



**TO:** Pew Campaign For Fuel Efficiency  
**FROM:** The Mellman Group, Inc. & Public Opinion Strategies  
**RE:** Public Support For Stricter Fuel Efficiency Standards In North Carolina  
**DATE:** July 20, 2007

*This analysis represents the findings of a survey of 500 likely voters in key North Carolina Congressional Districts. 100 voters in each of 5 Congressional Districts (2, 3, 7, 11, 12) were interviewed by telephone July 17-19, 2007. Registration-based-sampling was used to insure an accurate sample of the likely 2008 electorate. The margin of error for this survey is +/-4.4% at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is higher for subgroups.*

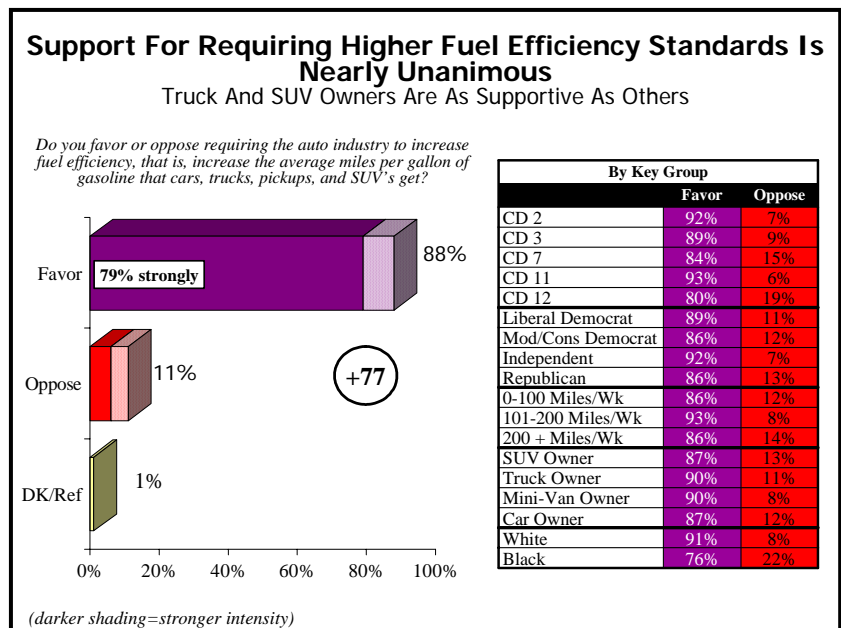
Support for increased fuel efficiency standards in these North Carolina Congressional Districts is overwhelming and unwavering. Large majorities demand higher standards, even after being presented with the best arguments the opposition has to offer. In fact, voters reject opponents' key arguments. These North Carolinians are clear: they want standards that are higher, binding, come into force sooner and are not capped. Voters will reward those members of Congress who support their point of view.

### North Carolinians In Key Congressional Districts Demand Higher Fuel Efficiency Standards

Our just completed survey shows that nearly nine in ten voters (88%), favor requiring the auto industry to increase fuel efficiency for cars, trucks, pickups, and SUVs, while only 11% oppose increases. Moreover, three quarters (79%) *strongly* favor requiring increases in fuel efficiency, while only 6% are *strongly* opposed.

Support is not only deep, but also wide. Overwhelming numbers support increased standards in each of the individual Congressional Districts we sampled, ranging from 80% in the 12<sup>th</sup> CD to 93% in the 11<sup>th</sup> CD. Support for stricter fuel efficiency standards cuts across partisan lines as 87% of Democrats (80% strongly), 92% of independents (85% strongly), and 86% of Republicans (73% strongly) all favor tougher CAFE standards.

Support is also strong among demographic segments which opponents charge would be adversely affected by the policy. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of SUV owners support higher standards (80% strongly), 90% of pick-up truck owners (81% strongly) and 86% of those who use their pick-ups on the job (79% strongly). In fact, there is no segment of the population in these districts among whom support for higher fuel efficiency standards is less than 76%.



## Voters Prefer CAFE Standards That Are Higher, Binding, Come Into Force Sooner And Are Not Capped

When offered the choice, 71% prefer a proposal designed to achieve an average fuel economy standard of 35 miles per gallon, while just 26% prefer an approach that would achieve an average of 32 miles per gallon. Sixty percent (60%) *strongly* favor the higher mileage requirement.

The higher standards were favored across party (82% of Democrats, 65% of independents and 61% of Republicans) and among those groups said to be sensitive to increases in CAFE standards (64% of SUV owners and 68% of pick-up truck owners). In fact, no subgroup favored lesser standards over higher standards. Majorities favor higher standards across the target districts, with support ranging from 62% (CD 12) to 76% (CD 3).

35 Vs. 32 MPG Standards		
	35m/gal	32m/gal
CD 2	75%	22%
CD 3	76%	22%
CD 7	72%	25%
CD 11	70%	27%
CD 12	62%	35%

The Senate has set a standard that voters expect the House to meet or exceed. Nearly all the voters in these Districts (91%) want the House of Representatives to pass legislation at least as strong as that passed by the U.S. Senate, while only 5% profess desire for the House to pass weaker standards. This sentiment is universal across the Districts we sampled, with the demand for nothing less than the Senate bill never dropping below 88%.

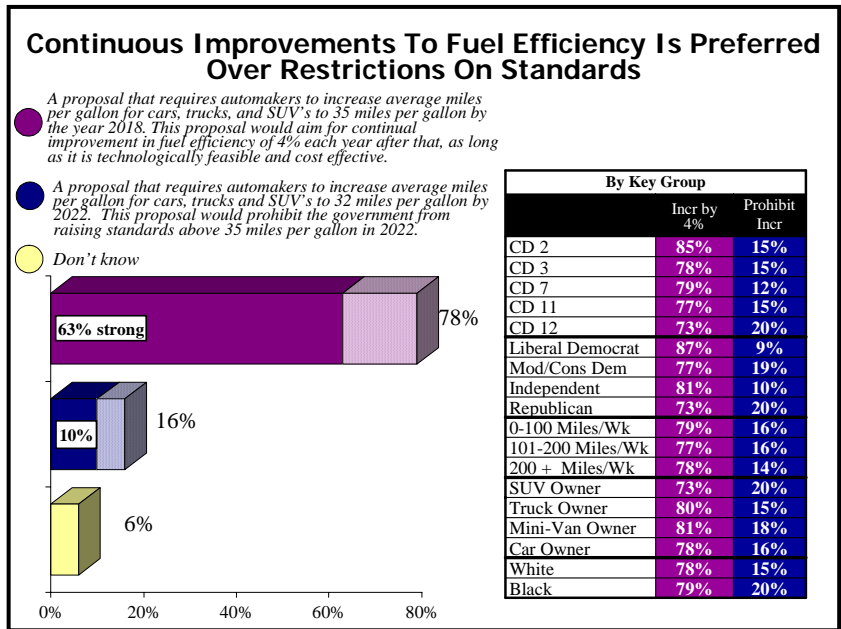
Voters not only want higher standards, they strongly oppose a cap on CAFE standards and want the flexibility to increase those standards in the future. Sixty-three percent (63%) want a proposal that allows the government to raise fuel efficiency standards above 35 miles per gallon. Only 32% would prohibit the government from raising fuel efficiency standards above 35 miles per gallon after 2022. Majorities in each District oppose a cap, as do majorities across party (66% of Democrats, 59% of independents, 62% of Republicans). A cap on fuel economy standards is also opposed by large majorities of SUV owners (63%), and pick-up truck owners (63%).

Standards By 2018/2022		
	2018	2022
CD 2	80%	15%
CD 3	85%	11%
CD 7	86%	11%
CD 11	95%	4%
CD 12	83%	11%

Finally, voters want increased standards to be binding. A supermajority (72%) favors mandatory gas mileage standards for automakers over one that sets “non-binding gas mileage goals” (23%). Four times as many voters *strongly* preferred mandatory standards (61%) than *strongly* preferred non-binding goals (15%). In each of our Congressional Districts, majorities favor mandatory standards over non-binding goals.

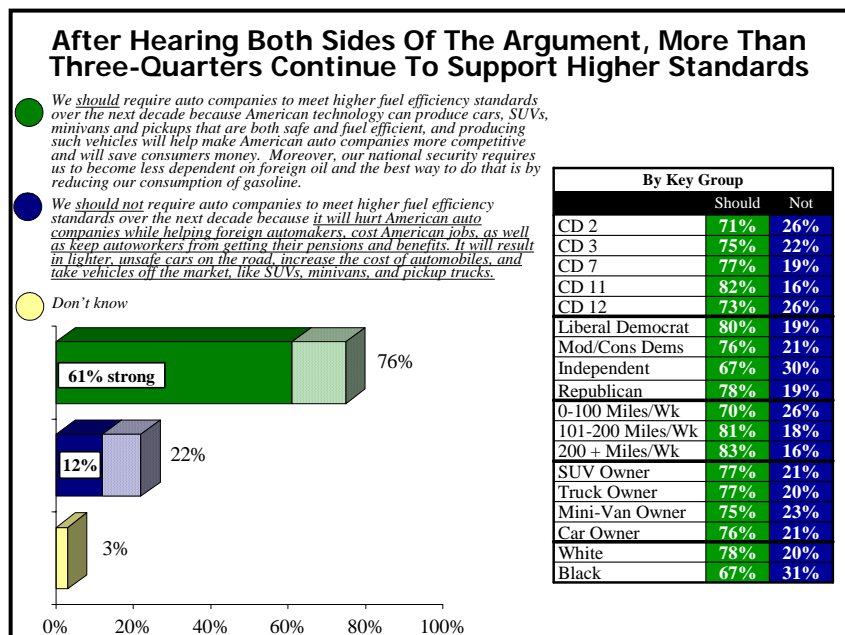
Mandatory v. Non-Mandatory		
	Mandatory	Non-Binding
CD 2	75%	20%
CD 3	72%	22%
CD 7	81%	16%
CD 11	66%	31%
CD 12	64%	26%

When given the choice between a bill with weaker fuel efficiency standards, a slower timeline and restrictions on future increases in standards, like the proposed Hill-Terry Bill, and a bill with stronger fuel efficiency standards, a quicker timeline and a goal for future increases in standards, like the Markey-Platts Bill, voters prefer the elements contained in Markey-Platts over those in Hill-Terry by nearly a 5 to 1 margin. Seventy-eight percent (78%) favor the stronger, quicker proposal, while only 16% favor the weaker, slower proposal. In fact, 63% *strongly* favor the proposal with stronger standards and a quicker timeline. At least 65% of voters in all our Congressional Districts and in every demographic and geographic subgroup support the stronger, quicker proposal over the weaker, slower one.



### Even After Hearing Arguments From Both Sides, Voters Still Overwhelmingly Support Strict CAFE Standards

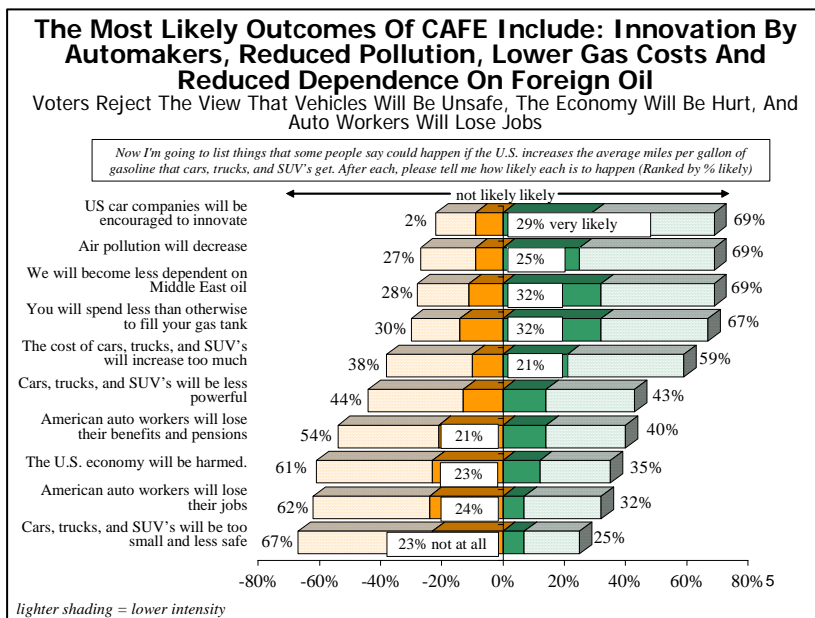
We presented voters with the core arguments on both sides of the issue and still found more than three quarters supporting higher fuel economy standards. Respondents heard a message from opponents arguing that higher standards would help foreign automakers at the expense of American companies, cost American jobs, deprive autoworkers of retirement benefits, result in unsafe cars, increase costs, and take vehicles off the market. Even in the face of this reputedly strong argument, 76% still support requiring automakers to meet higher CAFE standards.



As the chart to the right reveals, strong majorities in each Congressional District continue to support increased standards, as do supermajorities across party, SUV owners and pick-up truck owners.

**Voters Do Not Believe, Or Are Not Persuaded By, Industry Arguments Against CAFE, But Do See Substantial Benefits**

We carefully probed voters' expectations as to the impact of higher fuel economy standards. They believe stricter standards would result in less pollution (69% "likely"), reduced dependence on foreign oil (69% "likely") and reduced gas prices (68% "likely"). At the same time they reject opponents' arguments suggesting that increased standards will harm the U.S. auto industry. In fact quite the opposite—69% believe that higher fuel efficiency standards will encourage U.S. car companies to innovate, increasing their sales and protecting the jobs of American auto workers – making it tied for the single most likely outcome in the mind of North Carolinians in these Districts.



Moreover, these benefits are quite important to voters. We asked respondents to indicate how good or bad possible outcomes of improved fuel efficiency standards would be, using a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 was "one of the worst things that could happen" and 10 was "one of the best things that could happen." Lower gas costs (average rating 8.3 out of 10), less pollution (8.1), reduced dependence on foreign oil (8.1) and encouraging U.S. companies (7.1) are viewed as the most important outcomes.

At the same time, opposition messages lack basic credibility. Very few believe that "the U.S. economy will be harmed" (61% *unlikely*) if tougher standards are passed. Most also reject as not credible the arguments that automobiles will be "too small and less safe" (67% *unlikely*) or "American auto workers will lose their jobs" (62% *unlikely*) or that as a result of higher fuel economy standards. While a majority of voters do believe that cost will increase (59% likely), higher cost is not deemed a particularly bad outcome, garnering an average 3.8 rating on the 0 to 10 scale described above.

**Adopting A Strict CAFE Standard Would Be An Important Accomplishment That Voters Say Would Improve Their View Of Congress And Of Their Member Of Congress**

Passing energy legislation that increases fuel economy standards and invests in alternative energy would be an important accomplishment by Congress in the eyes of voters. Eighty-four percent (84%) said that Congress will have accomplished something important if it were to pass this legislation, including 56% who said they felt that way *strongly*. Only 12% said that Congress will not have accomplished something important. Voters of both parties (87% of Democrats and 81% of Republicans), 83% of independents, and strong majorities of voters in each of the Districts, ranging from 78% to 87%, would give credit to Congress for this accomplishment.

Voters say they would hold both Congress and Members who vote for increased standards in higher regard. Seventy-one percent (71%) said that they would have a more favorable view of Congress, should it pass increased fuel efficiency standards, while only 4% said they would hold a less favorable view.

Moreover, voters say they would reward individual members who vote to require auto companies to achieve an average of 35 miles per gallon for both cars and trucks by the year 2018, more than two-thirds (69%) said they would hold a more favorable opinion of their Member of Congress if they voted for the legislation. Forty-three percent (43%) said they would hold a *much more* favorable view of their Member as a result of an affirmative vote. There is little downside to voting for the provisions outlined above, with only 8% saying they would hold a less favorable opinion of their Member if they supported this legislation.

Voters in these Congressional Districts clearly understand the important impact of raising fuel economy standards. They look forward to spending less at the pump, decreasing our dependence on foreign oil, cleaner air, and innovation from American car companies, as results of increased fuel efficiency standards. They want their member of Congress to vote for the increased standards and will look more favorably upon them when they do. Voters interpret a vote against stricter standards as a vote against America's national security, economic and environmental imperatives, not as an effort to protect their interests as workers or drivers.

<b>Congress Favorability If Standards Are Passed</b>			
	<b>More Fav</b>	<b>Less Fav</b>	<b>No Diff</b>
CD 2	65%	3%	32%
CD 3	73%	5%	22%
CD 7	69%	6%	25%
CD 11	80%	4%	17%
CD 12	69%	5%	25%

<b>Members of Congress Favorability If Standards Passed</b>			
	<b>More Fav</b>	<b>Less Fav</b>	<b>No Diff</b>
CD 2	69%	7%	25%
CD 3	72%	9%	19%
CD 7	63%	8%	29%
CD 11	78%	6%	16%
CD 12	61%	12%	28%