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To: Interested Parties

From: Lake Research Partners & Bellwether Research

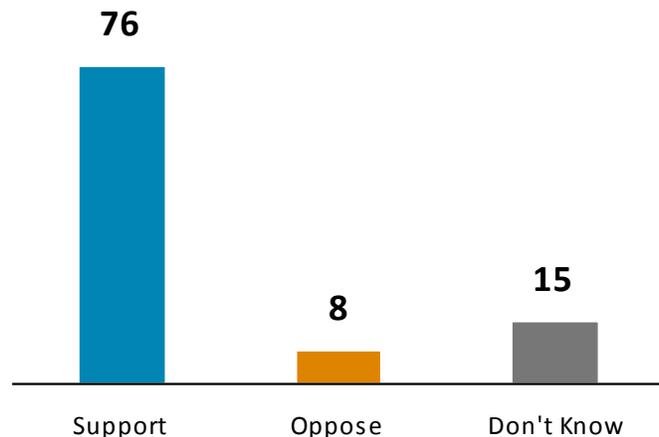
Re: Survey Findings on Mountaintop Removal Strip Mining

Date: August 3, 2011

A recent survey of likely voters from the heart of Appalachia reveals intense and broad-based support for strengthening the Clean Water Act to protect streams, rivers, and lakes from the damage caused by mountain top removal mining. Voters in Appalachia would also use this issue as a criterion in electoral choices, and are far less likely to support public officials who would weaken environmental protections on mountain top removal mining and more likely to support those who would strengthen those protections.¹

Voters across Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Virginia solidly oppose mountaintop removal coal mining, by wide margins and across a host of demographic and political divides. **Three-quarters support fully enforcing—and even increasing protections in—the Clean Water Act to safeguard streams, rivers, and lakes in their states from mountaintop removal coal mining.** Fully 76% of voters across these four states support this proposal, including a 62% majority who feel that way strongly. Just 8% of voters oppose it. **Support for this proposal is far-reaching, encompassing**

Fully Enforce/Increase Protections in Clean Water Act to Safeguard Streams, Rivers, & Lakes from Mountaintop Removal



¹ Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey that was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1315 likely voters in Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Virginia, including oversamples in Kentucky and West Virginia. The survey was conducted July 25 - 31, 2011. The margin of error for the full sample was +/- 2.8%.

solid majorities of Democrats (86%), independents (76%), Republicans (71%), and Tea Party supporters (67%).

Asked about mountaintop removal outside the context of the Clean Water Act, 38% oppose the practice compared to just 24% who support it, and another 38% of voters who are unsure. **When voters are provided with a brief description of the practice, opposition takes on majority status and garners noticeable intensity.** That description is as follows: “coal companies in [STATE] mine coal from mountains through a process called mountaintop removal mining where the top of a mountain is removed to extract the coal and waste is disposed in nearby valleys and streams”. In this scenario, fully 57% oppose mountaintop removal and with noticeable intensity (42% strongly oppose), compared to just 20% who support it (10% strongly). **On this measure, too, public opinion crosses typical political boundaries, including 64% of Democrats, 60% of independents, and even a 51% majority of Republicans.**

Efforts to associate opponents of mountaintop removal with economic costs fly in the face of public skepticism. **In fact, solid majorities of voters in these Appalachian states believe either that “environmental protections are often good for the economy” (40%) or “have little or no impact on the economy” (20%).** Just one-quarter of voters (25%) believes that “environmental protections are often bad for the economy”.

Perhaps it is not surprising then that simulating an engaged debate over mountaintop removal results in a 2:1 ratio of opposition to support, with fully half of voters opposed (50%, including 34% strong oppose) and just 27% in favor of the practice (including 14% strong support).

MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL: ENGAGED DEBATE	
Now, I would like to read you two statements about mountaintop removal mining... [ROTATE]	
<i>_(Some/Other) people say that coal is an important part of America’s economy and national security, and killing jobs is the wrong thing to do in this recession. Nearly half of all electricity produced in the U.S. is from coal, and increasing coal mining and using the most efficient methods frees America from our dependence on foreign oil, keeps energy costs low, grows jobs and the local economy.</i>	<i>_(Some/Other) believe mountaintop removal is bad for the economy and the environment and is causing ongoing harm to nearby communities, including increasing the number of birth defects and other serious health conditions. Mountaintop removal replaces workers with machines and explosives. It has filled nearly 2,000 miles of Appalachian streams with billions of tons of mining waste, killing wildlife and destroying forests.</i>
Sometimes over the course of a survey like this people change their minds. Do you favor or oppose mountaintop removal mining or are you unsure?	
<p>Favor: 27% (14% strongly)</p> <p>Oppose: 50% (34% strongly)</p> <p>Don’t know: 23%</p>	

In addition, this is a voting issue in these states, as the electorate here is overwhelmingly less likely to support elected officials who are in favor of weakening environmental regulations on mountaintop removal mining (48% less likely, 15% more likely, 38% no difference). By the same token, these voters are prepared to reward elected officials who support strengthening environmental regulations on mountaintop removal mining (48% more likely, 14% less likely, 38% no difference).

Bottom Line: Mountaintop removal is an unpopular practice, which voters oppose by wide margins and across party lines. Placed in the context of the Clean Water Act, strengthening protections on streams, rivers, and lakes from the damage caused by mountaintop removal mining surges to beyond three-quarters of the electorate in these states. Finally, strongly worded attacks on opponents of mountaintop removal mining fail to gain traction; opposition to mountaintop removal mining continues to best support by roughly a 2:1 margin.