



GODBE RESEARCH
Gain Insight

VOTER SURVEY
Summary of Results

Conducted for the City of Albany

June 2005

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction to the Study

The City of Albany commissioned Godbe Research to conduct a voter survey to assess overall support among voters in Albany for a parcel tax funding youth, park, and recreational programs, library services, the Veteran's building, and street maintenance among other important City services. Other objectives included: measuring the impact of the features of the tax on voting behavior, determining the strength of the arguments for and against the tax, determining the tax threshold at which the parcel tax receives two-thirds support, and segmenting the data by key demographic variables to uncover differences between important sub-groups. In total, 300 voters in Albany were interviewed via telephone for this study.

Survey Methodology

Table 1 briefly outlines the methodology used in this project.

Table 1 Methodology

Technique	Telephone interviewing
Interview Length	15 minutes
Field Dates	June 1 to June 8, 2005
Sample Size	300 likely voters

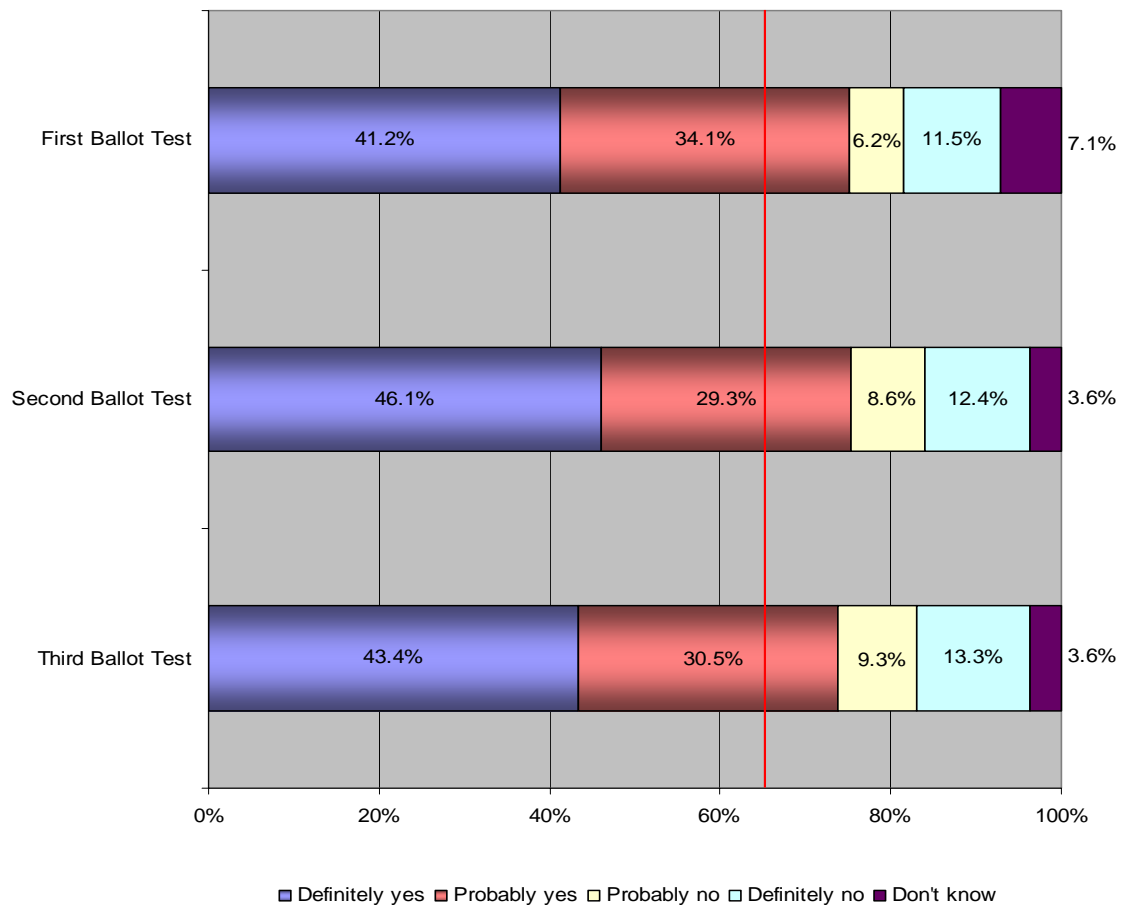
Support and Tax Threshold

Ballot Tests

In order to purchase and renovate the historic Veteran's Building in Memorial Park, replace damaged or unreliable storm drains, improve park and recreational facilities and public landscaping, maintain and expand youth and recreational programs, maintain Library services, repave deteriorated City streets, and improve fire and police buildings, shall the City of Albany be authorized to levy a \$145 per parcel tax with a guaranteed annual audit?

As shown in Figure 1, support for the parcel tax at \$145 stayed relatively constant over the three ballot tests and all received two-thirds support. The first ballot test represents the baseline in the absence of any detailed information. Seventy-five percent of the respondents indicated they would vote yes on the measure in the first ballot test. Support remained at 75 percent after respondents had heard of the features. After hearing arguments for and against the measure, support was at 74 percent in the third ballot test.

Figure 1 Ballot Tests



Conclusion: Support remained consistent with the addition of information about the measure.

Tax Threshold

All tax levels tested received at least three-fourths support from respondents. The \$130 tax had 76 percent (47% “Definitely yes” and 29% “Probably yes”) of respondents indicating they would vote for it, while the \$115 tax level garnered 75 percent (52% “Definitely yes” and 23% “Probably yes”) support.

The \$100 tax level had 81 percent (58% “Definitely yes” and 23% “Probably yes”) of voters indicating they would vote yes and the \$85 tax received 85 percent support (63% “Definitely yes” and 22% “Probably yes”). The lowest tax level tested, \$70, garnered 87 percent (66% “Definitely yes” and 21% “Probably yes”) support.

Recommendation: The committee should consider placing a \$145 parcel tax measure on the ballot in 2006.

Messaging and Target Segmentation

Top Features of the Parcel Tax Measure

Respondents were read a list of features for the measure and asked how each would affect their vote. Answers were coded using a scale of “Much more likely”=+2, “Somewhat more likely”=+1, “No effect”=0, “Somewhat less likely”=-1, and “Much less likely”=-2. Below is a list of the top-five rated features:

- Expand the number of hours per week the library is open to the public (1.21)
- Maintain and expand youth programs (1.16)
- Maintain and expand City park and recreation programs (0.96)
- Repair and perform major rehabilitation to deteriorated City streets (0.91)
- Expand police and fire stations to meet current operations needs & improve effectiveness (0.86)

Conclusion: Library services tested well and should be prominently located in the ballot question. Furthermore, the Veteran’s Memorial Building did not test strongly and should be placed towards the bottom of the list of features if at all.

Top Arguments For and Against the Parcel Tax Measure

Respondents were read lists of arguments for and against the measure. The sections were rotated within the survey to minimize the position bias. Respondents were asked how each statement would affect their vote. Answers were coded using a scale of "Much more likely"=+2, "Somewhat more likely"=+1, and "No effect"=0 on their decision to vote yes (positive arguments) or no (negative arguments) on the measure.

The top five arguments supporting the measure were:

- A local measure will ensure the funds are spent within Albany and without State interference (1.03)
- The measure will help to restore money that the State has taken away since 1991 (1.01)
- The measure will help attract and retain quality police and firefighters (0.96)
- Without the measure, public facilities will become unsafe and inaccessible (0.96)
- Albany has a growing family segment, and needs additional park and recreation facilities & programs (0.90)

Below is a list of the five opposing arguments tested:

- Voters recently approved a measure that was supposed to cover these areas (0.73)
- Funds for these improvements should come out of the City's general fund, not taxpayer's pockets (0.43)
- An improved Veteran's Memorial will only lead to increased maintenance costs and eventually more taxes to support it (0.42)
- City administrators can't be trusted to spend the money appropriately (0.38)
- Taxes are already too high (0.31)

Conclusion: Two of the opposing arguments show a concern about the City not using tax funds appropriately while the other three show an aversion to more taxes.

Target Segment

Figures 2 through 5 show support by various demographic segments. When engaged in public education and campaigning, the most important segment to address are those voters in the soft support/oppose and don't know categories. Resources focused on those target segments that are likely to change their opinion (or jump from a don't know/no opinion stance) will prove to be most effective.

Figure 2 shows the results of the first ballot test broken down by age. Respondents between the ages of 18 and 39 years had the largest portion of voters that are in the "Probably yes," "Probably no," and "Don't know" categories.

Figure 2 First Ballot Test by Age

	Overall	Age				
	Overall	18-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-64 years	65+ years
Base	300	17	41	64	109	41
Definitely yes	41.2%	35.3%	30.6%	48.5%	44.6%	40.8%
Probably yes	34.1%	42.4%	51.0%	32.1%	33.9%	29.7%
Probably no	6.2%	10.6%	4.5%	3.5%	5.9%	0.0%
Definitely no	11.5%	11.8%	0.0%	6.4%	11.9%	22.8%
Don't know	7.1%	0.0%	13.9%	9.5%	3.6%	6.7%

No significant difference arises between genders.

Figure 3 First Ballot Test by Gender

	Overall	Gender	
	Overall	Male	Female
Base	300	132	167
Definitely yes	41.2%	47.5%	36.3%
Probably yes	34.1%	34.7%	33.5%
Probably no	6.2%	4.2%	7.7%
Definitely no	11.5%	9.3%	13.2%
Don't know	7.1%	4.2%	9.3%

Democrats are very supportive, Republicans are not. There were not any significant differences among voters in the soft support/oppose and don't know categories.

Figure 4 First Ballot Test by Party Type

	Overall	Party			
	Overall	Democrat	Republican	Other	DTS
Base	300	216	23	21	40
Definitely yes	41.2%	45.6%	13.0%	35.8%	36.5%
Probably yes	34.1%	32.8%	31.8%	40.2%	38.8%
Probably no	6.2%	6.7%	9.0%	0.0%	4.6%
Definitely no	11.5%	8.2%	38.1%	9.8%	14.9%
Don't know	7.1%	6.7%	8.1%	14.2%	5.1%

There are no significant differences between voters likely to vote by mail versus those that will cast a vote at a polling place.

Figure 5 First Ballot Test by Likely Vote by Mail

	Overall	Likely vote by mail	
	Overall	Yes	No
		Yes	No
Base	300	109	191
Definitely yes	41.2%	41.3%	41.2%
Probably yes	34.1%	32.9%	34.7%
Probably no	6.2%	8.2%	5.0%
Definitely no	11.5%	13.4%	10.4%
Don't know	7.1%	4.2%	8.7%

Recommended Ballot Language

Based on the above results from the tax threshold, features, and arguments, Godbe Research recommends a ballot question that touches upon the features that had the most impact on voting behavior. The recommended ballot language is as follows:

In order to:

- **Expand the number of hours per week the library is open to the public;**
- **Maintain and expand youth programs;**
- **Maintain and expand City park and recreational programs;**
- **Repair and perform major rehabilitation to deteriorated City streets; and,**
- **Expand police and fire stations to meet current operations needs and improve effectiveness,**

Shall the City of Albany be authorized to levy a \$145 per parcel tax with a guaranteed annual audit? (70 words – 75 word limit)



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