

**Chesapeake Beach Consulting**

**HART**  
**RESEARCH**  
ASSOCIATES

# Voters' Attitudes on the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

*Key findings from a survey among voters in nine states conducted July 2016  
for*



**SIERRA  
CLUB**



# Methodology

- Landline and cell phone interviews with 1,209 voters across the nine RGGI-participating states
  - Approximately 200 interviews each in CT, MD, MA, NH, and NY
  - 50 interviews each in DE, ME, RI, and VT
  - Interviews offered in English and Spanish
- Statistical weights were applied to ensure that each state is sized in its correct proportion in the sample compared to the other states.
- Interviews were conducted July 19 to 24, 2016.
- The margins of error are  $\pm 3.9$  percentage points for the nine-state data (higher for subgroups),  $\pm 6.9$  percentage points for individual  $n=200$  states.
- The research was conducted by the bipartisan polling team of Hart Research (D) and Chesapeake Beach Consulting (R).

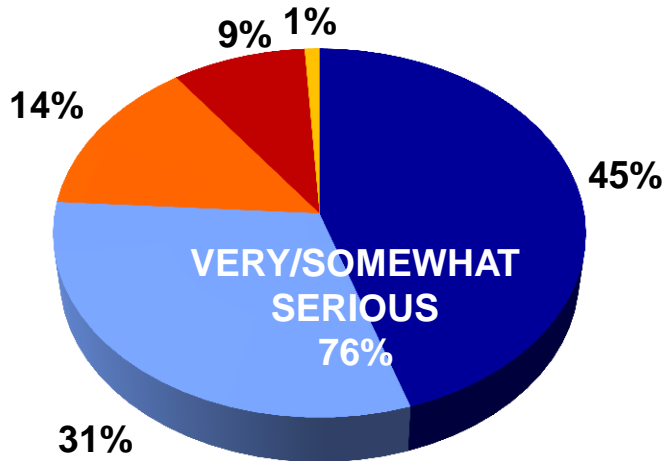
# Voters in RGGI states widely recognize climate change as a serious problem—more so than voters nationally.



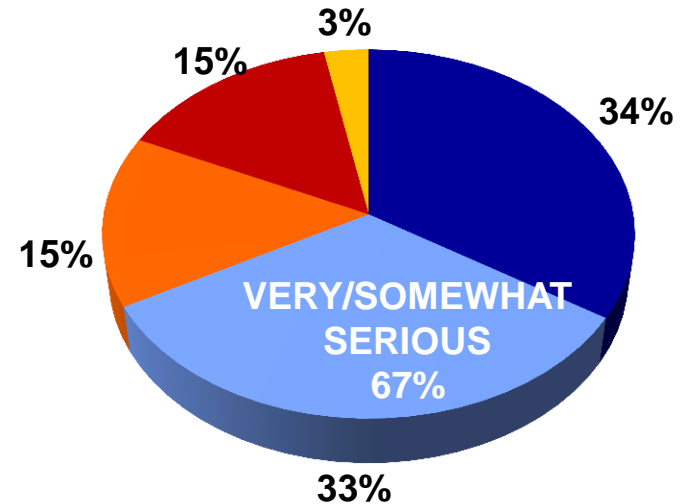
*How much of a problem do you consider the issue of climate change to be?*



**Voters in RGGI states/July 2016**

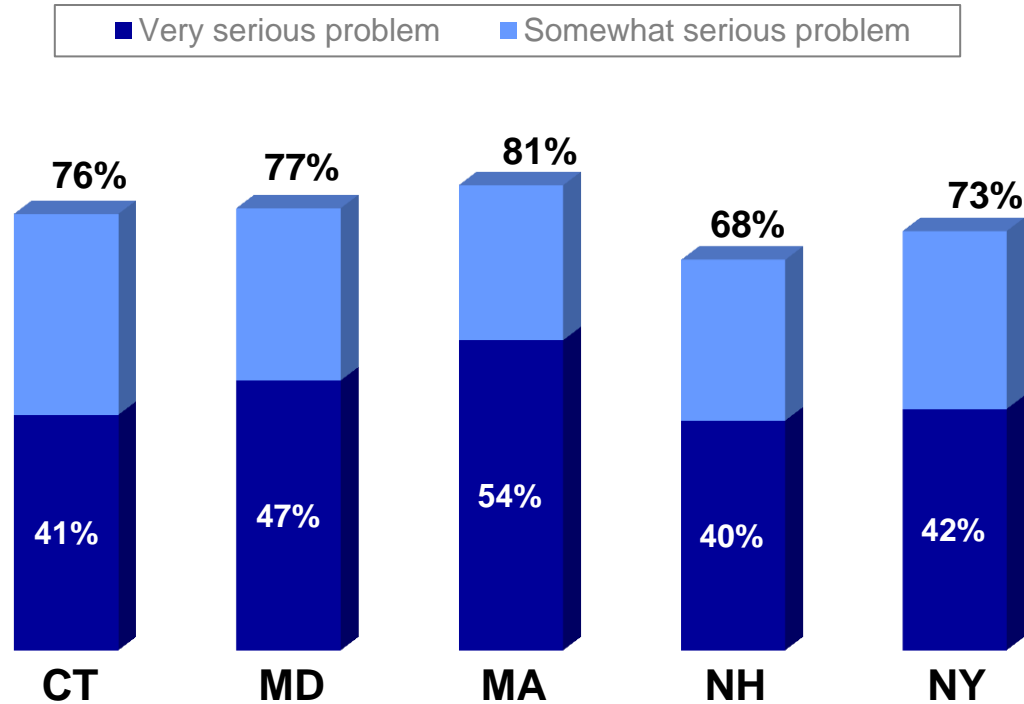


**LCV Poll/Voters nationwide/August 2015**



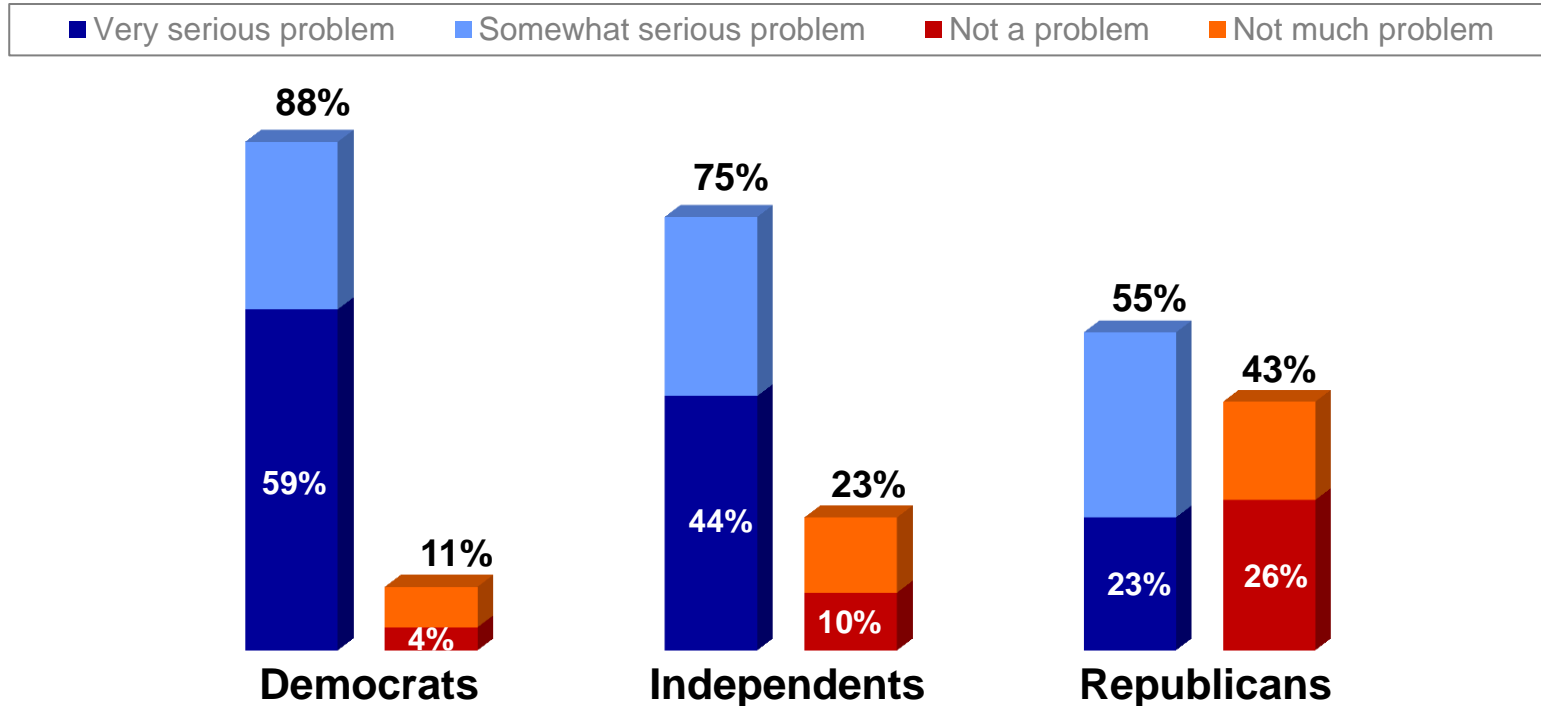
# Large majorities of voters in each state see climate change as a problem.

*How much of a problem do you consider the issue of climate change to be?*



# Majorities across the partisan spectrum share this opinion.

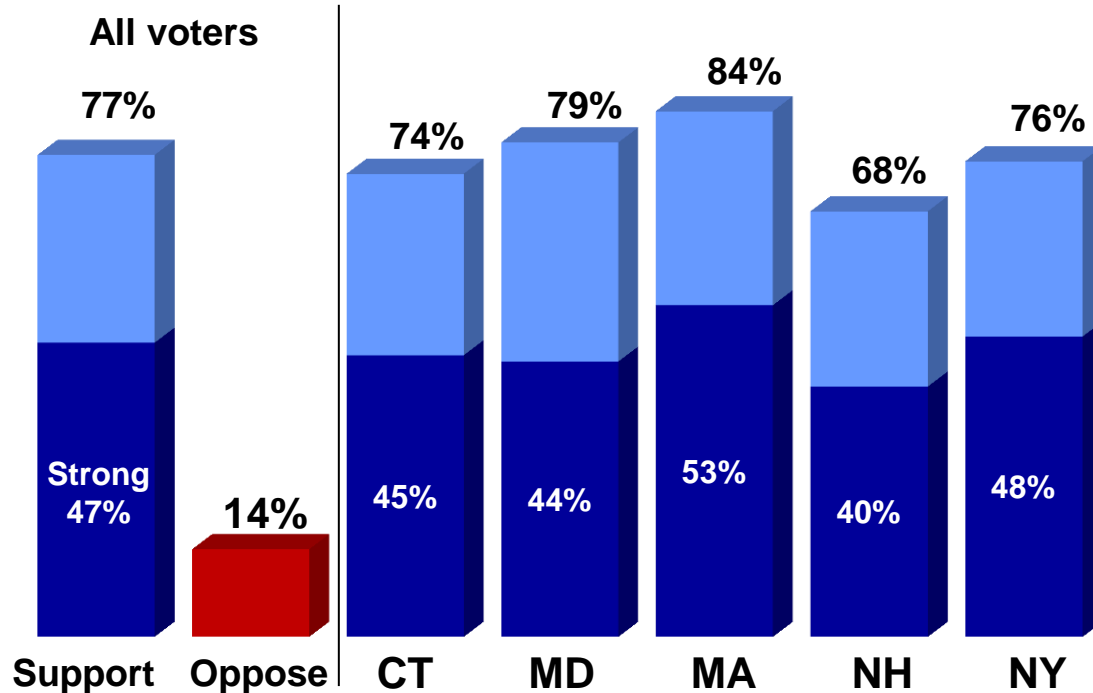
*How much of a problem do you consider the issue of climate change to be?*



# Three in four voters across the region support their state's participation in RGGI.



*Based on this description,\* do you support or oppose participation in this program?*

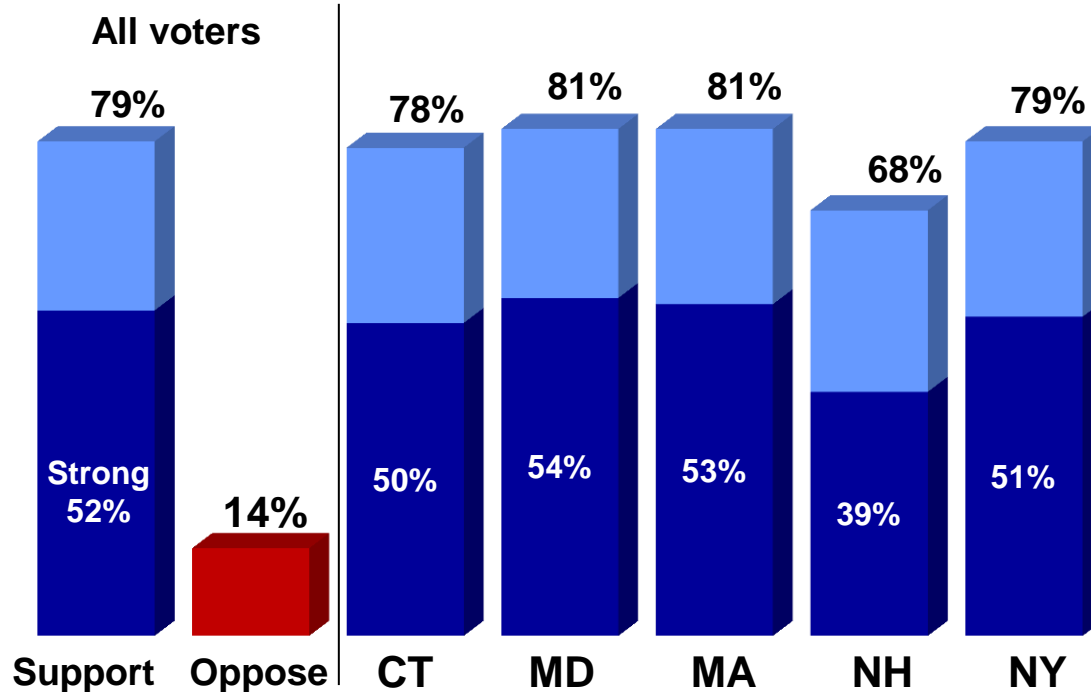


\* The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative is a program that nine states in the Northeast, including your state, participate in. The program sets a cap on the amount of carbon pollution that power plants in the participating states can release, and companies that produce energy must buy credits for the carbon pollution they release. The revenue raised from selling these credits goes to things such as energy efficiency programs, development of clean and renewable energy sources, credits to help consumers pay their electric bill, and worker training for clean energy jobs. The program requires power plants in each state to decrease the amount of carbon pollution they release overall by 2.5% every year through 2020.

# Support is equally strong and broad for changing the annual carbon decrease to 5%.



*Do you support or oppose this change in the program?\**



\* Proposal to change the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative's carbon pollution cap by requiring power plants in each state to **decrease the amount of carbon pollution they release by FIVE percent every year**. Most companies have been decreasing pollution by this amount already, and under this proposal they would be required to continue doing so.

# Voters across these states' electorates favor this change in RGGI requirements.

*Proportions who support changing the RGGI program to require power plants to decrease carbon pollution by 5% each year*

**All voters** **79%**

Men 74%

Women 83%

Income under \$30K 78%

Income \$30K to \$50K 82%

Income \$50K to \$75K 76%

Income over \$75K 79%

Democrats 90%

Independents 71%

Republicans 65%

Democrats:

    Liberals 92%

    Non-liberals 88%

Republicans:

    Non-conservatives 73%

    Conservatives 60%



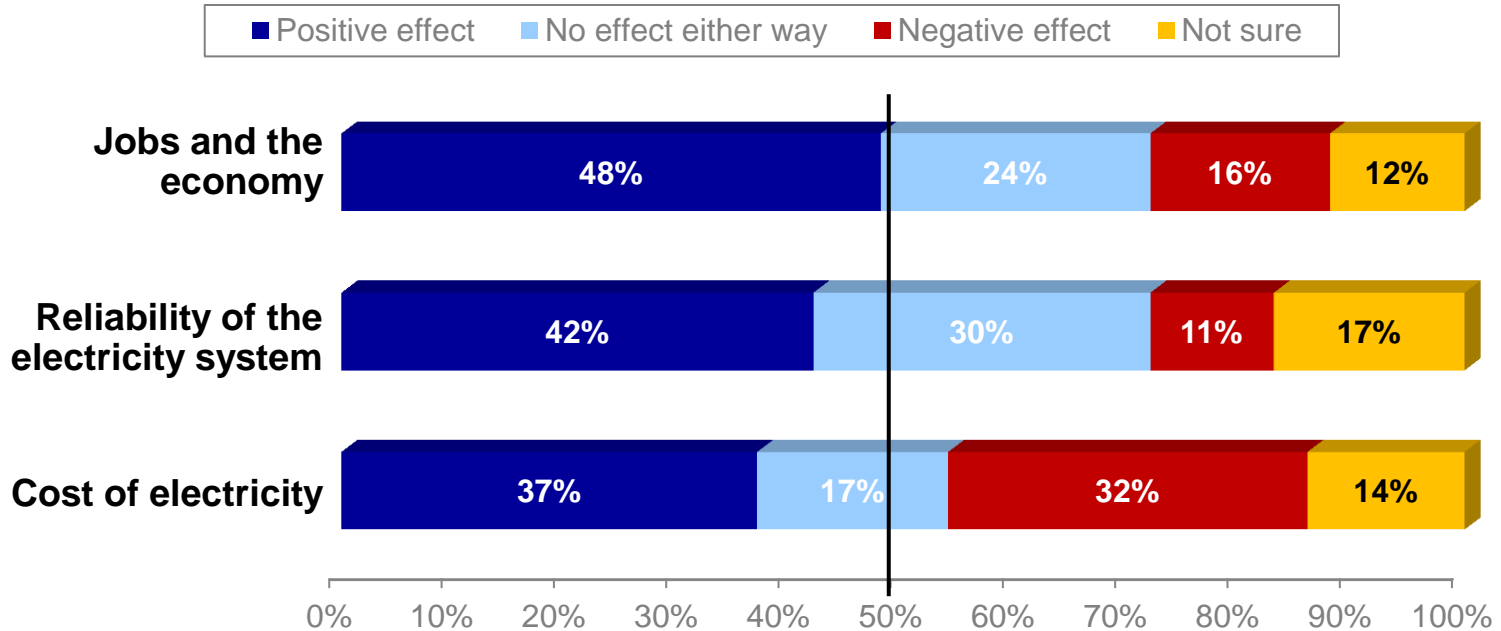
## Voters expect benefits in several areas from this change.

- ✓ **80%** say it would have a positive effect on air quality.
- ✓ **79%** say it would have a positive effect on people's health.
- ✓ **74%** say it would have a positive effect on the quality of our environment and climate change.
- ✓ **73%** say it would have a positive effect on development of renewable energy sources.



# In three other areas, voters believe the change either will be positive or do no harm.

*If this change is made and states in this program are required to decrease carbon pollution from power plants by 5% every year, what effect would it have on these areas in your state?*



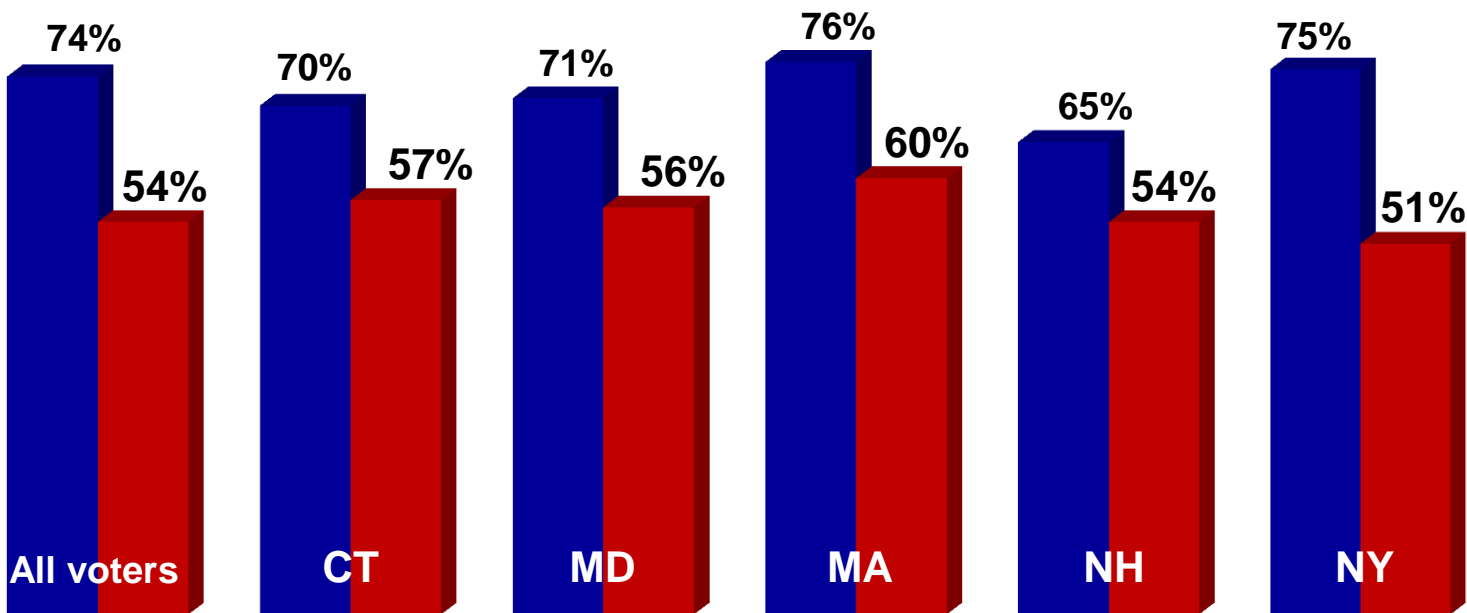
# The arguments for and against an annual 5% decrease in carbon emissions.

- **SUPPORTERS:** This program has already set participating states on the right path. They are **on track to reduce carbon pollution from power plants by 50% by 2020**, which is a great start, but will still mean tens of millions of tons of this pollution being released into the air every year. We can do better. **Locking in reductions in carbon pollution will result in fewer health problems and a cleaner environment** in your state. At the same time, **the program will raise billions of dollars more to develop clean, renewable energy, create thousands of new jobs, and save consumers billions of dollars through greater energy efficiency**. This is a market-based solution that has been proven to work, and can work even better going forward.
- **OPPONENTS:** This program is nothing more than an **energy tax on consumers**. Because power companies have to buy credits, they end up passing the costs along to consumers, meaning **higher electricity prices for everyone, something that hits seniors and lower-income consumers especially hard**. And **the program is subject to how political winds blow**—New Jersey previously left the program, saying that it did not help the state reduce pollution, and there's nothing to stop more states from leaving as well. Plus this program creates bureaucracy in your state that is no longer even necessary, because new rules from the federal government may require the state to reduce its carbon pollution anyway.

# Supporters make a stronger case for annual 5% decrease in carbon emissions.



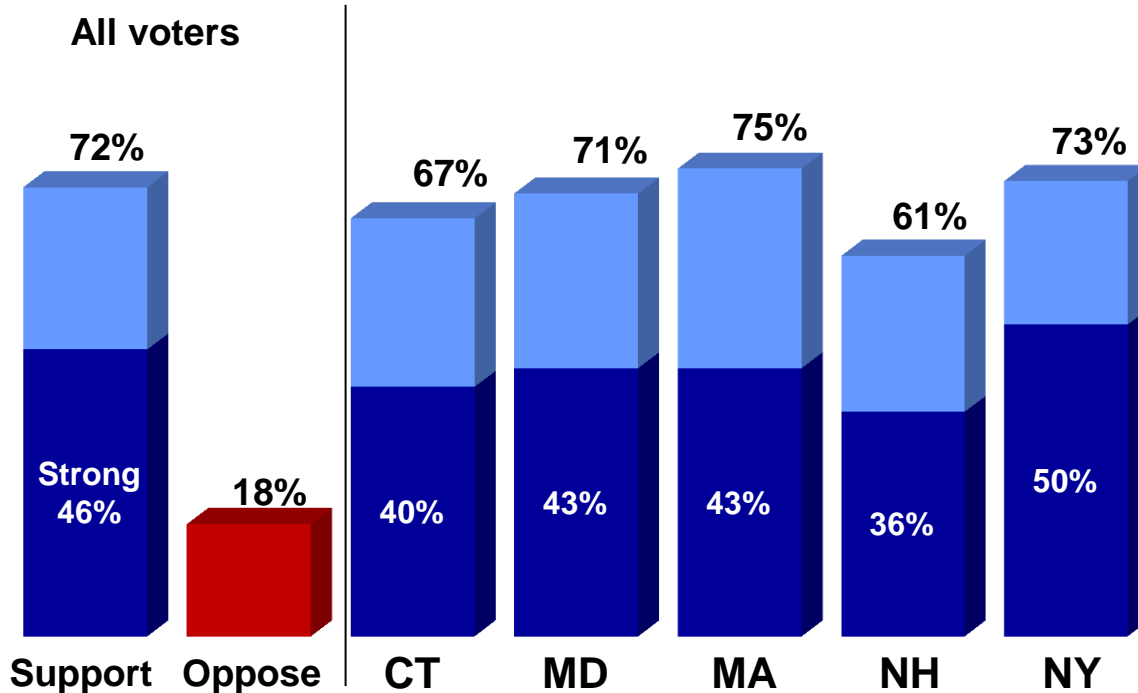
- Supporters' argument is very/somewhat convincing
- Opponents' argument is very/somewhat convincing



# After hearing both sides, voters remain in favor of changing the cap by a margin of four to one.



*Now that you have heard more, do you support or oppose this change in the program?\**



\* Proposal to change the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative's carbon pollution cap by requiring power plants in each state to decrease the amount of carbon pollution they release by FIVE percent every year.

## The Bottom Line.

- Support for RGGI in participating states is incredibly broad and deep.
- The cross-partisan support is unusual in today's divided political environment.
- Voters are highly enthusiastic about changing RGGI requirements to lock in a 5% annual reduction in carbon emissions, even after hearing reasons against doing so.
- They believe that such a change would have a number of benefits, with only minimal concerns about electricity costs or reliability.