

November 4, 2019

TO: Kim Haddow, Katie Belanger
Local Solutions Support Center

FROM: Erik Iverson, Moore Information Group

RE: Florida Voter Survey – Preemption Issues

A recent statewide survey reveals that Florida voters have a more favorable opinion of local governments, such as City Councils or County Commissions, than they do of the Florida State Legislature and believe local governments are better connected to the community than state government. Accordingly, regardless of partisanship, Republicans, Democrats and NA/Independents/other voters with an opinion on the issue of state preemption of local laws are more opposed than supportive of the practice and by a 3:1 margin, voters believe preemption has a more negative than positive impact on them personally.

Below are key findings from the survey.

When it comes to their views on government and passing new laws or ordinances, Florida voters tend to take a more positive view of local government than of state government:

- Local government, like City Council or County Commission (61% favorable/18% unfavorable) has a higher image rating than the Florida State Legislature (52% favorable/26% unfavorable) and the U.S. Congress (32% favorable/56% unfavorable).
- Fully 80% agree that "local governments are better connected to the community than state government and should be allowed to pass policies that reflect their community's needs and values" and 70% agree that "local governments pass ordinances that create strong local economies which contribute to a strong state economy." Wide majorities of voters across the political spectrum agree with these two statements.
- Further, 81% agree that "city and county officials should generally be able to pass local laws to protect public health, the environment and quality jobs when a community believes that statewide laws aren't enough." This sentiment is shared by Republicans, Democrats and NA/Independents/other voters alike.
- More than 8-in-10 voters believe "special interest lobbyists have more influence over Florida State Legislators than I do" and more than 7-in-10 believe "Florida state lawmakers care more about their corporate donors and their interests than mine" and "Florida state lawmakers are more likely to listen to corporate lobbyists than me." While approximately 2-in-3 believe "Florida State Legislators make their decisions based on what large corporations want, not what people want" and "Florida state lawmakers care more about corporate profits than people." Majorities of all parties agree with these statements.

Among voters familiar with preemption related issues, most take a dim view – regardless of party registration:

- Fully 45% of Floridians have heard something in the past year about preemption, described as, “when Florida state legislators vote to prevent a local government from passing a law or to overturn a local law that was already passed.”
- By a 3:1 margin, Florida voters believe that when preemption does occur, the impact on them personally is more negative (33%) than positive (11%), with the rest having no opinion or saying there is no impact.

Florida voters show strong support for local government taking the following actions:

- Establishing county programs to help workers recover wages when employers refuse to pay them what they are owed under state law (82% support).
- Creating a municipal broadband service in the state in order to bring adequate Internet access to Florida’s rural counties (79% support).
- Passing anti-smoking and anti-vaping regulations (73% support).
- Approving local transportation taxes to pay for road, transit and bike projects (72% support).
- Passing ordinances requiring developers to include affordable housing units in construction projects (72% support).
- Banning single use Styrofoam containers or plastic bags to protect the local environment and tourism economy (69% support).
- Passing gun safety laws and enacting gun safety ordinances (67% support).
- Passing anti-discrimination laws for employment, housing, and public accommodations to provide better protection for LGBTQ people than what statewide laws provide (66% support).

Finally, voters list a whole host of issues they think their community or city should be able to adopt if state government isn’t addressing them properly, including:

- Enacting local taxes to support public schools and transit infrastructure.
- Passing anti-discrimination laws.
- Increasing the minimum wage.
- Directing local law enforcement resources to community policing rather than immigration enforcement.
- Enacting a plastic bag ban.
- Regulating and capping rent increases for tenants.
- Deciding what kinds of guns can be sold and carried in the local community.
- Regulating term accommodation rentals, like Airbnb rentals.

Methodology

Live-caller telephone interviews were conducted by Moore Information Group October 12-16, 2019 among a representative sample of 800 registered voters statewide. Both landline and cell phone interviews were included. The potential sampling error is +/- 3% at the 95% confidence level.