

# News Release



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## **AAA SURVEY: IDAHO VOTERS SPEAK OUT ON SPEED LIMITS, TAXES, GAS PRICES, SEAT BELTS**

***Idahoans oppose higher gas taxes, think AG should have authority to prosecute gasoline price gouging, and don't want trucks driving faster on the Interstate.***

BOISE - A survey of Idaho voters conducted two weeks before the November elections should give lawmakers a better idea what their constituents think about a few hot button transportation issues, according to AAA Idaho.

A telephone survey of 400 Idaho voters in 41 Idaho counties reveals that 87 percent favor a law that would give the Idaho attorney general's office the authority to investigate wholesale gasoline prices during a declared emergency. In addition, 84 percent of the respondents favor a law that would define gasoline price gouging and give the state Attorney General's office authority to prosecute it.

"Last year's record gasoline prices no doubt piqued the attention of Idahoans," said AAA Idaho Division President Jim Manion. He said Idaho's prices have been higher than the national average price for the past four months, by as much as 40 cents a gallon during September. "Idahoans want some protections built into our laws to guard against unreasonable price increases that cannot be explained by market forces."

AAA Idaho supported legislation last session that would have given the Idaho attorney general's office the authority to investigate wholesale prices, but the bill was held in committee on the objection of several major business lobbies.

AAA's survey, which was conducted by Moore Information, an Oregon polling company, shows Idahoans are less than enthusiastic about several ideas to raise revenues for the state's crumbling roads and bridges. Nearly three of four respondents (74%) oppose raising the state gas taxes to address the projected funding shortfalls for Idaho's transportation infrastructure during the next thirty years. The state's last gas tax increase authorized by the legislature was in 1996.

Indexing fuel taxes and auto registrations to inflation did not draw as much opposition. Still, fifty-six (56) percent oppose indexing, while just 34 percent endorse it. AAA's survey posed three options based on recommendations from the Forum on Transportation Investments, a 17-month Idaho Transportation Department study. The options were drawn from more than a dozen Forum recommendations to deal with an expected annual shortfall of \$200 million during the next thirty years.

"As Forum participants, we were trying to determine how much support Idahoans have for these ideas," said AAA Idaho Director of Public and Government Affairs Dave Carlson. "Obviously much work must be done to get Idahoans and their legislators on board with the Forum's recommendations."

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On a related issue, the survey showed there is support (73 percent favor, 17 percent oppose) to local option authority that would allow voters to decide how to pay for public transportation in their communities. That, too, was a recommendation from the Forum study. However, only 49 percent of respondents said they would be willing to pay an additional half cent sales tax to pay for vanpools, city buses, senior center vans or light rail in their communities, another of the recommendations included in the Forum's final report. Currently, there is no local option authority to do so. Legislation would be required to give such authority to voters.

### **Speed and Weight Limits for Trucks**

Eighty (80) percent oppose raising the speed limit for trucks over 26,000 pounds from 65 to 75 miles per hour on the Interstate, to match the maximum legal speed limit for cars. Legislation to do that, SB1349, was pulled by its sponsor, Sen. Tim Corder, (R-Mountain Home) in 2006. Similar legislation may be introduced in 2007.

"Conflicting study results regarding the safety implications of split versus uniform speed limits for cars and truck could lead to considerable debate on the subject," Manion said. "The guy on the street may not have read the studies, but it's pretty clear they don't like the idea."

Just one in four Idaho voters (26%) favors opening additional roads to trucks weighing up to 129,000 pounds. Fifty-one percent oppose the idea. In 2003, the Legislature agreed to allow controversial ten-year pilot test, opening 600 miles of state roads to trucks hauling loads up to 129,000 pounds. The state maximum limit on the Interstate and other state roads is 105,500 pounds. Additional routes may be considered during the 2007 session.

### **Stronger Seat Belt Law**

Fifty-six percent favor (56% favor, 38% oppose) amending the current law to allow police officers to enforce the seat belt law in the same manner as other traffic laws, issuing citations when they see a violation, rather than only when they stop a motorist for another reason.

AAA Idaho is a member of the Idaho Seat Belt Coalition which is working to raise seat belt use to reduce the incidence of fatal crashes and to lessen the financial impact and severity of injury collisions for unbelted occupants.

"After promoting a stronger seat belt law during the past two decades, it's heartening to see that a majority of Idahoans understand that a strong, enforceable law is one that saves lives and lessens the impacts on everyone's pocketbook," Carlson said.

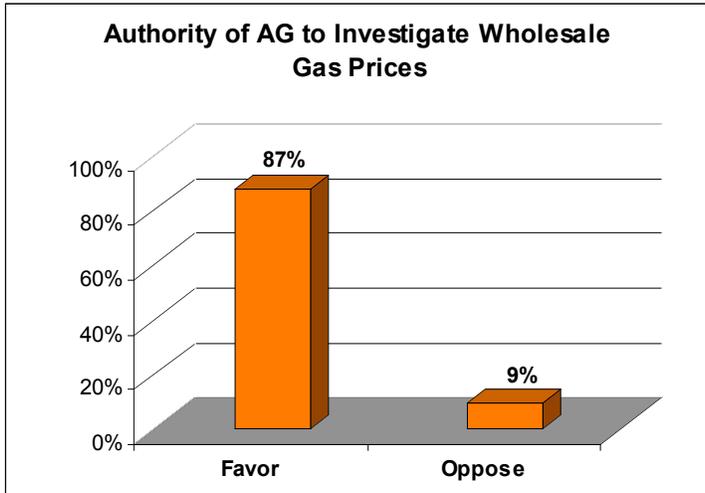
Respondents were more evenly split on the issue of raising Idaho's \$10 seat belt fine, the lowest in the country. The survey showed that 51 percent favor and 46 percent oppose raising the fine to \$52 (to include court costs) to put a seatbelt violation on par with other non-moving violations.

"We think Idahoans understand that it's easier to disobey traffic laws that do not have efficient deterrents," Carlson said. "A ten dollar fine is one of the reasons Idaho's buckle-up rate is so much lower than our western neighbors."

### **About the Survey**

*The survey was conducted by Moore Information, a nationally recognized public opinion research company in Portland, Oregon. A total of 400 interviews among a representative sample of voters was used. The survey was conducted October 16-18, 2006. The sampling error associated with this survey is +/-5% at the 95% confidence level. This means if the survey was repeated 100 times, in 95 of those cases,*

*the question response would not vary more than the sampling error. These abbreviated charts include primary data rounded to the nearest whole number. They do not include 'do not know' responses.*



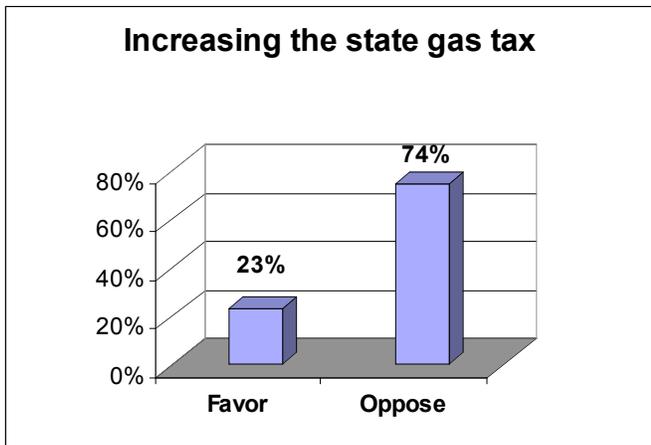
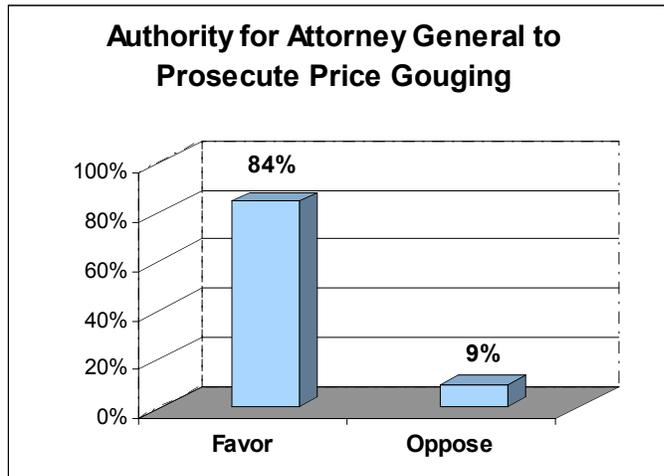
### Nearly nine in ten Idahoans support giving Attorney General the authority to Investigate Wholesale Gas Prices

Would you favor or oppose a law that would give the Idaho Attorney General's office authority to investigate gasoline prices at the wholesale level?



### Overwhelming majority favors giving AG's office authority to prosecute for price gouging

Do you favor or oppose a law that would define price gouging and give the Idaho Attorney General's office the authority to prosecute price gouging?



### Nearly three quarters of Idahoans Oppose Raising State Gas Tax

A recent study by the Idaho Transportation Department shows Idaho's transportation infrastructure will require an additional \$200 million investment each year for the next 30 years to meet projected traffic growth. Here are some potential proposals that would help pay for bridge repairs, road maintenance, road improvements and safety needs. Please tell me if you favor or oppose each:

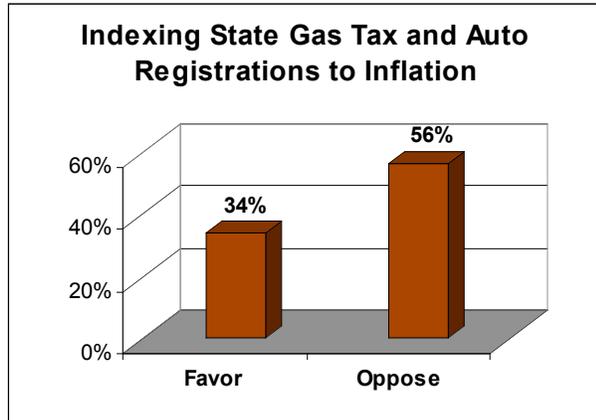
**Increasing the state gas tax**

**Indexing Gas Tax to Inflation**

## Nearly six in ten Idahoans Oppose Indexing Gas Tax to Inflation

A recent study by the Idaho Transportation Department shows Idaho's transportation infrastructure will require an additional \$200 million investment each year for the next 30 years to meet projected traffic growth. Here are some potential proposals that would help pay for bridge repairs, road maintenance, road improvements and safety needs. Please tell me if you favor or oppose each:

### Indexing state gas tax to inflation



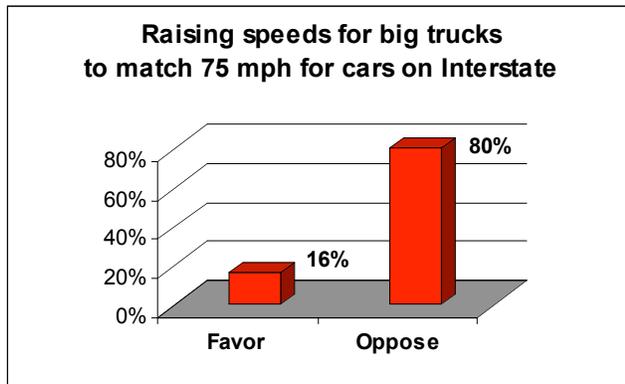
## Majority Opposes Indexing Registrations and Gas Tax to Inflation

A recent study by the Idaho Transportation Department shows Idaho's transportation infrastructure will require an additional \$200 million investment each year for the next 30 years to meet projected traffic growth. Here are some potential proposals that would help pay for bridge repairs, road maintenance, road improvements and safety needs. Please tell me if you favor or oppose each:

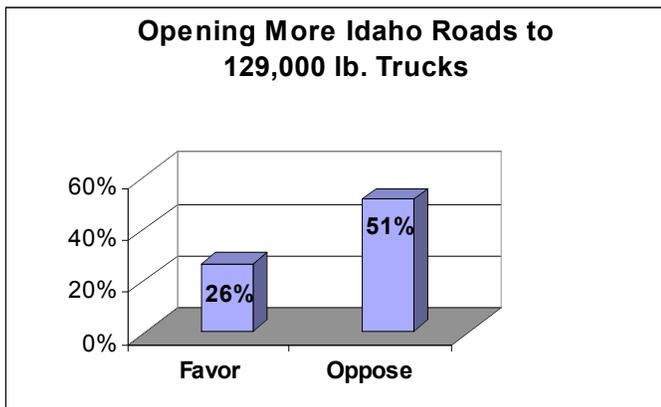
### Indexing state gas tax and auto Registration fees to inflation

## 80 Percent of Idahoans Oppose Raising Truck Speeds

Would you favor or oppose raising the maximum speed limit for big trucks on the Interstate from 65 miles per hour to 75 miles per hour? This would mean the legal maximum speed limit for trucks with five or more axles and operating at a gross weight of more than 26,000 pounds would match the legal maximum speed for cars.



## Opening More Idaho Roads to 129,000 lb. Trucks



## Idahoans Oppose Opening New Routes to Heavier Trucks

In 2003 the Legislature authorized a ten-year pilot test period to permit trucks weighing up to 129,000 pounds to operate on about 600 miles of state roads. Do you favor or oppose allowing trucks at these higher limits on additional state highways or other roads in Idaho?

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**AAA Idaho is affiliated with AAA Oregon/Idaho, which provides more than 678,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive related services. AAA serves 49 million motorists in North America.**

*Editor: An audio version of this news release is available on the AAA News Hotline. In Boise, call 342-9391. Outside Boise, call toll free, 1-800-999-9391. Ask for the AAA News Hotline.*