

To: Interested parties  
From: GBA Strategies & Lincoln Park Strategies  
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## Opposition to Fracking Mounts in North Carolina

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New public opinion polls conducted in the Tar Heel state show increasingly strong opposition to fracking since the state legislature voted to rewrite North Carolina’s environmental safeguards and start handing out fracking permits to energy companies earlier this year.

These new polls, conducted in July on behalf of the North Carolina Environmental Partnership, show an enormous shift in public opinion over the course of the last 7 months in selected state House and Senate districts whose legislators voted to put fracking on the fast-track. This shift is in large part due to the Partnership’s efforts to raise awareness of the serious risks that fracking poses to water quality and people’s health, and hold these legislators accountable for their votes.

### State Legislative Districts Polled

- SD-01** (Bill Cook)
- SD-12** (Ronald Rabin)
- SD-18** (Chad Barefoot)
- SD-19** (Wesley Meredith)
- HD-51** (Mike Stone)
- HD-52** (Jamie Boles)
- HD-116** (Tim Moffitt)
- HD-118** (Michele Presnell)

The following findings are drawn from multiple rounds of polling<sup>1</sup> in these districts, both before and after the Partnership launched a program that included television ads, online ads, and direct mail. They illustrate the speed and degree to which public debate has swung against fracking, leaving these legislators who voted to allow it badly out of step with the people they were elected to represent.

**1. Majorities and pluralities now disapprove of fracking.** This is a massive turnaround compared to earlier in the year when approval of fracking outpaced disapproval in each district where a poll was taken before the Partnership’s activities began.

Some of the biggest shifts against fracking have occurred in the districts in the Raleigh market, where the bulk of the Partnership’s television communications were devoted. In SD-12, one of the areas where fracking is most likely to occur in North Carolina, 61 percent now disapprove of the legislature’s rush to allow fracking, which is a 20-point increase since January. Likewise, in SD-18 public disapproval has increased by 19 points to a total of 57 percent who disapprove, while in SD-19 disapproval has increased 14 points to 50 percent.

### Shift in Fracking Approval in State Senate Districts

	January/March Polling		July Polling		Net Margin Shift in Approval
	Approve – Disapprove	Margin	Approve – Disapprove	Margin	
<b>SD-01</b>	49 – 39	+10	42 – 48	-6	-16
<b>SD-12</b>	47 – 41	+6	31 – 61	-30	-36
<b>SD-18</b>	45 – 38	+7	33 – 57	-24	-31
<b>SD-19</b>	52 – 36	+16	41 – 50	-9	-25

After people in the greater Raleigh area became more familiar with fracking debate following the Partnership’s initial rounds of advertising, June polling conducted in HD-51 and HD-52 (in the Sandhills, which is also a likely location for fracking) also found that majorities now disapprove of the legislature’s vote to allow fracking. Targeted communications in HD-51, as well as HD-116 and HD-118 in the western part of the state, were successful in further expanding public disapproval in these districts over the last month.

Shift in Fracking Approval in State House Districts					
	June Polling		July Polling		Net Margin Shift in Approval
	Approve – Disapprove	Margin	Approve – Disapprove	Margin	
<b>HD-51</b>	28 – 61	-33	26 – 67	-41	-8
<b>HD-52</b>	-	-	31 – 59	-28	-
<b>HD-116</b>	40 – 48	-8	34 – 55	-21	-13
<b>HD-118</b>	39 – 51	-12	28 – 62	-34	-22

- 2. The intensity behind fracking disapproval is growing.** One of the most striking features of the sea change in the fracking debate over the last several months is the intensity of the opposition.

Before the Partnership began raising awareness, most North Carolinians did not know enough about fracking to have strong views on the subject. Now, strong opposition—people who say they “strongly” disapprove of the state legislature’s vote to allow fracking—outnumbers total approval in all but 2 of the 8 districts surveyed. In fact, most of the growth in overall disapproval has been driven by the growing share of people who “strongly” disapprove.

Share of Strong Fracking Disapproval		
	July Polling	
	Approve – Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove
<b>SD-01</b>	42 – 48	36
<b>SD-12</b>	31 – 61	47
<b>SD-18</b>	33 – 57	42
<b>SD-19</b>	41 – 50	38
<b>HD-51</b>	26 – 67	55
<b>HD-52</b>	31 – 59	45
<b>HD-116</b>	34 – 55	42
<b>HD-118</b>	28 – 62	50

- 3. Concerns about fracking have risen dramatically.** Since early polling conducted in January and March, the percentage of people who indicate a very high level of concern about fracking (rating it an 8 or higher on a 0 to 10 scale) has increased by double digits.

In SD-12 only 36 percent rated fracking an 8 or higher back in January; now that figure has grown to a *majority* of 55 percent. Similar increases have occurred in SD-18 and SD-19, where the very high level of concern group grew from 36 and 31 percent in January, respectively, to 47 and 44 percent in July. While the issue of fracking was somewhat obscure to the general public earlier this year, it’s now a very important issue for North Carolinians.

<sup>i</sup> GBA Strategies and Lincoln Park Strategies administered these surveys of North Carolinians. Each one interviewed 400 respondents on landlines and cell phones, and carries a margin of error of ±4.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval. The initial polls for SD-12, SD-18, and SD-19 were conducted January 23-26, 2014. The initial poll for SD-01 was conducted March 25-27, 2014. The initial polls for HD-51, HD-116, and HD-118 were conducted June 9-12, 2014. The latest round of polling for all districts, which included HD-52, was conducted July 15-20, 2014.