

**PUBLIC OPINION:**

# Americans Want More Protection from Toxic Chemicals

**T**his fact sheet summarizes the key findings from the survey research exploring public attitudes about reforming and updating the laws governing toxic chemicals.<sup>1</sup>

## Attitudes on the Toxic Substances Control Act

- **A strong majority of voters (74 percent) support the Toxic Substances Control Act when given a description. Intensity is also strong, with nearly half of voters expressing strong support (46 percent).**
  - **Support for the Toxic Substances Control Act is strong across partisan lines.** Roughly three quarters of Democrats, independents, and Republicans alike favor this Act. Republican women express more intensity than do Republican men (48 percent to 38 percent strongly favor).
- **The elements of the legislation that elicit greatest concern upon explanation include that chemicals in existence prior to 1976 have been grandfathered in (87 percent somewhat or very concerned; 66 percent very concerned), that the EPA was unsuccessful in banning asbestos (80 percent; 60 percent), and that only 200 chemicals have been tested in the years that TSCA has been in effect (84 percent; 58 percent).**
  - **Hearing information on TSCA's limitations diminishes support across demographic groups by double digit margins; roughly 15 to 25 points across most groups. Latinos are less likely to show a decline in support (12 points), compared to 20 points among whites and 17 points among African Americans.**
- **Additionally, people grow more convinced that regulations on chemicals are not strong enough once they hear details on TSCA. There is an 11 point increase in this sentiment once people hear information on TSCA. Majorities of voters across most demographic groups say regulations on chemicals are not strong enough. The exceptions are Independent and Republican men (49 percent and 47 percent say not strong enough respectively).**



## Attitudes on Chemical Reform

- **A strong majority of roughly seven in ten voters (71 percent) support proposed legislation, when given a brief description.** Intensity is greater than initial attitudes on TSCA, with 53 percent expressing strong support.
  - While Democrats express the greatest support for chemical reform, strong majorities of Independents and Republicans also favor the legislation. Eight in ten Democrats (81 percent) favor the legislation, compared to 66 percent of Republicans and 63 percent of Independents.
  - A majority of white and African American voters strongly favor the initiative, with Hispanics showing the broadest and deepest support. Among Hispanics, 86 percent favor the legislation (69 percent strongly), compared to 72 percent among African Americans (52 percent strongly) and 69 percent among white voters (51 percent strongly).
- **The most popular proposed bill provisions give EPA the power to take immediate action on the most dangerous chemicals.** Majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans say they feel much more favorable when hearing that the legislation will take chemicals off the market if they have been detected in babies at birth or in infants (Democrats, 66 percent much more favorable; Independents, 52 percent; Republicans, 59 percent) and exposure to other toxic chemicals, such as formaldehyde, that have been extensively studied, will be reduced to the maximum extent possible (Democrats, 69 percent much more favorable; Independents, 51 percent; Republicans, 57 percent).

## Views of the EPA and the Chemical Industry

- **Voters tend to hold positive views of the EPA.** Six in ten voters (61 percent) hold favorable views of the EPA (22 percent very favorable), while only 28 percent express an unfavorable opinion (13 percent very unfavorable).



- **Views toward the EPA are positive across all demographic groups.** Those who are particularly favorable include: Women (+39 points), voters under 30 (+53), Democrats (+52), single voters (+55), unmarried women (+45), women without children (+41), African Americans (+45), Latinos (+50), and younger whites (+42).
- **In contrast, few trust the chemical industry.** Only one in five voters give the industry a positive rating and only three percent express any intensity.
  - Those who are most *unfavorable* toward the chemical industry include: Women under 50 (net -25 points), non-college educated women (net -15), Democrats (net -22), particularly Democratic women (net -24), mothers (net -22), and voters in the West (net -20).

1 Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1000 registered voters nationwide. The survey was conducted August 25 to 31, 2009. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn using an RDD sample. The samples were stratified geographically based on the proportion of voters in each region. Data was weighted by gender, age, region, race, parental status, and party identification to reflect the attributes of the electorate. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1%.

The Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families coalition includes nurses, parents, advocates for the learning disabled, scientists, environmental health advocates, and concerned citizens from across the nation. These diverse groups are united by their common concern about toxic chemicals in our homes, places of work, and products we use every day.