

December 5, 2011

To: Interested Parties

From: Ben Tulchin and Ben Krompak, Tulchin Research

Re: **Marin County Survey Finds Strong Support for County Services, Frontline Workers**

A recent survey by Tulchin Research of 400 likely voters in Marin County, California finds strong support for county services and public workers. Marin County voters fundamentally believe in government, overwhelmingly trust frontline workers on county budget issues, and want to see county services strengthened and improved. They strongly oppose recent service cuts and favor new revenue solutions to protect essential services and prevent additional cuts.

Voters See Marin County Moving in the Right Direction and Hold Favorable Opinions of the County Supervisors and County Workers. By an 18-point margin (48 percent to 30 percent), voters in Marin County believe their community is moving in the right direction – an encouraging sign for any county in the current economic climate.

Voters See Marin County Moving in the Right Direction	
<i>“Would you say that things in Marin County are going in the right direction, or would you say that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?”</i>	
<i>Right Direction</i>	48%
<i>Wrong Track</i>	30%
<i>Don't Know</i>	22%
<i>Right Direction – Wrong Track</i>	+18

Additionally, voters hold generally positive opinions of the county’s elected leadership and very positive opinions of county workers. The Marin County Board of Supervisors is viewed favorably by 39 percent of voters and unfavorably by 21 percent while county workers are viewed favorably by a margin of 36 points – 50 percent favorable to just 14 percent unfavorable.

Voters Hold Positive Opinions of County Supervisors, County Workers			
	TOTAL FAVORABLE	TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	FAVORABLE - UNFAVORABLE
The Marin County Board of Supervisors	39%	21%	+18
County workers	50%	14%	+36

Voters Overwhelmingly Favor Improved Services Over Smaller Government and Trust Frontline Workers on Budget Issues Over Politicians, Department Heads. Fundamentally, voters in Marin County believe in government and favor strengthening services. Asked whether it was more important to improve the quality of services like road repair, child protection, and environmental protection, or to shrink the size of county government to put more money in their own pockets, voters favored improving services by a margin of nearly four-to-one (70 percent to 18 percent).

Voters Want Better Services, Not Smaller Government	
<i>"Is it more important to you for government to:"</i>	
<i>Improve the quality of services, like road repair, child protection, and environmental protection</i>	70%
<i>Shrink county government to put more money in your pocket</i>	18%
<i>Both</i>	5%
<i>Neither</i>	4%
<i>Don't Know</i>	3%

Asked who they trust more when it comes to the county budget, Marin County voters choose frontline workers over county politicians and senior management by a better than two-to-one margin. Consistent with their strongly favorable view of county workers generally, voters trust frontline workers over County Supervisors on budget matters by 26 points (48 percent to 22 percent) and over county department heads by 33 points (53 percent to 20 percent).

On Budget Issues, Voters Trust Frontline Workers	
<i>"On county budget issues, who do you trust more?"</i>	
<i>Frontline workers</i>	48%
<i>County Supervisors</i>	22%
<i>Both</i>	3%
<i>Neither</i>	10%
<i>Don't Know</i>	17%
<i>"On county budget issues, who do you trust more?"</i>	
<i>Frontline workers</i>	53%
<i>Heads of county departments</i>	20%
<i>Both</i>	4%
<i>Neither</i>	11%
<i>Don't Know</i>	13%

Overwhelming Opposition to County Service Cuts. Marin County voters are very strongly opposed to recent cuts in county services, consistent with their overall preference for improving services over shrinking county government. Voters oppose the county’s reduction of its frontline workforce while not laying-off any department heads or senior management by a wide 57-point margin (73 percent opposed to just 16 percent support). They’re deeply troubled by the county having stopped providing most direct health services to Marin County residents (73 percent opposed to 14 percent support) and they overwhelmingly oppose cuts to in-home support services for seniors and people with disabilities (79 percent opposed to 18 percent support). Additionally, the county’s decision to cut nutritionists that address and prevent obesity and diabetes is opposed by 58 percent of voters and supported by just 29 percent.

Voters Opposed to County Service Cuts by Wide Margins			
<i>“For each statement, tell me whether you support or oppose this.”</i>			
	TOTAL SUPPORT	TOTAL OPPOSE	SUPPORT – OPPOSE
<i>The county has cut in-home support services for seniors and people with disabilities</i>	18%	79%	-61
<i>The county has stopped providing most direct health services to Marin County residents</i>	14%	73%	-59
<i>The county has cut 146 frontline workers from its workforce but has not laid-off any department heads or senior management.</i>	16%	73%	-57
<i>The county has cut nutritionists that address and prevent obesity and diabetes.</i>	29%	58%	-29

Strong Support for New Revenues to Protect Essential Services. Marin County voters express a clear willingness to consider new revenue solutions to balance the county budget and protect the essential services they value. Voters support establishing a five-year temporary parcel tax of 80 dollars a year by a wide 25-point margin, with 60 percent of voters in support of such a measure and 35 percent opposed. And voters support a sales tax increase of one half of one percent for up to five years by a margin of 15 points, with 56 percent supporting such a measure and 41 percent opposed to it.

<p>Strong Support for New Revenues to Balance Budget and Protect Essential Services</p> <p><i>“Here are some proposals that have been made to help balance the county budget and protect essential services. Please tell me whether you support or oppose that proposal.”</i></p>			
	TOTAL SUPPORT	TOTAL OPPOSE	SUPPORT – OPPOSE
<i>Establish for five years a temporary 80 dollars a year parcel tax to prevent additional cuts and restore services such as sheriff, libraries and road repair, with annual independent audits and exemptions for low-income households and seniors.</i>	60%	35%	+25
<i>Raise the county sales tax by one half of one percent for up to five years to prevent additional cuts and restore services such as sheriff, libraries and road repair, with annual independent audits.</i>	56%	41%	+15

In summary, this poll clearly demonstrates that while voters are generally satisfied with Marin County’s elected leadership and believe the county is going in the right direction, they are overwhelmingly opposed to service cuts and instead want to see services strengthened and improved. Voters view county workers very favorably and overwhelmingly trust frontline workers over department heads and the Board of Supervisors on county budget matters. Finally, voters express strong support for new revenue solutions to help balance the county’s budget and protect essential services.

Survey Methodology: From November 6 – November 8, 2011, Tulchin Research conducted a countywide telephone survey in Marin County among 400 likely voters. Interviews were conducted by live professional callers and the sample included both landline and cell phone numbers. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4.89 percentage points.