



Paul Simon Public Policy Institute



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**SOUTHERN ILLINOIS VOTERS FAVOR CIGARETTE TAX,
OPPOSE INCOME TAX AND SALES TAX HIKES**

While southern Illinois voters remain adamantly opposed to raising major taxes to plug the state's \$15 billion budget deficit, they show some support for increasing the cigarette tax, according to the latest Southern Illinois Poll conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

The poll, taken February 14 through February 22, showed 60.3 percent of registered voters in the state's southernmost 18 counties favor a \$1 per pack increase in the cigarette tax. There were 36 percent opposed. The rest were undecided.

But when asked about raising other taxes, such as the sales tax or the income tax, southern Illinoisans were opposed and said they favored cuts to spending to plug the state's budget deficit. The inaugural Southern Illinois Poll, conducted last year, found similar opposition.

"It was somewhat surprising to see such strong support for the cigarette tax here," said Charles Leonard, the Simon Institute visiting professor who supervises the polling. "You hear the argument that higher cigarette taxes will force smokers to buy in nearby states with lower rates. However, border area Illinois legislators may take comfort in this high level of local support for the tax increase—which could generate as much as \$375 million a year for our desperately unbalanced budget."

The survey also found:

- There were 59.5 percent of southern Illinoisans who said the state's budget deficit could be fixed by cutting waste and inefficiency. Last year, it was 60 percent. Also, the statewide Simon Poll conducted last fall showed 57 percent holding that belief.
- Only 5.8 percent in this year's Southern Illinois Poll said taxes should be raised; 24.5 percent said it would take a combination of tax increases and spending cuts.

- Seven in ten (71 percent) opposed raising the sales tax rate and 61 percent opposed increasing the reach of the sales tax to include services as well as goods.
- A comfortable majority – 61.5 percent – opposed expanding gambling to raise more revenue. That’s up from 54.9 percent opposition a year ago.
- A whopping 64 percent said they opposed the state’s action to implement a temporary increase in the state income tax from 3 percent to 5 percent. Only 32 percent approved. Similar results were found when asked about the increase in the corporate income tax.

The poll of 400 registered voters in the 18 southernmost counties in Illinois was taken February 14 to 22 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that if we conducted the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances the results would vary by no more than plus or minus 4.8 percentage points.

Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas, conducted the telephone interviews for the Southern Illinois Poll using the random-digit-dialing method and screening for registered voters. The poll’s sample included both landline and cellular phones. CRI reports no Illinois political figures as clients and was paid with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund.

Counties included in the Southern Illinois Poll are: Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, Washington, White, and Williamson.

Note: The “Simon Poll” and the “Southern Illinois Poll” are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Use or publication of these polls is encouraged – but only with credit to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute.

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**Paul Simon Public Policy Institute
Southern Illinois University Carbondale**

**Poll Results of Voters in Illinois
Conducted February 14 through February 22, 2011
*Released March 10, 2011***

1. The state of Illinois has a budget deficit of over 15 billion dollars. I'm going to read three statements that people have made about how to fix the deficit, and ask you which one comes closest to your views, OK?

We can only fix the problem by taking in more revenue	5.8%
We can fix the problem by cutting waste and inefficiency	59.5%
A combination of budget cuts and revenue increases	24.5%
Haven't thought about it much	4.8%
Other / Don't know	5.5%

2. Do you favor or oppose raising the state sales tax rate?

Favor	25.8%
Oppose	71.0%
Other / Don't know	3.3%

3. Do you favor or oppose expanding the sales tax to cover services like dry cleaning or haircuts, which are not currently taxed?

Favor	35.0%
Oppose	61.0%
Other / Don't know	4.0%

4. Do you favor or oppose a proposal expanding legalized gambling in the state?

Favor	36.0%
Oppose	61.5%
Other / Don't know	2.5%

5. Do you favor or oppose a proposal to increase the tax on cigarettes by \$1 per pack?

Favor	60.3%
Oppose	36.0%
Other / Don't know	3.8%

6. Do you approve or disapprove of the state's action to implement a temporary increase in the state income tax from 3 percent to 5 percent?

Approve	32.0%
Disapprove	64.0%
Other / Don't know	4.0%

7. Do you approve or disapprove of the state's action to implement temporary increase in the state's corporate income tax from 4.8 percent to 7 percent?

Approve	33.8%
Disapprove	59.5%
Other / Don't know	6.8%

**Some columns do not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.*

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