



2010 Legislative Priorities Survey

Introduction:

In May 2010, the DLCC launched our second Legislative Priorities Survey, a project to facilitate communication between legislators and their constituents nationwide. We designed the survey to test individuals' views of the highest profile issues in legislative politics and determine which of those issues are the highest priorities for our supporters this year.

The response this year has again been overwhelming.

More than 2,000 Democratic supporters offered input, representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This universe of respondents is self-selected and is not based on a random sampling of the population.

Issue Importance: Respondents were asked to rank how important a series of issues were to them. The issues were: "Fully Funding Public Schools," "Expanding Environmental Protections and Clean Energy," "Strengthening Government Ethics Rules," "Promoting Job Growth," and "Promoting Equal Rights for the LGBT Community." Respondents were extremely supportive of all these issues, though Economic Development and Education both received a noticeable uptick in intensity compared to last year's survey.

Issue:	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important at All	No Answer
Public Education	80.3%	14.1%	2.2%	1.0%	2.4%
Energy/Environment	59.4%	28.2%	5.1%	4.4%	2.9%
Transparency/Ethics	63.8%	25.9%	5.5%	1.0%	2.1%
Econ. Development	68.8%	23.7%	2.8%	1.2%	3.5%
Equal Rights	47.3%	33.3%	7.9%	5.6%	5.8%

Health Care: The health care issue was broken into two parts this – a question measuring individuals’ impression of the federal Health Care Reform law, and a separate question asking if state governments should attempt to go above and beyond the federal reforms. Given the intensity of the emotions on this issue last year, it is unsurprising that a large share of our supporters would like to see more far-reaching reforms:

The Federal Health Care Reform Law:	
Is Just Right/ Could Have Gone Further	85.0%
Goes Too Far	10.5%
No Answer	4.5%

Should States Go Further?	
Yes	63.4%
No	24.8%
No Opinion	8.9%
No Answer	2.9%

Top Priorities: In an effort to separate issues from one another, respondents were next asked to compare specific issues and designate one of them as their most important priority. Economic Development has clearly supplanted Health Care as the top priority among those tested, favored by over 30% of respondents. In fact, now that the federal health care reform debate is behind us, there is clearly more “oxygen” available for a host of other issues, including Energy/Environment and Education.

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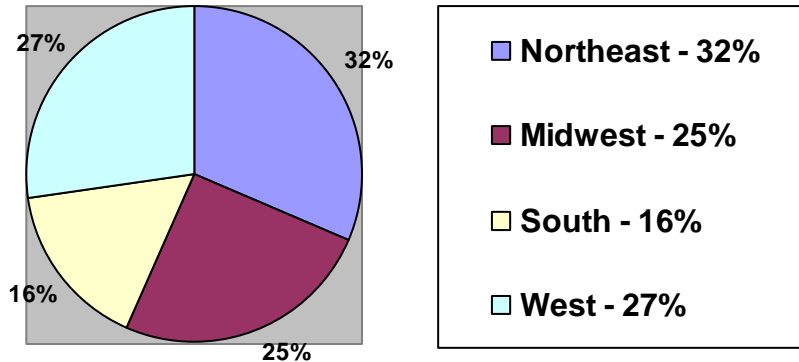
Issue:	Top Priority:
Health Care	61.5%
Energy/Environment	9.9%
Econ. Development	8.7%
Public Education	8.6%
Transparency/Ethics	5.8%
Equal Rights	3.6%

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Issue:	Top Priority:
Econ. Development	30.0%
Health Care	20.2%
Energy/Environment	16.3%
Public Education	15.3%
Transparency/Ethics	9.3%
Equal Rights	4.0%

Open-Ended Question: The survey concluded with an open-ended question, “Is there any other issue or concern you'd like your state legislators to address?” Among the most common responses were those supporting environmental protection, lower taxes, public campaign financing, and transportation improvements. Responses from constituents in your state are available in a separate packet.

Regional Distribution of Responses: Survey respondents were required to submit their zip codes to allow some geographic analysis of the data. Nationwide, responses followed an uneven geographic distribution (rounded):



There was slightly more geographic variation on some issues this year compared to last year. As noted in the chart below, the economy was the top issue in all four regions, while 19%-21% of respondents in all regions listed health care as their top priority among the issues tested.

Top Priority:	Midwest	Northeast	South	West
Health Care	21.1%	19.8%	19.3%	20.4%
Energy/Environment	15.9%	16.4%	13.9%	17.9%
Public Education	14.1%	11.0%	15.2%	21.4%
Transparency/Ethics	10.4%	9.0%	8.1%	9.3%
Econ. Development	28.7%	35.5%	31.4%	24.2%
Equal Rights	4.6%	3.9%	7.1%	1.8%
Other/No Answer	5.2%	4.4%	5.1%	4.8%

Supporter enthusiasm for particular issues showed slightly more variations across different regions. Interestingly, while Education was just about tied for third place as our supporters’ top issue, it now draws the most consistently enthusiastic responses. The following charts list the percentage of respondents in each region who said that each issue was “Extremely Important” or who agreed that their state should pursue additional health care reforms:

More Health Reforms	“Yes”
Midwest	64.8%
Northeast	65.2%
South	54.4%
West	65.5%

Economic Development	Extremely Important
Midwest	69.6%
Northeast	72.6%
South	69.6%
West	63.1%

Energy/Environment	Extremely Important
Midwest	58.3%
Northeast	60.8%
South	59.1%
West	59.1%

Transparency/Ethics	Extremely Important
Midwest	62.2%
Northeast	64.3%
South	67.9%
West	62.3%

Public Education	Extremely Important
Midwest	79.1%
Northeast	79.7%
South	81.1%
West	81.7%

Equal Rights	Extremely Important
Midwest	48.7%
Northeast	47.7%
South	43.9%
West	47.6%

Conclusion: Based on the results of this survey, the economy and job creation are now the top concerns of our supporters at this time. Energy and Education also gained in the past year, and Education in particular prompted much more enthusiastic responses than any other issue tested. Overall, while health care is still an extremely important issue to a large share of our supporters, the national health care debate appears more and more settled, so all other issues we tested are enjoying more attention from our supporters than they did last year.