
Kentucky Voters' Attitudes On Food Safety

*Findings from a statewide survey of registered voters, conducted by
Hart Research Associates and Public Opinion Strategies*

Key Findings From This Survey

Voters across the political spectrum in Kentucky strongly endorse passing the food safety legislation currently before the U.S. Senate. Indeed, at a time of heightened partisan division, this issue garners an unusually high level of support among Republicans and Democrats alike. They see ensuring food safety as the federal government's responsibility, believe it is important that stronger food safety measures be put in place, and overwhelmingly favor the specific legislation currently in Congress. They even believe that it would be worth paying more for food to have these new safety measures. Moreover, a plurality of voters say they would feel more favorable toward their Member of Congress if he or she supported this legislation and it would show them that their Member is willing to put public interests ahead of special interests.

More than four in five Kentucky voters say it is important for Congress to pass legislation to strengthen food safety standards.

- 85% of voters say it is important for Congress to pass legislation to strengthen food safety standards and better protect consumers from contaminated foods, including 58% who say this is very important.
- Large majorities of all major subgroups of the electorate feel this way. Voters of all ages, genders, income levels, and political persuasions believe this is important.
- Indeed, 87% say ensuring food safety is the government's responsibility; just 8% say this is something for which the government should not have responsibility.

Even voters who are satisfied with the government's current level of food safety activity say it is important to further strengthen food safety standards.

- A 59% majority of voters say the federal government is doing too little when it comes to ensuring food produced in other countries is safe to eat, while 28% say it is doing the right amount and 1% say it is doing too much.
- By comparison, 39% say the government is doing too little to ensure the safety of domestically produced foods, while 49% say it is doing the right amount and 3% say too much.

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- But even those who generally are satisfied with the government's current level of activity in this area would support it doing more. In fact, 78% of voters who say the government is doing too much or the right amount to ensure the safety of domestic food also believe it is important to pass legislation to strengthen food safety standards.

The food safety legislation currently before the U.S. Senate earns overwhelming support from Kentucky's voters.

- After being read a description of the current legislation, fully 87% of Kentucky voters say they favor its passage, including 64% who *strongly* favor it. The description of the legislation read to respondents follows.

Congress is considering legislation to strengthen food safety standards and better protect consumers from contaminated food. This legislation would increase the frequency of government inspections of food facilities, create a tracing system that would make it easier to trace back contaminated food to its original source, give the FDA the ability to issue mandatory recalls of contaminated food, and certify that food imported from other countries was produced with safety standards as high as those in the United States.

- Again, support for this legislation crosses all demographic and partisan lines. Eighty-six percent (86%) of voters under age 50 favor the legislation, as do 90% of 50- to 64-year-olds and 84% of seniors. Moreover, 91% of Democrats favor the legislation as do, notably, 81% of Republicans.

Voters say this legislation would be effective in making food safer, and the large majority say it would be worth it to pay more for groceries to have these new protections in place.

- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of voters say this legislation would be effective in making the food Americans eat safer, while 22% say it would not do so. Once again, even 69% of those who think the government is currently doing enough in this area say this legislation would be effective.
- Underscoring their support for this legislation, fully 72% of voters say it would be worth it to have these new food safety measures, even if it increased the cost of many foods by 3%. Voters agree on this point regardless of their household income: 76% of those with incomes less than \$40,000 say it would be worth it, as do 70% of those with incomes of \$40,000 to \$75,000 and 75% of those with incomes more than \$75,000.

Kentucky voters say the Senate should pass the food safety bill this year, and many—even those who disapprove of the job Congress is doing—say they would have a more positive view of their Member of Congress if he/she voted in favor of this legislation.

- By a margin of six to one (79% to 13%) voters say the Senate should consider and pass this legislation.
- Forty-three percent (43%) of voters say they would feel more favorable toward their Member of Congress if he or she voted in favor of this legislation, while just 6% would feel less favorable (48% say it would make no difference either

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way in their feelings).

- Currently, 69% of Kentucky voters disapprove of the job Congress is doing. But two in five (42%) members of this disapproving group say they would feel more favorable toward their Member for supporting this bill, while just 7% would feel less favorable.
- Finally, Kentucky voters were read a list of statements and asked what it would mean to them if their Member supported this legislation. The top responses are that their Member puts public safety above special interests, and that he/she cares about the everyday problems of consumers and families.

What It Would Show If Congress Passes Food Safety Legislation*

That my Member of Congress is willing to put the public interest ahead of special interests on an issue of public safety	38%
That my Member of Congress cares about the everyday problems of consumers and families	32%
That my Member of Congress does not understand the everyday economic struggles that families face	19%
That my Member of Congress has the wrong priorities	9%
That Congress is able to get things done	9%
That my Member of Congress wants too much government regulation	7%

* Respondents were able to choose up to two responses for this question.

These findings are derived from a statewide survey of 501 registered voters, conducted June 22 and 23, 2010, by Hart Research Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R) on behalf of the Pew Charitable Trusts and Produce Safety Project. Respondents were drawn randomly from a list of all registered voters in the state, and were interviewed by telephone. The results of the poll are statistically representative of the opinions of voters statewide, and carry a margin of error of ± 4.3 percentage points for the full sample, and higher margins of error for subgroups of the sample.