

To: Interested Parties  
From: Celinda Lake, Daniel Gotoff, and Eric Schoenfield, *Lake Research Partners*  
Re: Key Findings from Survey  
Date: September 3, 2014

---

The following memo outlines the major takeaways from a recently completed national survey on voters' attitudes toward enforcement.<sup>1</sup>

- Voters of all partisan stripes, and with near unanimity, believe there should be increased enforcement of laws and regulations in the U.S. Voters respond with similar support and intensity whether increased enforcement is defined as “commonsense”, “fairer, more equal”, “proper”, or “tougher”. Across these various semantic permutations, fully 87% of voters agree that we need increased enforcement of laws and regulations, including 89% of Democrats, 85% of Republicans, and 87% of independents.
- Engaging the debate over this issue does little to diminish support for greater enforcement, even when attacks on increased enforcement characterize it as a costly, big government job-killer. After voters hear arguments for and against, fully 77% agree we need tougher enforcement (including 56% who feel that way strongly). Just 18% of voters disagree.
- Perceptions of the regulatory agencies tested in this study are by-and-large positive, with majorities of voters—including majorities of Republicans—expressing favorable opinions of the FDA (58%), the USDA (58%), OSHA (57%), the NHTSA (55%), and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (55%). Even the much-maligned EPA enjoys positive ratings from 52% of voters. As important, no more than one-third of voters has an unfavorable opinion of any of these agencies. These findings may stun a good number of opinion-makers, who believe that the criticism of these agencies has permeated the public.
  - A plurality of voters (46%) lacks an opinion of the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, though positive attitudes outweigh negative attitudes by two-to-one among those voters who have an impression (36% favorable, 18% unfavorable).
- However, despite positive ratings of the enforcement agencies and the fact that two-thirds of voters believe the enforcement of laws in the U.S. generally works well (66% generally works/30% generally does not work), voters nevertheless see plenty of room for improvement. A 51% majority believes there is too little enforcement of laws and regulations in the U.S., compared to just 30% who believe there is too

---

<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 700 likely 2016 General Election voters nationwide. The survey was conducted July 21<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The margin of error for this poll is +/- 3.7%.

#### Partners

Celinda Lake  
Alysia Snell  
David Mermin  
Dr. Robert G. Meadow  
Daniel Gotoff  
Joshua Ulibarri

#### Lake Research Partners

1726MSt.,NW  
Suite1100  
Washington, DC 20036

Tel:202.776.9066  
Fax:202.776.9074

much enforcement.

- Similarly, nearly half of voters believe that our laws and regulations are not tough enough to get the job done (8% too tough/40% about right/44% not tough enough), with Republicans, men and independent voters the most adamant in their beliefs that enforcement need to be tougher.
- Voters believe that enforcement of laws and regulations can be most effective when it comes to “protecting seniors and children” (66% say this describes the enforcement of laws and regulations well), “preventing deadly mistakes” (68%), “reducing pollution” (59%), and “holding big business accountable” (51%).
- Voters see a critical role for enforcement of laws and regulations in a number of areas of American life. Majorities believe enforcement is extremely important when it comes to “clean water” (64%), “food and drugs from other countries” (56%), and—as we have seen in previous research—“government officials” (50%). Other areas where voters believe enforcement plays an important role include “civil rights”, “drugs produced in the U.S.”, “nuclear energy”, “Wall Street”, “clean air”, “work places”, and “credit card companies”.
- Finally, this study examined the efficacy of a range of messages that argue in support of tougher enforcement. Not surprising, given voters’ underlying attitudes, all of the messages resonate powerfully, but the leading arguments tend to revolve around case studies, where lives and great sums of money were lost as a result of insufficient enforcement. These case studies make it painfully clear that failing to enforce our laws and regulations causes costly and deadly disasters. In addition, voters prioritize messages that emphasize how lives and dollars can be saved when enforcement agencies do their job properly, as well as a message on wage theft that calls for criminal penalties for CEOs who are found guilty of engaging in wage theft.