



NEW POLL: THE PEOPLE OF RHODE ISLAND OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT FEDERAL TRUST FUND TO GUARANTEE CLEAN AND SAFE WATER

Nine in ten Rhode Islanders believe that clean and safe water is a national issue that deserves federal investment.

An overwhelming majority of Rhode Islanders — 89% — support legislation by the U.S. Congress that would create a long-term, sustainable and reliable trust fund for clean and safe water infrastructure, according to a statewide poll by the Luntz Research Companies and Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates.

An overwhelming majority of Rhode Islanders — 94% — agree that ‘*if, as a country, we are willing to invest over \$30 billion dollars a year on highways and more than \$8 billion a year on our airways, we certainly should be willing to make the necessary investments in our nation’s rivers, lakes and oceans.*’

KEY STATISTIC

Generally speaking, which of the following programs do you think is in greatest need of a dedicated trust fund that would guarantee federal money to help state and local governments pay for maintenance and improvements?

CLEAN AND SAFE WATER	57%
ROADS AND HIGHWAYS	37%
AIRPORTS AND AVIATION	2%

In short, Rhode Islanders believe clean and safe water is a *national* problem that requires a *national* solution.

THE FOUR KEY FINDINGS

- 1) **Rhode Islanders want clean and safe water to be a national priority.** Nine in ten Rhode Islanders (90%) say that “federal investment to guarantee clean and safe water is a critical component of our nation’s environmental well-being.” That is why, despite all of the talk about tax cuts and entitlement programs today, Rhode Islanders believe that protecting their water must be a priority.
 - More than eight in ten Rhode Islanders (86%) would rather the federal government invest in water infrastructure than increase spending on entitlement programs.
 - And by 79% to 14%, Rhode Islanders prefer spending to guarantee clean and safe water over tax cuts.

- 2) **Voters expect the federal government to carry their fair share of the burden of protecting our nation's water.** Rhode Island voters simply do not see this as a local issue. Though they expect local communities to be involved, by almost a three-to-one margin, they believe clean and safe water is a national issue that requires a national solution:

64%	Clean and safe water is a national issue that requires dedicated national funding. As a matter of principle, the federal government should become a true partner with states and localities and pay for the necessary sewage and wastewater treatment systems to guarantee clean and safe water for future generations of Americans.
24%	Clean and safe water is a local problem that requires a local solution. The federal government is already running a \$500 billion dollar deficit. Clean and safe water is important, but the federal government just can't afford to spend any more money. Local communities need to step up and pay.

- 3) **The federal government has a responsibility to invest in water alongside investments in our nation's highways and airports.** Too many sectors of the American economy rely on clean waterways. As such, Rhode Islanders believe the problem must be addressed by *America*.

— 90% of Rhode Islanders agree that, *“Clean water has no local boundaries. Given the interstate nature of clean water issues, it is important for the federal government to support our nation's rivers, lakes and oceans with necessary funding ... just as it does with highways and airports.”*

- 4) **Rhode Islanders understand that this investment has costs and they are willing to pay for it.** Rhode Islanders want to do what is necessary to guarantee that their water is clean and safe for the future. They accept that it will cost money and they are willing to pay from their own pockets if necessary -- a nickel on every bottled beverage is not a problem for them.

-- More Rhode Islanders believe there should be *“a dedicated funding source to ensure clean and safe water for future generations”* (74%) than believe that clean water *“should not receive federal funding but should continue to be funded as it is today”* (17%).

Commenting on the survey findings, Dr. Frank Luntz said: “I’ll be blunt ... this issue is NOT going to go away. This is not simply an environmental issue. It is an issue that is very personal to voters because of the importance of clean and safe water to their daily lives. This is not a local issue because Rhode Islanders understand that water has no local boundaries. They want Washington to take responsibility.

“Taxes – of any kind – are never an easy sell. This, however, is one area where there is real support for a federal investment in our nation’s future. When 83% of Rhode Islanders say they are willing to open their wallets because they think something is a priority, you know it is important. Americans are sending their lawmakers a clear message... protect our nation’s water, establish the federal trust fund, or risk getting left behind by the voters.”

Doug Schoen, Senior Partner of Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates noted that: “Environmental issues writ large can sometimes be divisive, but clean and safe water is not seen by voters as a divisive issue. Instead, there is overwhelming support from both political parties for what is seen as a basic need that has to be protected – clean and safe water for our generation and for our children’s.”

###