



Politics Notebook: Poll Shows Opposition To Oil And Gas Severance Taxes; Industry Launches TV Ad Campaign; Report Shows Gender Wage Gap

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An overwhelming majority of Ohioans believe [Gov. John Kasich](#)'s plan to hike taxes on the oil and gas industry would damage the state's economy, according to a poll the Ohio Petroleum Council issued Thursday.

The industry group's [telephone survey](#) of 605 registered Ohio voters found 76% believe increasing the severance tax on the oil and natural gas industry could harm the state's economy and drive away energy development, and 77% think it could hurt consumers of gasoline and home heating fuels.

"Ohio voters understand higher taxes on energy development could have a direct negative impact on them," said Ohio Petroleum Council Executive Director Chris Zeigler. "This survey tells us Ohioans are leery of anything that hinders the promise of high paying jobs and a better quality of life associated with shale energy development. Ohioans worry that any tax increase could lead to higher costs."

Gov. Kasich has proposed raising the oil and gas severance tax to help pay for a much larger cut to the state income tax as part of his executive budget ([HB 59](#)).

Kasich spokesman Rob Nichols declined to comment, sort of.

"We don't comment on polls, particularly push polls from big oil lobbyists who would rather see oil companies in Oklahoma and Texas get richer than see Ohioans get a 20% income tax cut," he said, noting the poll did not ask whether respondents would support the change to provide a tax cut as other surveys have done.

OOGA Ads: In a related development, Ohio's oil and gas industry recently started airing television ads heralding new job creation as a result of development in the state's Utica Shale formation.

Tom Stewart, executive vice president of the Ohio Oil and Gas Association, which launched the ad campaign, said the group would air several commercials on television in coming weeks. Radio and print ads are also a possibility, he added.

"We're trying to educate the public about what this opportunity has meant, particularly for eastern Ohio, and that there is economic opportunity, there is new state and local taxes that are flowing because of it. There are good things that happened and the message is, 'We need to take care of these good things.'"

Mr. Stewart acknowledged the ads were intended in part to push back against negative publicity about the industry from environmental groups opposed to fracking.

"Noticed Ohio's economy picking up lately? The recent increase in drilling right here in Ohio's led to adding jobs at a breakneck pace. And jobs are coming in all walks of life, from construction, to restaurants, to manufacturing, jobs are being created in all sectors of the economy," says the voiceover on one television spot.

"Fact is, nearly 40,000 jobs have been created in the last year due to the new wells," she says.

The Columbus think tank Innovation Ohio, however, pointed to a recent study by Cleveland State University that indicated employment growth lagged far behind increased economic activity in the shale region.

Counties in the shale region, from Ashtabula to Guernsey County, experienced a 21.1% increase in total sales activity last year to \$14.9 billion over 2011, said [the report](#) from CSU's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs.

"While there is a clear positive trend in sales receipts, the employment data show very modest increases for the strong shale counties between 2011 and 2012. Furthermore, these modest increases in strong shale counties (1.4%) are similar to those experienced by moderate (1.4%) and non-shale counties (1.3%)."

Innovation Ohio said the report reinforces its call for policy makers to develop incentives that encourage the oil and gas industry to hire more Ohioans.

Wage Gap: Ohio women who work full-time, are on average paid \$0.77 for every dollar paid to a man - a disparity equal the national average wage gap, according to an analysis by National Women's Law Center released Thursday.

NWLC's study found a wage gap in every state, with greater disparities for some racial and ethnic groups. The wage gap for African-American and Hispanic women in Ohio was \$0.66 and \$0.60, respectively, to every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men, the group said.

"This June, 50 years will have passed since President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law, and the gap in wages has barely budged - shrinking only 18 cents in five decades and remaining stagnant for the last decade," NWLC Co-President Marcia Greenberger said in a statement.

"And for women of color, the situation is even worse. At a time when families are relying increasingly on women's wages, it's especially critical to close this gap," she said. "Equal pay is not an abstract principle for women and their families. It means thousands of dollars of lost wages every year that cut deeply into household budgets and force many families to go without basic necessities."

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