



The Elway Poll

An independent nonpartisan analysis of public opinion trends in Washington and the Northwest

04 JANUARY 2017

Education Tops Public Agenda for 3rd Straight Year

Education issues topped Washington voters' agenda for the legislative session for the 3rd year in a row, with more weight this year. Nearly half (45%) of the respondents to last week's *Elway Poll* volunteered an education issue in response to an open-ended question about what the state legislature should be working on. Last year, 33% named education as the top issue, just ahead of the economy (32%).

The economy was mentioned by 22% this year, — its lowest mention since just before the Great Recession in 2008.

Taxes, transportation, and government spending rounded out the top 5 issues mentioned. Except for the increase in mention of education and the decrease for the economy, the other issue categories changed only slightly from last year.

There were partisan differences (surprise!) in legislative priorities: education was the predominant issue listed by Independents (51%) and Democrats (47%) but was ranked #2 among Republicans (with 33%), just behind taxes (34%).

Education was the #1 issue named by respondents in all income brackets and education levels, but the propensity to cite education got stronger as respondents' education and income rose. Mention of education issues went from

41% among those with a high school education; to 56% with post graduate degrees; and from 38% of those with annual incomes under \$50,000; to 55% of those over \$100,000.



TOP-RANKED ISSUE BY PARTY IDENTIFICATION

DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS	INDEPENDENTS
Education (47%)	Taxes (34%)	Education (51%)
Economy (19%)	Education (33%)	Transport (19%)
Transport (14%)	Economy (21%)	Economy (24%)
Health Care (13%)	Transport (11%)	Taxes (11%)
Social Svcs (12%)	Govt Spending (9%)	Health Care (10%)

"MOST IMPORTANT" ISSUE FOR THE LEGISLATURE: 2007-2017.

Cell entries are % who volunteered an issue in that category.

Shading indicates the top-ranked issue for each year.

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Education	45%	33%	42%	19%	22%	27%	14%	11%	15%	20%	31%
Economy	22%	32%	32%	46%	43%	59%	44%	49%	43%	18%	15%
Taxes	16%	14%	19%	14%	12%	12%	12%	10%	6%	15%	11%
Transportation	15%	11%	17%	8%	2%	5%	5%	2%	10%	33%	20%
Gov't /Budget	10%	12%	15%	17%	24%	41%	30%	25%	23%	7%	12%
Health Care	9%	6%	7%	11%	4%	12%	13%	14%	10%	16%	13%
Social Services	7%	12%	3%	4%	5%	4%	3%	6%	9%	5%	4%
Public Safety	5%	5%	4%	1%	*	1%	1%	5%	1%	3%	3%
Environment	3%	5%	6%	2%	2%	*	1%	1%	1%	6%	5%

Most Willing to Cut State Programs to Fund Education

After years of debate on education funding, there appears to be growing support for cutting other state programs in order to fund public education in order to avoid new taxes.

Elway Poll respondents have been presented with 3 basic strategies for the last 3 years:

- A. Fund public education first with the money available, then fund the rest of state government with the money remaining - even if that means cutting other programs and services.
- B. Increase taxes on businesses to fund public education without making deep cuts to other state programs and services. This option was modified this year to specify “taxes on businesses,” since that is most of the Governor’s proposal. The change made no significant difference in the response.
- C. Do as much as possible to fund education without raising taxes and without deep cuts to other programs -- even if that means we do not fully fund education.

Rather than ask respondents to choose one approach, we asked them whether they favor or oppose each one, or find it acceptable or unacceptable. The idea is to pose trade-offs to assess where there may be maneuvering room from a public opinion perspective.

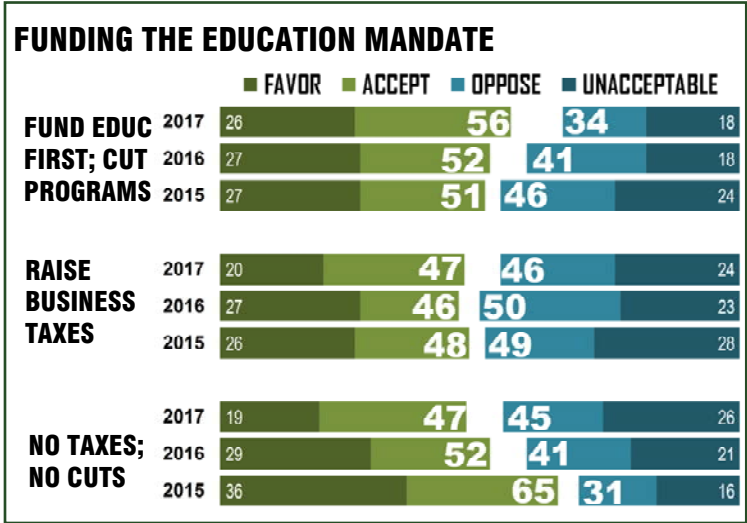
The “fund education first” option has had a slim majority in previous years, which grew to 56% in the current survey. It is important to note that no specific “other programs and services” to be cut are named, making it easier to say “cut.” The results do, however, indicate the resistance to new taxes.

Support has faded for the “no tax increases and no deep cuts” option, which was never a realistic option, but tests voters’ willingness to give up on fully funding education. A growing number (45% in this survey) appear unwilling to forego education funding to avoid new taxes or deeper cuts.

Raising taxes, both generally or just “on business,” has split voters evenly and continues to do so.

Only 10% of these respondents were opposed to all three options and half (51%) said that more than one of the options would be acceptable to them, suggesting the possibility of a solution in there somewhere that most voters would accept. All lawmakers have to do now is find that solution.

As has been clear for years, the public is not going to lead the legislature out of this problem. ☒

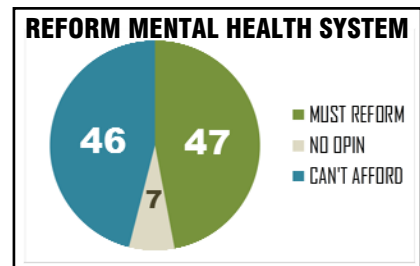


Voters Also Divided on Mental Health Reform

After education, the next biggest portion of Governor Inslee’s budget is dedicated to reform of the mental health system. This issue is not high on the public radar screen. Despite years of scandals, campaign debates and court orders, mental health issues were named by just *one person* in this survey as an important legislative issue.

The complexity and details of the governor’s proposal were beyond the scope of this survey, but we asked the fundamental question to get a sense of the public’s “starting place” on this issue.

Respondents divided evenly after being told that “Washington state has been in violation of federal court orders for its failure to adequately provide mental health care. Governor Inslee has proposed to spend \$300 million dollars to reform of the state mental health system.”



Sample Profile

500 registered voters, selected at random from registered voter lists in Washington state, were interviewed December 27-29 by live, professional interviewers. 34% of the interviews were conducted on cell phones. The margin of sampling error is ±4.5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means, in theory, had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within ±4.5% of the results reported here at least 95 times.

REGION	
King County	31%
Pierce + Kitsap.....	15%
North Sound (Snohomish to Whatcom).....	17%
Western Washington (Clallam to Clark)	18%
Eastern Washington	20%
GENDER	
Male	47%
Female	53%
AGE	
18-35.....	15%
36-50.....	26%
51-64.....	30%
65+	29%
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	
Democrat	31%
Republican	26%
Independent.....	43%
HOUSEHOLD	
Couple with Children.....	28%
Couple / No children at home	42%
Single / No children at home.....	21%
Single parent.....	7%
EDUCATION	
High School.....	14%
Some College	33%
College Graduate.....	34%
Post Graduate.....	18%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	
<\$50,000.....	27%
\$50 - 74,000.....	22%
\$75 - 99,000.....	15%
\$100,000+.....	20%
No Answer	15%

The Elway Poll

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PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS: Each quarter, space is reserved in the questionnaire to allow for proprietary questions. The fee for proprietary questions is \$1000 per question. You will receive the results of your question(s) with full crosstabulations within three days after the interviews are completed.

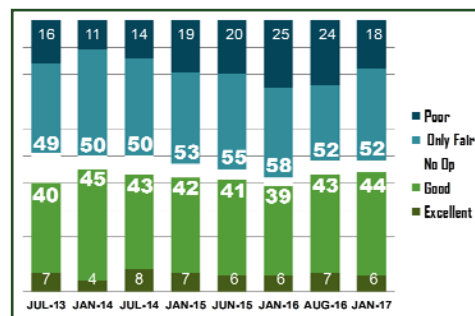
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Inslee Job Rating Unchanged; Best January Numbers Since 2014

Governor Jay Inslee has never enjoyed positive job performance ratings in *The Elway Poll*, but from the “take-it-where-you-can-get-it” file, this is the best start to a year he has had since 2014.

- 44% said he was doing an “excellent” (6%) or “good” job (38%); compared to
- 52% who said “only fair” (34%) or “poor” (18%).
- Inslee’s best ratings were in Seattle (+47/-46), while
- His lowest were from King County outside Seattle (+41 /-57).
- Ratings from Democrats were positive (+61/-34);
- Republicans were negative (+26/-72); and
- Independents were negative (+43/-54).

GOVERNOR INSLEE JOB PERFORMANCE



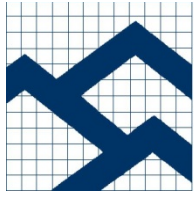
MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

They were asked which of two statements came closest to their own thinking on the issue:

- We must reform the mental health system – even if that means higher taxes on some businesses in the state. (46% chose this statement).
- This is not the time to raise taxes, so we will have to do the best we can for the mental health system with the money available. (47% chose this one).

Predictably, partisans had opposing views on this question:

- Democrats were strongly in favor of reforming the system (69%);
- Republicans were even more strongly against raising taxes to do so (74%);
- Independents leaned toward reform (50% vs. 43% who said it is not the time to raise taxes).



The Elway Poll

PROPRIETARY SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Elway Poll offers a limited number of organizations the ability to monitor public opinion on issues vital to your operation effectively and economically.

PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS: IN-HOUSE SURVEY CAPACITY

For an annual fee, Proprietary Subscribers are able to add their own private questions to our quarterly survey. Your data will be yours to use as you see fit. Your data are not published and subscribers are not disclosed. Use your questions for internal strategic purposes or release them as your own survey to internal or external audiences. You could even use them to create your own branded, on-going publicity generator.

QUARTERLY SURVEY

The on-going survey affords you the opportunity to track changes over time, ask follow up questions, and build a deeper understanding of public opinion on issues important to you. You can vary the number of questions from quarter to quarter: ask them at once, ask a few questions per quarter, or any combination you choose.

500 WASHINGTON VOTERS

Our sample of 500 Washington voter households has a margin of sampling error of $\pm 4.5\%$ and the ability to segment the sample by region, demographic variables.

ANNUAL FEE = SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS

The annual fee is \$12,000 for 16 proprietary questions. Demographic questions and crosstabs are included in the annual fee, as is help with question design. You are not limited to 16 questions. You can ask additional questions at a pro-rated cost.

This plan offers on-going survey capacity for less than the cost of a single survey. By way of comparison, a single proprietary question in *The Elway Poll* costs \$1000. A single survey of 16 questions, plus demographics, could cost \$14-15,000. A quarterly survey of four questions each, plus demographics, could easily cost in the neighborhood of \$30,000.

Stretch your research dollar by becoming a Proprietary Subscriber to *The Elway Poll*. It could be the best investment you make this year.