



DEC 7, 2010

Most Voters Think State Budget Can Be Balanced with Cuts + “Found Money”

In the wake of an election in which voters repealed one tax, said no to another and required a 2/3 legislative majority to raise taxes or fees, most respondents told *The Elway Poll* that the state’s projected \$5.7 billion budget shortfall can be made up with cuts, spending freezes and “money from somewhere”. This no doubt will be encouraging news to the Governor and Legislature.

Only 40% thought the Legislature would have to raise taxes to balance the budget. Last year, when the state was facing a \$9 billion gap, a majority of those polled (54%) said ultimately taxes “would have to be raised,” as they had in the deficit years of 2005 and 2003. In each of those years, strong pluralities had *avored* cutting programs over raising taxes—they just thought the legislature would not be *able* to balance the budget without a tax increase. In 2009, for example, 54% thought a tax increase would be *necessary*, but only 18% actually *avored* raising taxes over cutting programs (not shown).

This is the first time respondents were given the option of “the Legislature will find money from somewhere to fund programs without a general tax increase.” One in 5 thought this would happen, driving down the perceived inevitability of a tax increase.

Presented with a list of 6 budgetary program areas, which comprise the bulk of the state budget, majorities favored cuts to 3 programs and tax increases to avoid cuts for the other 3.

The differentiation between programs was not simply a matter of some groups favoring some programs and other groups favoring other programs. The differentiation was going on at the individual level. The “average” respondent favored cuts to 3 programs and tax increases for 3 programs. Only:

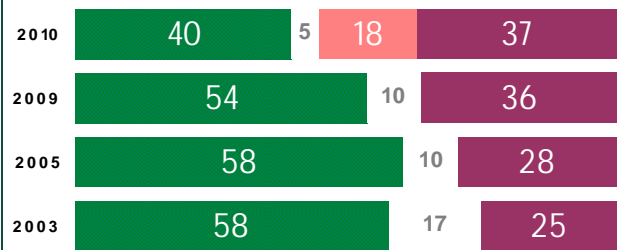
17% favored cuts to all 6 program areas, while
11% favored a tax increase to avoid cuts in any of the 6.

The order of voter priorities did not change from last year, although there was more support for cuts in 5 of the 6 areas.

Majorities preferred tax increases to avoid cuts in:

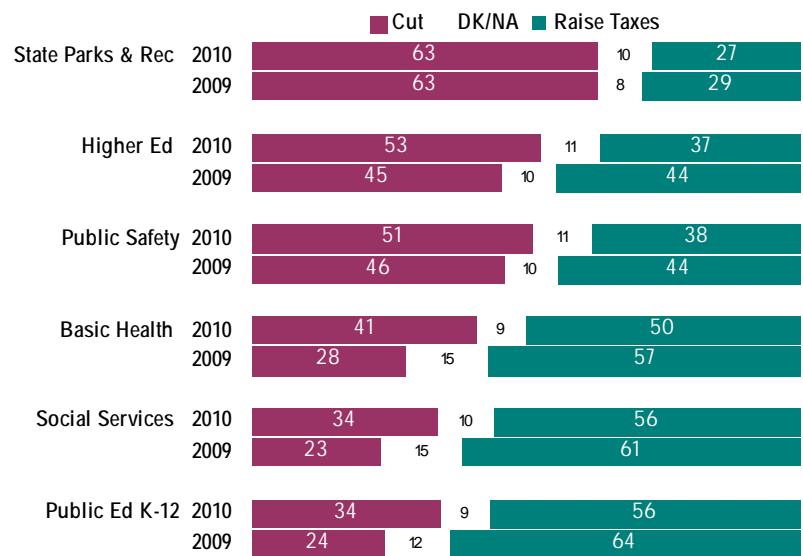
- “Public Education, Kindergarten through 12th grade” (56%);
- “Social Services to low-income citizens, the elderly, and developmentally disabled children and adults” (56%); and

HOW WILL BUDGET BE BALANCED?



■ Some taxes will have to be raised
 ■ The Legislature will find money from somewhere to fund programs without a general tax increase
 ■ The Legislature will be able to balance the state budget entirely by cutting programs and freezing spending

BUDGET CATEGORIES: CUT PROGRAMS OR RAISE TAXES?



Sample Profile

Live telephone interviews were conducted with 404 voters selected at random from registered voter lists in Washington state between Dec. 2-5 2010. The margin of sampling error is ±5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means, in theory, had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within ±5% of the results reported here at least 95 times.

REGION

King County.....	28%
Pierce + Kitsap.....	17%
North Puget Sound (Snohomish to Whatcom).....	17%
Western WA (Clallam to Clark).....	18%
Eastern WA.....	20%

GENDER

Male.....	50%
Female.....	50%

AGE

18-35.....	4%
36-50.....	23%
51-64.....	41%
65+.....	30%

PARTY ID

Democrat.....	35%
Republican.....	24%
Independent.....	41%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Self Employed.....	12%
Private Sector.....	29%
Public Sector.....	14%
Not Employed.....	10%
Retired.....	34%

INCOME

\$25,000 or less.....	14%
\$25 to \$50,000.....	21%
\$50 to \$75,000.....	16%
Over \$75,000.....	29%
No Answer.....	20%

The Elway Poll

The Elway Poll is an independent, non-partisan analysis of public opinion in Washington and the Northwest available exclusively to subscribers.

SUBSCRIPTION: An annual subscription is \$250.

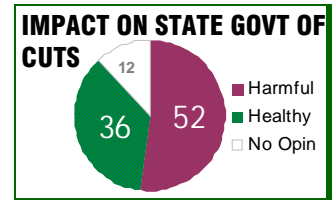
PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS: Each month, space is reserved in the questionnaire to allow subscribers to ask proprietary questions. The fee for proprietary questions is \$500 per question. You will receive the results of your question(s) with full crosstabulations within three days after the interviews are completed.

CROSTABS: A full set of cross-tabulation tables for any month's survey is available for \$100.

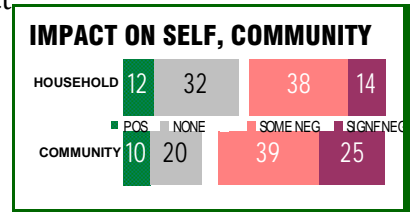
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- “The Basic Health Program, which subsidizes health care coverage for low-income working families and children” (50%).
- Majorities preferred cuts to avoid tax increases in:
 - State Parks and Recreation (63%);
 - Higher Education, including universities, colleges community and technical colleges (53%); and
 - Public safety, including prison and community supervision for offenders, and other public safety programs (51%).

Most thought cutting \$5.7 billion worth of state programs and services would have negative impacts, but substantial minorities thought the impact



would be positive: 52% said the cuts would harm state government in the long run;



36% said they would be “healthy”; 52% said their own household would be negatively effected by the state cuts, including 14% who said those impacts would be “significant”; 12% said the personal impact would be positive because their taxes would be lower. 64% said there would be negative impacts on their community, including 25% who said the impact would be “significant.” 43% said their would be negative impacts on *both* their household and community.

Among those who thought cutting \$5.7 billion worth of programs and services would be “healthy” for state government in the long run, solid majorities favored cuts in all 6 program areas.

- Voters who thought cutting that much would be “harmful” to state government were less uniform:
- Just half (50%) favored raising taxes to avoid cuts in higher education and public safety, and
 - Most (53%) favored making the cuts in parks.

Not surprisingly, the differences were highly partisan: strong majorities of Democrats preferred tax hikes to program cuts and strong majorities of Republicans preferred just the opposite.

Most Independents preferred cuts in parks (66%), higher education (58%) and public safety (55%); pluralities preferred tax hikes to avoid cuts in social services (46%) and K-12 (48%). Independents were evenly divided about Basic Health.