make decisions themselves.	28%
Both/Neither/Unsure	5%

Overall, the survey results show that **voters in Colorado strongly support tighter controls over oil and gas drilling in the state.** Coloradans demonstrate a desire for high standards for safety, environmental protection, and safeguards in the energy industry – as opposed to less regulation – even if these standards were to result in higher prices and slower production.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From August 30 to September 2, 2010, FM3 and POS completed 462 telephone interviews with registered voters in Colorado. Results for the full sample have a margin of sampling error of +/- 4.6%; margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be higher.