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October 22, 2015

## **New OIA poll released: voters in Western swing states say outdoor recreation economy is key issue**

BOULDER, Colo. -- In advance of the GOP presidential debate in Boulder on October 28, a new poll released by Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) today shows that majorities of likely voters in the battleground states of Colorado and Nevada say issues involving public lands, water and wildlife are important factors in deciding whom they support.

The poll found that these issues have significant influence on voters, with 84 percent in Colorado and 77 percent in Nevada saying public lands, waters and wildlife are somewhat important, to very important in their voting decisions.

The poll also shows most voters in Colorado and Nevada believe outdoor recreation and access to national public lands help the economy and are essential to the quality of life in their state.

The survey found that nearly nine in 10 voters in Colorado and more than eight in 10 in Nevada participate in outdoor recreation on public lands, with three-quarters of those surveyed stating that these places belong to all Americans, not the individual states in which they are located.

**Download the topline report [here](#).**

“The polling data confirms what we’ve always believed,” said Amy Roberts, executive director of OIA. “People in Colorado and Nevada, but really all across the West and around the country, regardless of political affiliation, know that outdoor recreation and access to national parks, national forests and national monuments are key to quality of life, job creation and healthy economies in their states. It’s no wonder that an overwhelming majority of voters are in favor of protecting these places and will support candidates who share these beliefs.”

Further, majorities across the political spectrum in Colorado and Nevada are opposed to proposals that would give state governments control over America's public lands. Voters in both states also believe that these places have a positive impact on protecting our nation's history and heritage.

The poll was conducted October 6–10, 2015, by Public Opinion Strategies, one of the nation's leading public opinion research firms, and included 500 likely Republican, Democratic, and independent voters in each state.

“The survey results show the strong connection that voters in these critical swing states have with national public lands and outdoor recreation,” said Lori Weigel, partner at Public Opinion Strategies. “They recognize the economic contribution that public lands and outdoor recreation make in their state, and want their state to encourage this sector of the economy.”

Voters in both Colorado and Nevada agreed that their states should invest more in jobs and businesses related to outdoor recreation and tourism, even above those in the oil and gas and mining industries in both states, the health care industry in Colorado and the gaming industry in Nevada.

Consumer spending on outdoor recreation contributes \$13.2 billion to Colorado's economy and \$14.9 billion to Nevada's, as well as billions more in salaries and wages in each state.

Additionally, access to outdoor recreation attracts outdoor businesses and supports 125,000 jobs in Colorado.

“We chose to base our business in Colorado because of the state's natural beauty, the abundance of public land nearby and the quality of outdoor recreation all around us,” said Tom Barney, CEO of Cortez-based Osprey Packs. “These places inspire the Osprey team every day and help us build the best products for our customers to get outside.”

Similarly, Nevada's 148,000 outdoor recreation industry jobs depend on access to public lands.

“Whether it's exploring the wild places in northern or southern Nevada or visiting new national monuments like Basin and Range, we have amazing opportunities for our employees and customers alike to lead a healthy active lifestyle here,” said Ron Hunter, Patagonia Activism Manager in Reno. “It's great to see Nevadans agree about the importance of protecting these places today and for future generations of Americans.” Patagonia employs more than 400 people at its facility in Reno.

The road to the White House runs through Colorado and Nevada, and candidates from both parties running for president, the House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate or state legislatures should review OIA's polling data to gain a better understanding of how important issues involving America's public lands, waters and wildlife are to voters in those key western states. Investing in outdoor recreation on national public lands is not only smart economics, it is smart politics.

**Download the media packet including this press release, polling memo and infographic summary [here](#).**

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### **About Outdoor Industry Association**

Based in Boulder, Colo., with offices in Washington, D.C., Outdoor Industry Association is the leading trade association for the outdoor industry and the title sponsor of Outdoor Retailer. OIA supports the growth and success of more than 4,000 employees of manufacturers, distributors, suppliers, sales representatives and retailers of outdoor recreation apparel, footwear, equipment and services. For more information, visit [outdoorindustry.org](http://outdoorindustry.org) or call [303.444.3353](tel:303.444.3353).

Link to Topline Report:

<https://outdoorindustry.org/?p=87742>

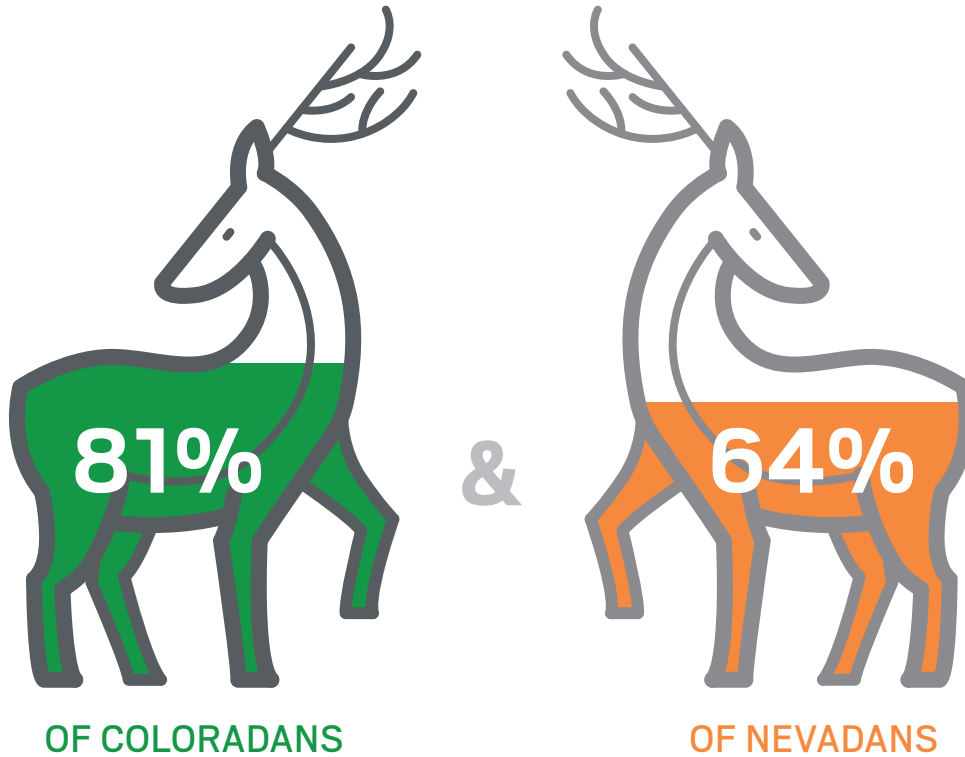
Link to Polling Memo, Infographic Summary & this press release:

<https://outdoorindustry.org/?p=87747>



# THE ECONOMY OF NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS

COLORADO  
NEVADA



**THINK THE PRESENCE OF NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS,  
SUCH AS NATIONAL FORESTS, NATIONAL MONUMENTS,  
AND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES,**

**HELPS THEIR STATE ECONOMY.**





# FUTURE BUSINESSES THAT CITIZENS WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN THEIR STATE



SOLAR, WIND & RENEWABLE ENERGY

47%

37%



COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

31%

34%



OUTDOOR RECREATION & RELATED TOURISM

28%

22%



HOSPITALS & HEALTH CARE

25%

29%



OIL & GAS DRILLING

18%

9%



MINING

6%

10%



MARIJUANA & GAMING<sup>†</sup>

5%

4%

COLORADO  
NEVADA





# THE VALUE OF NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS

COLORADO  
NEVADA



**83%** OF COLORADANS & **74%** OF NEVADANS

BELIEVE NATIONAL FORESTS, NATIONAL MONUMENTS, WILDLIFE REFUGES, AND OTHER NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR HUNTING, FISHING AND OUTDOOR RECREATION.



**98%** OF COLORADANS & **97%** OF NEVADANS

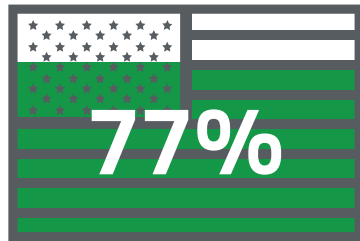
BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROTECT NATIONAL FORESTS, NATIONAL MONUMENTS, WILDLIFE REFUGES, AND OTHER NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.





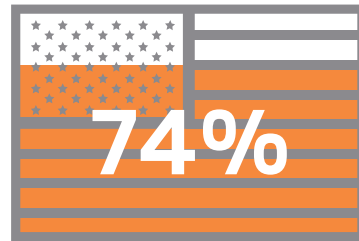
# THE PERCEPTION OF NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS

COLORADO  
NEVADA



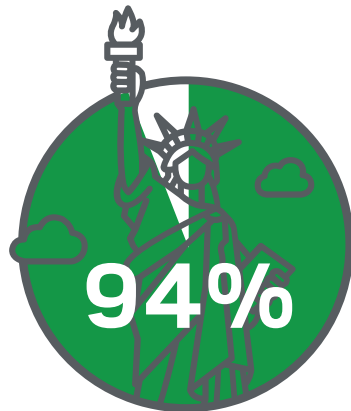
OF COLORADANS

&



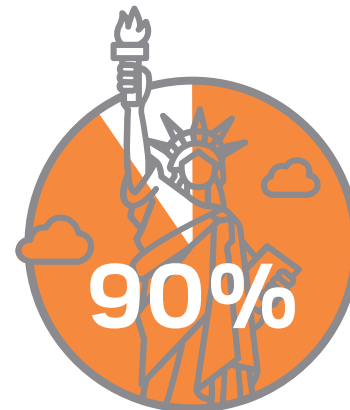
OF NEVADANS

THINK OF PUBLIC LANDS AS AMERICAN PLACES THAT BELONG TO EVERYONE IN OUR COUNTRY.



OF COLORADANS

&



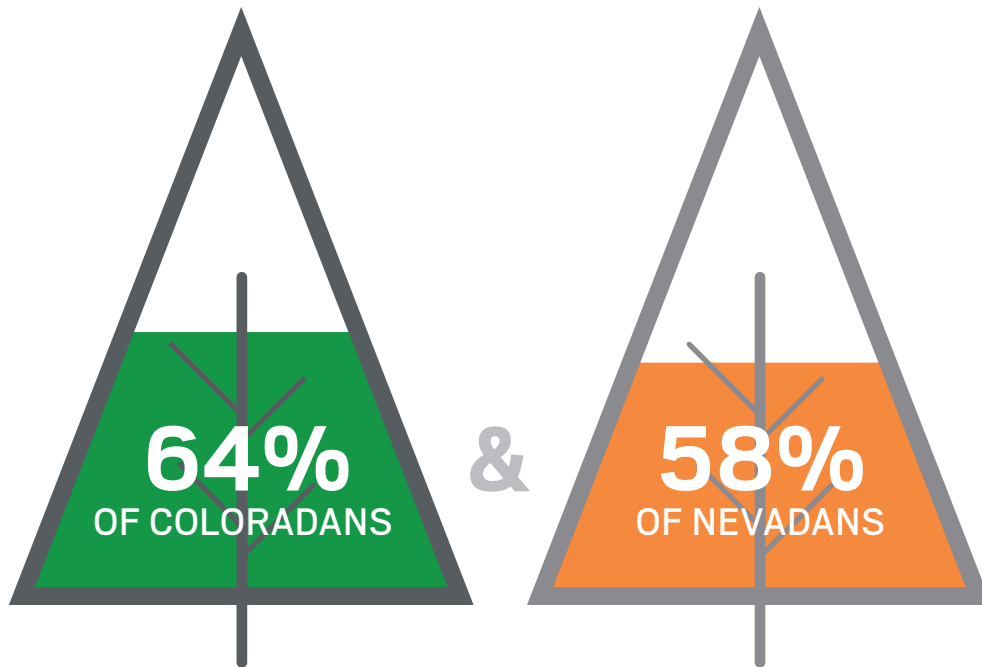
OF NEVADANS

BELIEVE HAVING NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS, SUCH AS NATIONAL PARKS, NATIONAL FORESTS, MONUMENTS AND WILDLIFE REFUGES HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON PROTECTING OUR NATION'S HISTORY AND HERITAGE.



# THE CONTROL OF NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS

COLORADO  
NEVADA



**OPPOSE GIVING STATE GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS, SUCH AS NATIONAL FORESTS, NATIONAL MONUMENTS, AND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES IN ITS BORDERS.**

THE STATE GOVERNMENT WOULD DECIDE THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE LANDS, BUT STATE TAXPAYERS WOULD PAY ALL COSTS, INCLUDING THE COST OF MAINTENANCE AND PREVENTING AND FIGHTING WILDFIRES.





# PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Lori Weigel, Public Opinion Strategies

RE: Western Battleground State Voters Place Outdoor Recreation and Public Lands High in Importance for State Economy and for their Elected Leaders

DATE: October 16, 2015

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The Republican polling firm of Public Opinion Strategies recently completed surveys of likely presidential election voters in the two Western swing states of Colorado and Nevada.<sup>1</sup> The survey results show that Presidential election voters in these two critical states are users of national public lands for outdoor recreation, recognize the economic contribution that public lands and outdoor recreation makes in their state, and want their state to encourage this sector of the economy.

But they are also transferring these strong connections to public lands into the political arena. **Overwhelmingly, Colorado and Nevada voters say a candidate's stance on issues involving public lands is important to their vote decision.** Fully 84 percent of Colorado voters and 77 percent of Nevada voters say that compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, issues involving public lands, waters and wildlife are right there in the mix of factors that will determine for whom they decide to support.

One specific issue which some candidates have already voiced opinions about is future management of national public lands. **A solid majority – including a majority across the political spectrum – reject the idea of state government taking over the management of, and costs associated with, these lands.** Voters continue to reject these ideas even after hearing viewpoints on both sides of this debate. Hunters and anglers in particular also express concern about the implications it could have on license fees.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:









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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From October 6-10 2015, Public Opinion Strategies completed 500 telephone interviews with registered voters in Colorado and Nevada who are likely to vote in the November 2016 presidential election. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/-4.4%; margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

- **Voters in these two Western swing states have a strong connection to national public lands.** More than four-in-five say they have visited public lands in the last year (89 percent in Colorado, 84 percent in Nevada). And many are not simply casual users – nearly half of Coloradans say they have gone to national public lands six or more times, along with 31 percent of Nevadans. More Coloradans went somewhere in their own state (85 percent in state) than did Nevadans (53 percent in state). But they tend to agree that their last visit to national public lands was a positive one (96 percent of Coloradans and 81 percent of Nevadans).

Notably, Republican voters in both states are more likely to say they have visited national public lands than their Democratic counterparts, dispelling some of the myths about users of these areas.

- **Candidates seeking to curry favor with voters in these states better break out their backpacks.** The overwhelming majority of voters in both states report regularly participating in at least one of the following outdoor recreation activities (89 percent in Colorado and 82 percent in Nevada). Just look at the reported rates of participation in each state:

	Colorado	Nevada
 Hiking	65%	53%
 Camping	46%	38%
 Skiing or other winter recreation	31%	12%
 Biking	30%	19%
 Bird watching and viewing wildlife	29%	25%
 Paddling or boating	18%	17%
 Riding an off-road vehicle or snowmobile	17%	14%
 Rock climbing	9%	5%

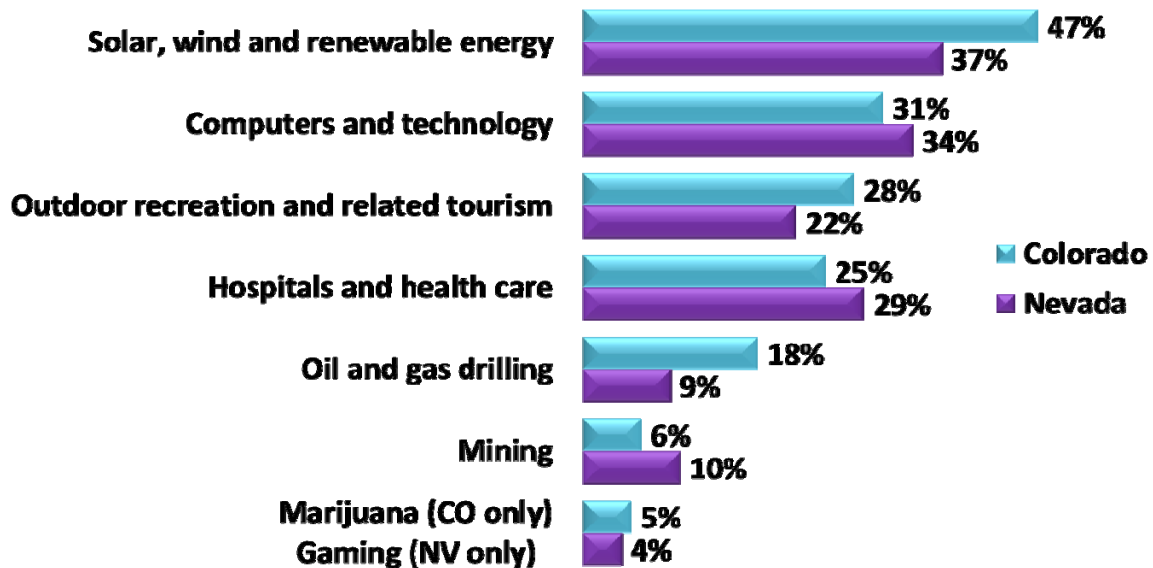
Moreover, 36 percent of Coloradans consider themselves to be a hunter or angler and 29 percent of Nevadans identify as such too. Those engaged in outdoor recreation are the most likely to have visited national public lands – especially sportsmen among whom more have hunted or fished on public lands than on private lands.

**Swing voter sub-groups in both states report higher outdoor recreation use, including Independents, Latinos and younger voters.**

- Voters in these battleground states view outdoor recreation and national public lands as economically essential for their state and an area of the economy they want to see grow, even more than other higher profile sectors.** The vast majority in both states say the presence of national public lands helps their economies (81 percent in Colorado and 64 percent in Nevada); and similar proportions view outdoor recreation and related tourism as essential to their state's economy (94 percent agree in Colorado, 69 percent in Nevada).

And outdoor recreation is in the top tier of priority industries for voters when they think about the future of their state's economy. In fact, voters are far more likely to say outdoor recreation and related tourism should be a sector encouraged in their state than focus on even some traditional economic mainstays like health care or gaming as the following chart vividly illustrates:

*When you think about the types of businesses and jobs you would like to see more of in (Colorado/Nevada), which one or two of those types of businesses would you want (Colorado/Nevada) to encourage more of in the future?*



And the focus on outdoor recreation came from voters of various backgrounds, including across the partisan spectrum (25 percent of Colorado GOP voters and 21 percent of Nevada GOP voters say outdoor recreation is the type of business they would want their state to encourage more of).

- Voters clearly indicate that conservation issues are in the mix of things which they will consider in evaluating candidates.** The very first substantive question we asked survey respondents about was to tell us what role these issues would play in the upcoming elections: "Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official?"

**More than one-third of Colorado's voters (37 percent) and nearly as many in Nevada (29 percent) say that issues involving public lands, waters and wildlife are a primary consideration in whether or not to support an elected public official. Overall, more than four-in-five Colorado voters (84%) and more than three-quarters (77 percent) of Nevada voters say it is at least somewhat important to them.**

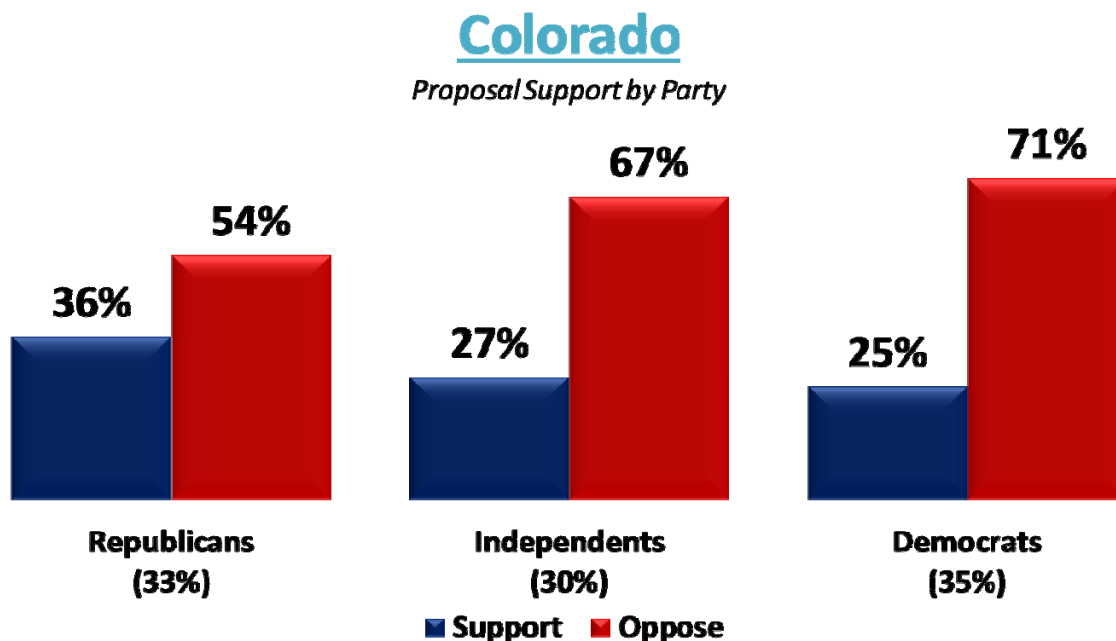
This sentiment is evident across all voter sub-groups, including among Republicans (77 percent in Colorado and 69 percent in Nevada say this will be a factor in their vote decision) and those critically important sub-group of Independents (84 percent in Colorado and 81 percent in Nevada). Not surprisingly voters in both states who visit public lands more frequently – such as sportsmen - are more likely to say these issues are of primary importance to them.

- **A majority in both Colorado and Nevada opposes having state government assume control and cost of managing public lands; two-in-five offer support.** Respondents were queried as follows:

*“Some Members of Congress have proposed giving the (Colorado/Nevada) state government control over national public lands, such as national forests, national monuments, and national wildlife refuges in its borders. The state government would decide the future management of the lands, but state taxpayers would pay all costs, including the cost of maintenance and preventing and fighting wildfires. Do you support or oppose this proposal?”*

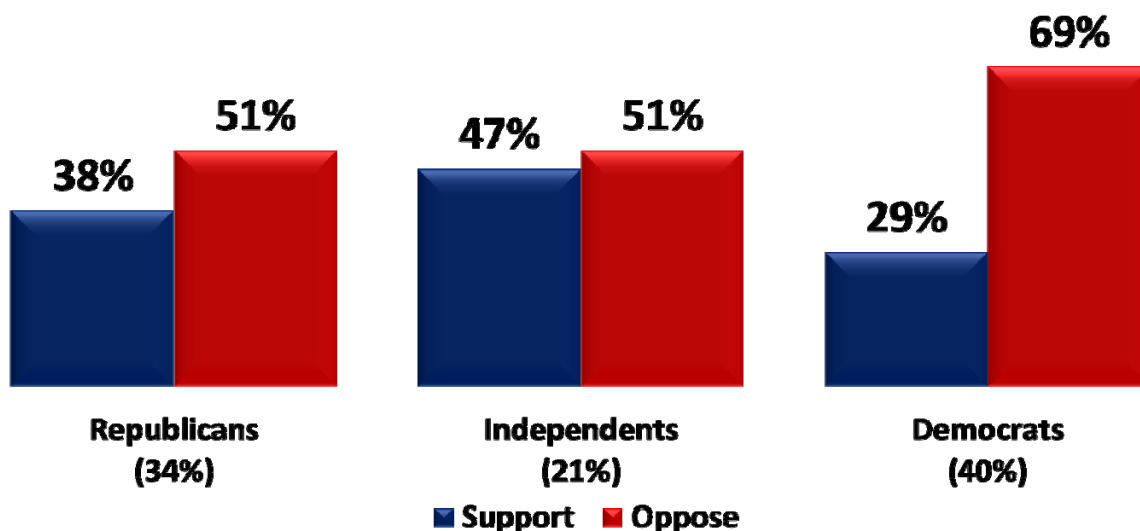
Fully 64 percent of Colorado voters and 58 percent of Nevadans opposes this change. Only about one-in-three in each state offer support for the idea (29 percent and 35 percent, respectively). Intensity of opposition also is twice as high as the intensity of support in each state.

As evident in the following graphs, **a majority of voters across the partisan spectrum in both states oppose state management of national public lands.**



## Nevada

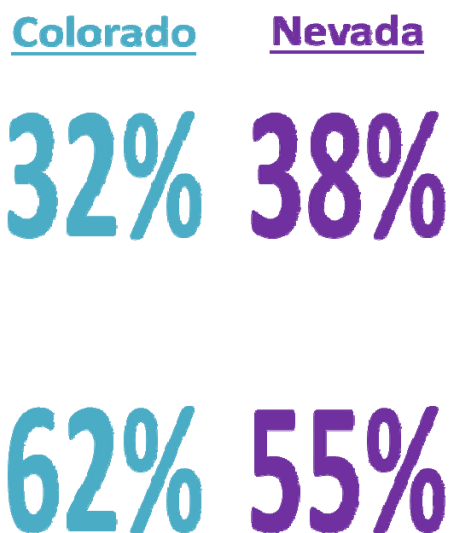
*Proposal Support by Party*



- Voters continue to reject this proposal after they hear statements from both supporters and opponents of state management of public lands now maintained by national government agencies. We provided survey respondents with rationales both for and against state management of national public lands, but this does little to affect how voters perceive this idea as one can see in the next graph.

People who support having state government take over national public lands, and pay for all costs of these lands, say that they were never meant to be held by the U.S. government forever. State government will manage these lands better than national agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, as they can allow more companies on these lands to responsibly log, mine and drill which will help raise revenues to fund important needs in our states.

People who oppose having state government take over national public lands, and pay for all costs of these lands, say that politicians are sacrificing long-term priorities for short-term gain. (Colorado/Nevada) does not have the funding to maintain these lands, much less fight wild fires, which can cost over one hundred million dollars per year. Some places will be auctioned off to the highest bidder, limiting our ability and that of future generations to enjoy these places.



*Overall, the survey results show the strong connection that voters in these critical swing states have with national public lands and outdoor recreation. They recognize the economic contribution that public lands and outdoor recreation makes in their state, and want their state to encourage this sector of the economy. This also bears implications for political candidates as voters say these issues are important even in comparison to traditional issues like the economy and health care. And when it comes to one of the most prominent public policy issues in this arena, they strongly reject calls for state management of national public lands.*