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NEW POLL: AMERICANS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT FEDERAL TRUST FUND TO GUARANTEE CLEAN AND SAFE WATER

More than eight in ten Americans believe that clean and safe water is a national issue that deserves federal investment.

The American people have spoken with one voice... an overwhelming majority – 86% – support legislation by the U.S. Congress that would create a long-term, sustainable and reliable trust fund for clean and safe water infrastructure.

In a poll undertaken jointly by the Luntz Research Companies and Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, 900 adults were interviewed (+/- 3% margin of error) nationwide.

Among young and old, male and female, Democrat AND Republican, the demand for clean and safe water is universal. An overwhelming majority of Americans — 91% — agree that *‘if, as a country, we are willing to invest over \$30 billion dollars a year on highways and more than \$8 billion a year on our airways, we certainly should be willing to make the necessary investments in our nation’s rivers, lakes and oceans.’*

KEY STATISTIC

Generally speaking, which of the following programs do you think is in greatest need of a dedicated trust fund that would guarantee federal money to help state and local governments pay for maintenance and improvements?

CLEAN AND SAFE WATER	71%
ROADS AND HIGHWAYS	20%
AIRPORTS AND AVIATION	3%

Simply put, clean and safe water is an issue for ALL Americans – whether they live in red states or blue states. And Americans believe clean and safe water is a *national* problem that requires a *national* solution.

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THE FIVE KEY FINDINGS

- 1) **Americans want clean and safe water to be a national priority.** More than eight in ten Americans are very or somewhat concerned that America’s water will not be clean or safe for their children or grandchildren. And almost nine in ten Americans (89%) say that “federal investment to guarantee clean and safe water is a critical component of our nation’s environmental well-being.” That is why, despite all of the talk about tax cuts and entitlement programs today, Americans believe that protecting their water must be a priority.

- More than three-quarters of Americans (77%) would rather the federal government invest in water infrastructure than increase spending on entitlement programs (12%).
- And by 67% to 26%, Americans prefer spending to guarantee clean and safe water over tax cuts.

- 2) **Voters expect the federal government to carry their fair share of the burden of protecting our nation’s water.** Voters simply do not see this as a local issue. Though they expect local communities to be involved, by more than a three-to-one margin, they believe clean and safe water is a national issue that requires a national solution:

71%	Clean and safe water is a national issue that requires dedicated national funding. As a matter of principle, the federal government should become a true partner with states and localities and pay for the necessary sewage and wastewater treatment systems to guarantee clean and safe water for future generations of Americans.
23%	Clean and safe water is a local problem that requires a local solution. The federal government is already running a \$500 billion dollar deficit. Clean and safe water is important, but the federal government just can’t afford to spend any more money. Local communities need to step up and pay.

- 3) **The federal government has a responsibility to invest in water alongside investments in our nation’s highways and airports.** As one voter questioned ... where would the national economy be today without the Highway Trust Fund? Too many sectors of the American economy rely on clean waterways. As such, the problem must be addressed by *America*. Americans support federal investments in national issues, and they believe our nation’s water is as important as our highways and airways.

- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of Americans agree that, *“Clean water has no local boundaries. Given the interstate nature of clean water issues, it is important for the federal government to support our nation’s rivers, lakes and oceans with necessary funding ... just as it does with highways and airports.”*
- And when asked which program was in greatest need of a dedicated national trust fund, 68% of Americans said clean and safe water, compared to just 26% who said roads and highways and only 2% who would rank a trust fund for airports and aviation as most important.

- 4) **Americans understand that this investment has costs and they are willing to pay for it.** The clear message from the data is that Americans want to do what is necessary to guarantee that their water is clean and safe for the future. They accept that it will cost money and they are willing to pay from their own pockets if necessary.
- Four times as many Americans believe there should be *“a dedicated funding source to ensure clean and safe water for future generations”* (73%) than believe that clean water *“should not receive federal funding but should continue to be funded as it is today”* (18%).
- 5) **Voters are more likely to vote for Members of Congress who support legislation to create a Federal Trust Fund for clean and safe water... and more likely to vote against those who don’t.** Nearly eight in ten voters (78%) describe themselves as more likely to vote for their Member of Congress if they learned he or she supported the trust fund while 63% say they are less likely to vote for their member if they learn that they opposed the legislation.

Commenting on the survey findings, Dr. Frank Luntz said: “I’ll be blunt ... this issue is NOT going to go away. This is not simply an environmental issue. It is an issue that is very personal to voters because of the importance of clean and safe water to their daily lives. This is not a local issue because Americans understand that water has no local boundaries. This is one of those areas where Americans demand that Washington take responsibility.

“Taxes – of any kind – are never an easy sell. This, however, is one area where there is real support for a federal investment in our nation’s future. When more than 80% of Americans say they are willing to open their wallets because they think something is a priority, you know it is important. Americans are sending their lawmakers a clear message... protect our nation’s water or risk getting left behind by the voters.”

Doug Schoen, Senior Partner of Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates noted that: “Environmental issues writ large can sometimes be divisive, but clean and safe water is not seen by voters as a divisive issue. Instead, there is overwhelming support from both political parties for what is seen as a basic need that has to be protected – clean and safe water for our generation and for our children’s.”

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