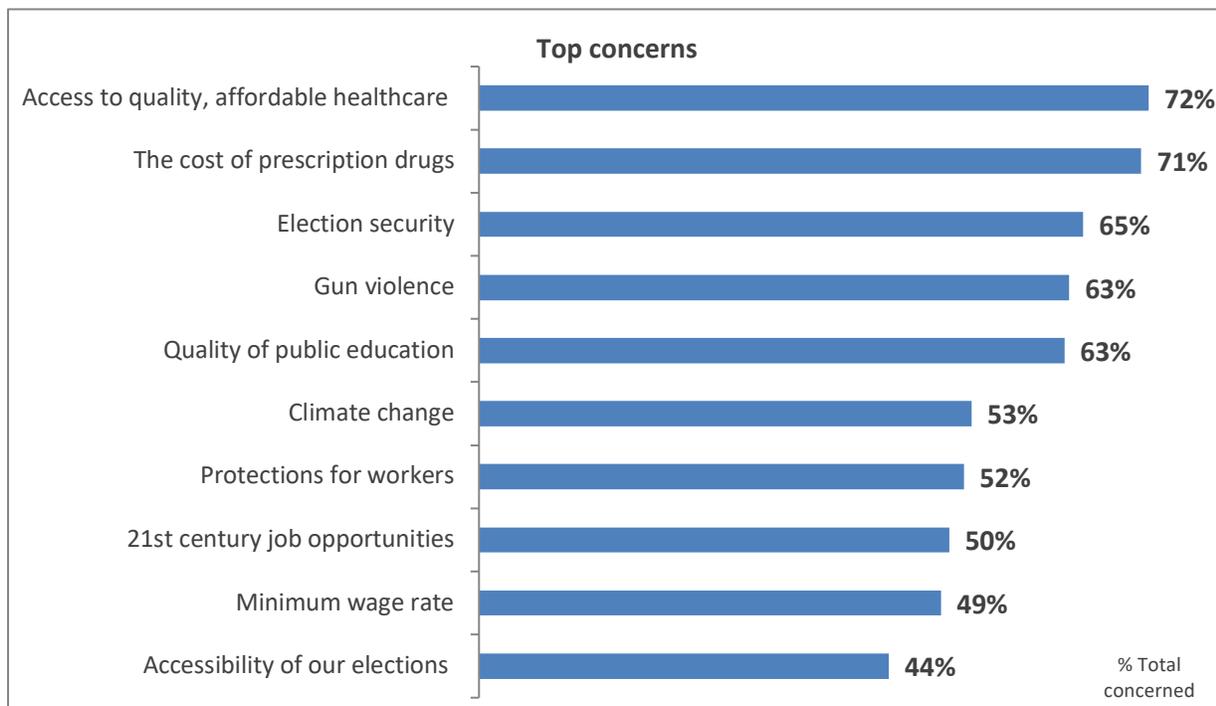


**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FR:** Lincoln Park Strategies  
**RE:** Legislative Priorities in Virginia: Survey Results  
**DATE:** January 22, 2020

As lawmakers head back to Richmond to begin the new legislative session, State Innovation Exchange (SiX) commissioned Lincoln Park Strategies to conduct a survey of Virginians<sup>1</sup> to gauge voters' feelings about the state's future and their views on the legislative leadership's policy agenda. One thing is clear: a majority of Virginians support the progressive policies under consideration for this year.

While there were many interesting findings throughout the data, this memo focuses specifically on Virginians' reactions to the legislation that might be considered by the General Assembly.

**1) Overall, health care issues are the largest concerns Virginians have, and health care-focused legislation is among the most popular.** Voters' top two concerns focus on the cost of and access to quality health care. These concerns are followed by gun violence, the security of our elections, and the quality of education.



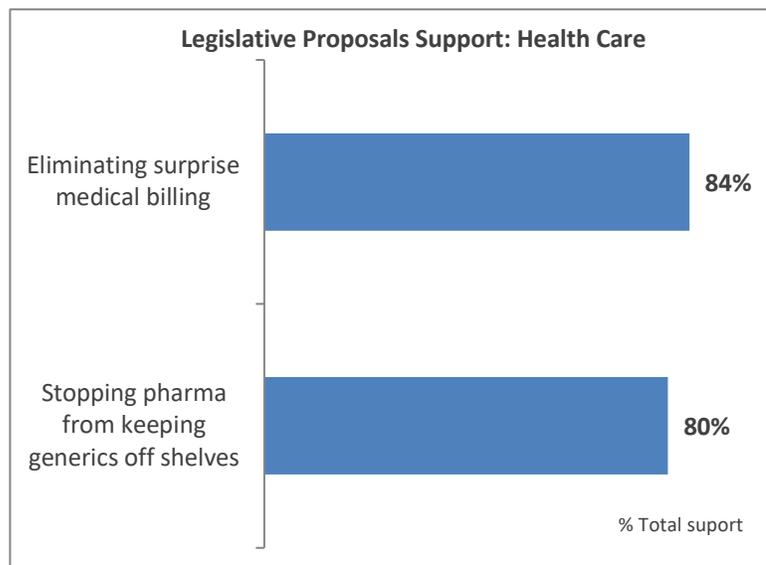
<sup>1</sup> 800 interviews among voters were conducted from January 8 – 13, 2020 via both internet and phone survey. The results were weighted to ensure proportional responses. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.5$  percent at the 95% confidence level.

Key findings on this topic include:

- Across the state, access to quality and affordable health care (72%) and the cost of prescription drugs (71%) lead voters' concerns, followed closely by election security (65%), gun violence (63%), and the quality of public education (63%).
- The cost of prescription drugs is most important to women (75%), African American voters (77%), voters in the Norfolk (73%) and southwestern (75%) media markets, and voters age 55 and older (77%). Similarly, access to quality and affordable health care is important to African American voters (84%), and those outside the Washington D.C. media market.
- Following health care, over three in five Virginians are concerned about election security (65%), gun violence (63%), and education (63%). Gun violence is the top concern among African American voters (82%) while voters in the Richmond (76%) are most concerned about education.
- A majority of voters are also concerned about climate change (53%), worker protections (52%), and job opportunities in the state (50%). Additionally, a majority of voters under 55 (55%) and African American voters (71%) are concerned about the minimum wage rate.

**2) Given voters' strong concern around health care-related issues, it is not surprising that healthcare-focused legislation is strongly supported.** Eliminating surprise medical billing for nonemergency services and stopping pharmaceutical companies from keeping generic drugs off the shelves are both policies that received the support from four of five Virginians.

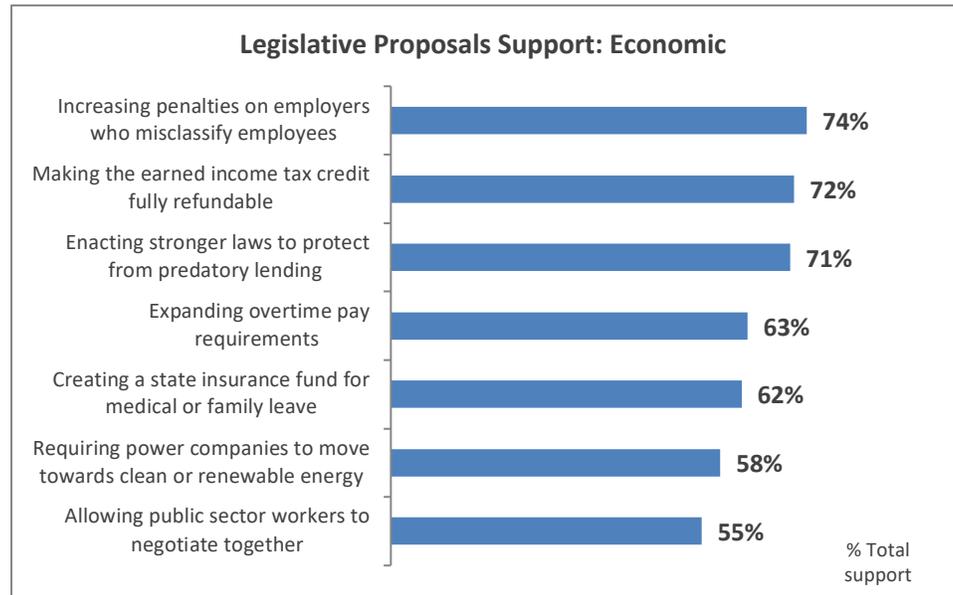
- When asked to rate various legislative policies that are pending, over four in five Virginians (84%) support ending surprise medical billing for nonemergency services and four in five (80%) support stopping pharmaceutical companies from keeping generic drugs off the shelves.
- Both policies have strong support across the state, particularly with voters 55 and older, voters in the DC media market, and voters in the southwestern part of the state.



**3) The state of the economy and personal finances are keeping many voters up at night and Virginians see easy solutions to help ease the burdens many workers face.** Indeed, legislation establishing more protections for workers such as increasing penalties on employers who misclassify employees is the third most popular policy after ones focusing on health care.

Policies that focus on the everyday economic issues that many voters face are supported across the board, particularly among African American voters.

- Over seven in ten voters support increasing

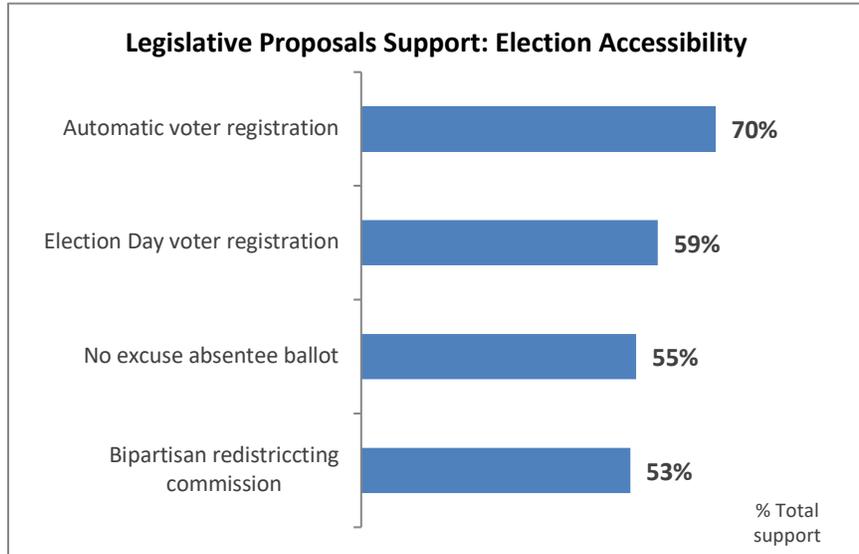


penalties on employers who misclassify employees (74%), making the earned income tax credit fully refundable (72%), and enacting stronger laws to protect Virginians from predatory lending (71%). Voters 55 and older are more likely to support increasing penalties for misclassifying employees (77%) and stronger laws to protect against predatory lending (76%) while those under 55 are more likely support making the earned income tax credit refundable (74%).

- Over three in five Virginians also support expanding overtime pay requirements (63%) and establishing a state insurance fund so all employees can take medical or family leave (62%). Over three-quarters of African American voters support each policy.
- A majority of voters also support requiring power companies to move towards clean or renewable energy (58%) and allowing public sector workers to negotiate together (55%). Allowing workers to negotiate together is strong among African American voters (71%).
- A majority of Virginians (58%) across the state support tax incentives like the one that was given to Amazon for moving their headquarters to the state. While support is highest in the Washington, DC media market (64%), a majority of voters in all areas of the state continue to support tax incentives.
- Virginia voters also think the state minimum wage should be higher than it is now with nearly a third (32%) thinking it should be above \$15. While the average suggested wage was \$13.20, voters in the DC and Norfolk media markets, voters of color, voters under 55, women, and college voters think it should be higher.

**4) Virginia voters are supportive of a wide range of policies to make elections more accessible.** Seven in ten Virginians support automatic voter registration and a majority also support Election Day voter registration, no excuse absentee voting, and the establishment of a bipartisan redistricting commission.

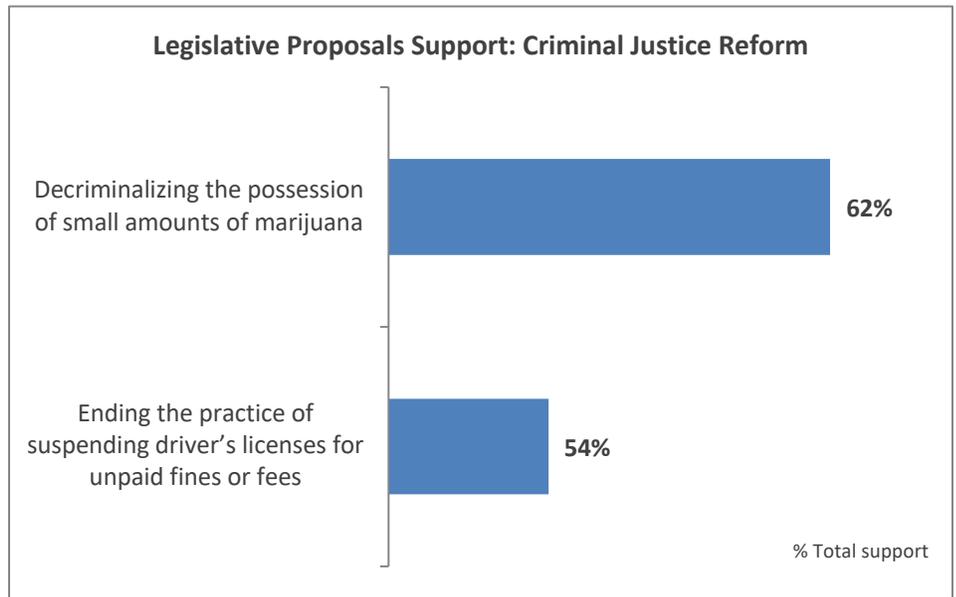
- Seven in ten (70%) Virginians support automatic voter registration with support strongest among women (73%), Washington DC and southwest media markets (74%), and college voters (73%).



- Election Day voter registration is strongest among African American voters (74%), voters under 55 (62%), men (62%), and in the DC media market (62%).
- A majority of voters also support no excuse absentee voting (55%) and establishing a bipartisan redistrict commission (53%). Both are strongest among college voters and in the Washington DC media market. However, the bipartisan redistricting commission will need more of an explanation to voters as one in five voters are not sure about it.
- A majority of voters (56%) support at least three of the election accessibility policies tested and just 12% do not support any of them.
- When it comes to the Census, Virginia voters understand its importance with 71% saying it is very important for people to respond and another 22% saying it is somewhat important. Additionally, a majority of Virginia voters (58%) plan on filling the Census out online and just under three in ten (29%) will fill out the form on paper. Just 2% say they will probably not participate.

**5) Legislative proposals that focus on criminal justice issues also receive broad support from Virginians.** Virginians are on board with decriminalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana and ending the practice of suspending driver’s licenses for unpaid fines or fees.

- A majority of voters (62%) support decriminalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana. Voters in the Richmond media market (66%), voters under 55 (65%), and African American voters (65%) are the most supportive.
- Similarly, 54% of Virginians support ending the practice of suspending driver’s licenses for unpaid fines or fees. African American voters (62%), southwest media markets (59%), and the Richmond media market (57%) are most supportive.



In conclusion, progressive legislative policies are popular in Virginia and legislators will garner strong support from their constituents, including harder-to-convince cohorts which are not typically viewed as being supportive of progressive lawmakers. Indeed, two-thirds of voters support more than half of the progressive policies tested and two in five support at least ten of them. These polling results show strong support for a progressive legislative agenda in the current session.