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Illinois Voters Favor Graduated Income Tax, Wide Range of Reforms

By a two-to-one margin, Illinois voters favor an amendment to the Illinois Constitution that would allow for a graduated income tax, replacing the state's flat income tax rate. That is one of the highlights of the latest statewide Simon Poll™ from the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

The poll of 1,000 registered voters was conducted between February 10 and 17. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

Graduated Income Tax

Two-thirds (65 percent) of respondents said they favored a constitutional change “to allow a graduated income tax—that is, tax rates would be lower for lower-income taxpayers and higher for upper-income taxpayers.” Support was robust, with 44 percent strongly favoring and 21 percent somewhat favoring the proposal. About a third (32 percent) opposed the proposal, 24 percent strongly and 8 percent somewhat opposed.

Support for the graduated income tax proposal reached majority levels in all three of the major geographic breakdowns in Illinois: 73 percent in favor in the City of Chicago, 68 percent favorable in the Chicago suburbs and 55 percent favorable downstate. Partisan differences were more stark with 83 percent of Democrats favoring the graduated tax system, compared with only half that level of support among Republicans (41 percent). Roughly six in ten (59 percent) Independents favor the graduated tax.

“Millionaire’s Tax”

Similarly, 68 percent favored a so-called “millionaire’s tax,” a 3 percent tax on all income above \$1 million a year, which was the subject of an advisory referendum in November of 2014, when it passed with 60 percent in favor. Half (51 percent) strongly favored the proposal, and another 17 percent were somewhat in favor. Three in ten respondents (30 percent) opposed the proposal, 22 percent strongly, and 8 percent only somewhat.

Like the graduated income tax proposal, the surtax on million-dollar-plus incomes is popular across Illinois' major regions: 72 percent favorable in Chicago, 69 percent in the Chicago suburbs, and 63 percent were in favor Downstate. As before, the proposal is widely popular among Democrats (84 percent favorable), less popular among Republicans (about evenly divided, with 48 percent in favor, 50 percent opposed), with Independents in the middle, 62 percent favoring the “millionaire’s tax.”

Redistricting Reform

By almost three-to-one, voters are in favor of redistricting reform, which has been the subject of two ultimately unsuccessful statewide petition drives. More than six in ten (64 percent) favor having “legislative district maps created and recommended by a commission that is independent of the elected representatives.” Four in ten (40 percent) strongly favored redistricting reform, with 24 percent favoring it somewhat. Two in ten respondents (22 percent) were opposed.

Voters across partisan and regional groupings were in favor of the redistricting commission idea: 67 percent of Chicago city voters, 66 percent of suburban Chicago voters, and 58 percent of Downstate voters in support. Likewise, the redistricting commission was supported by 68 percent of Democrats, 67 percent of Independents, and 60 percent of Republicans.

“The proposal for redistricting by an independent commission is now quite popular as it has been in all of our earlier Simon polls. There seems to be a very active grassroots movement supporting a change, and this year there is an unusual number of legislators from both parties who have signed on,” noted John S. Jackson, one of the co-directors of the poll.

Lobbying Reform

Concern over influence-peddling in Springfield may be driving support for lobbying reform proposals. By a wide margin (85 percent in favor, only 11 percent opposed), voters support a so-called “revolving door” proposal that would force lawmakers “to wait at least one year after leaving office before accepting jobs with firms that lobby their state legislatures.” Support is uniformly robust—in the mid- to high 80 percent range across demographic and geographic categories.

Six in ten (61 percent) support a ban on state legislators being paid for lobbying local governments—46 percent strongly in favor and 15 percent somewhat in favor. A third (33 percent) oppose the proposal. As in the “revolving door” question, there is little meaningful variation according to party or region, with support approaching or exceeding 60 percent throughout.

Pension System Reform

A bare majority (51 percent) favored a constitutional amendment that would allow a reduction in retirement benefits earned in the future by state workers. About a quarter (24 percent) strongly favored, and 27 percent somewhat favored a proposal that “would preserve state retirement

benefits already earned by public employees, but would also allow a reduction in the benefits earned in the future, whether by current or future employees.” More than a third (37 percent) opposed the proposal.

The pension-reduction question received majority support in Chicago (55 percent) and its suburbs (51 percent), and plurality support Downstate (48 percent). The variation occurs among partisan groups: below a majority among Democrats (48 percent) and independents (47 percent), with much more enthusiasm among Republicans (61 percent favor).

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The margin of error for the entire sample of 1,000 voters is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. This means that if we conducted the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances, the population proportion would be within plus or minus the reported margin of error for each subsample. For subsamples, the margin of error increases as the sample size goes down. The margin of error was not adjusted for design effects.

Live telephone interviews were conducted by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas using the random digit dialing method. The telephone sample was provided to Customer Research International by Scientific Telephone Samples. Potential interviewees were screened based on whether they were registered voters and quotas based on area code and sex (<60 percent female). The sample obtained 56 percent male and 44 percent female respondents. Interviewers asked to speak to the youngest registered voter at home at the time of the call. Cell phone interviews accounted for 60 percent of the sample. A Spanish language version of the questionnaire and a Spanish-speaking interviewer were made available.

Field work was conducted from February 11 to 17. No auto-dial or “robo” polling is included. Customer Research International reports no Illinois political clients. The survey was paid for with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund. The data were not weighted in any way. Crosstabs for the referenced questions will be on the Institute’s polling web site, simonpoll.org.

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s (AAPOR) Transparency Initiative. AAPOR works to encourage objective survey standards for practice and disclosure. Membership in the Transparency Initiative reflects a pledge to practice transparency in reporting survey-based findings.

The Institute’s polling data are also archived by four academic institutions for use by scholars and the public. The four open source data repositories are: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (<http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/>), The University of Michigan’s Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (<http://openicpsr.org>), the University of North Carolina’s Odum Institute Dataverse Network (<http://arc.irss.unc.edu/dvn/dv/PSPPI>), and the Simon Institute Collection at OpenSIUC (<http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ppi/>).

Note: The “Simon Poll” and the “Southern Illinois Poll” are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Use and publication of these polls is encouraged- but only with credit to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU Carbondale.

Frequency Tables¹

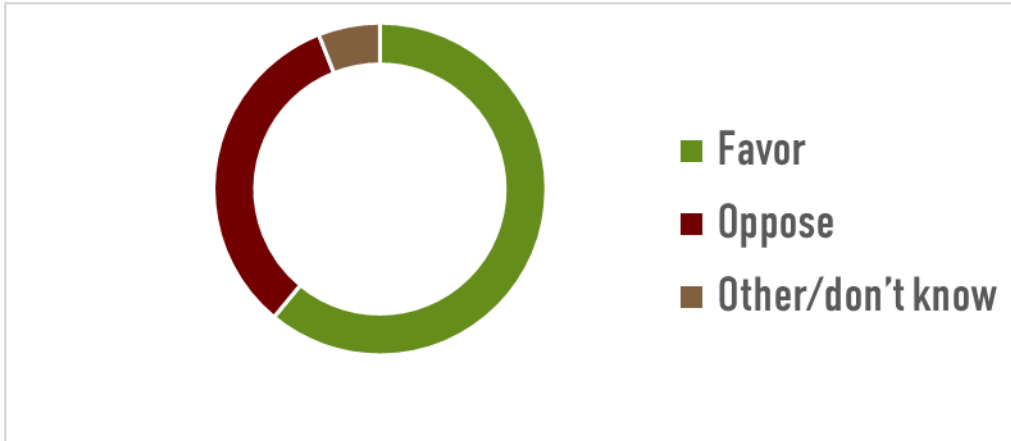
Reforms

Some people have proposed an amendment to the Illinois Constitution that would preserve state retirement benefits already earned by public employees, but would also allow a reduction in the benefits earned in the future, whether by current or future employees?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Favor	51%
<i>Strongly favor</i>	24%
<i>Somewhat favor</i>	27%
Oppose	37%
<i>Somewhat oppose</i>	17%
<i>Strongly oppose</i>	20%
Other/don't know	12%

It has been proposed that Illinois ban state legislators from lobbying for local governments if they get paid for the lobbying. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Favor	61%
<i>Strongly favor</i>	46%
<i>Somewhat favor</i>	15%
Oppose	33%
<i>Somewhat oppose</i>	11%
<i>Strongly oppose</i>	22%
Other/don't know	6%

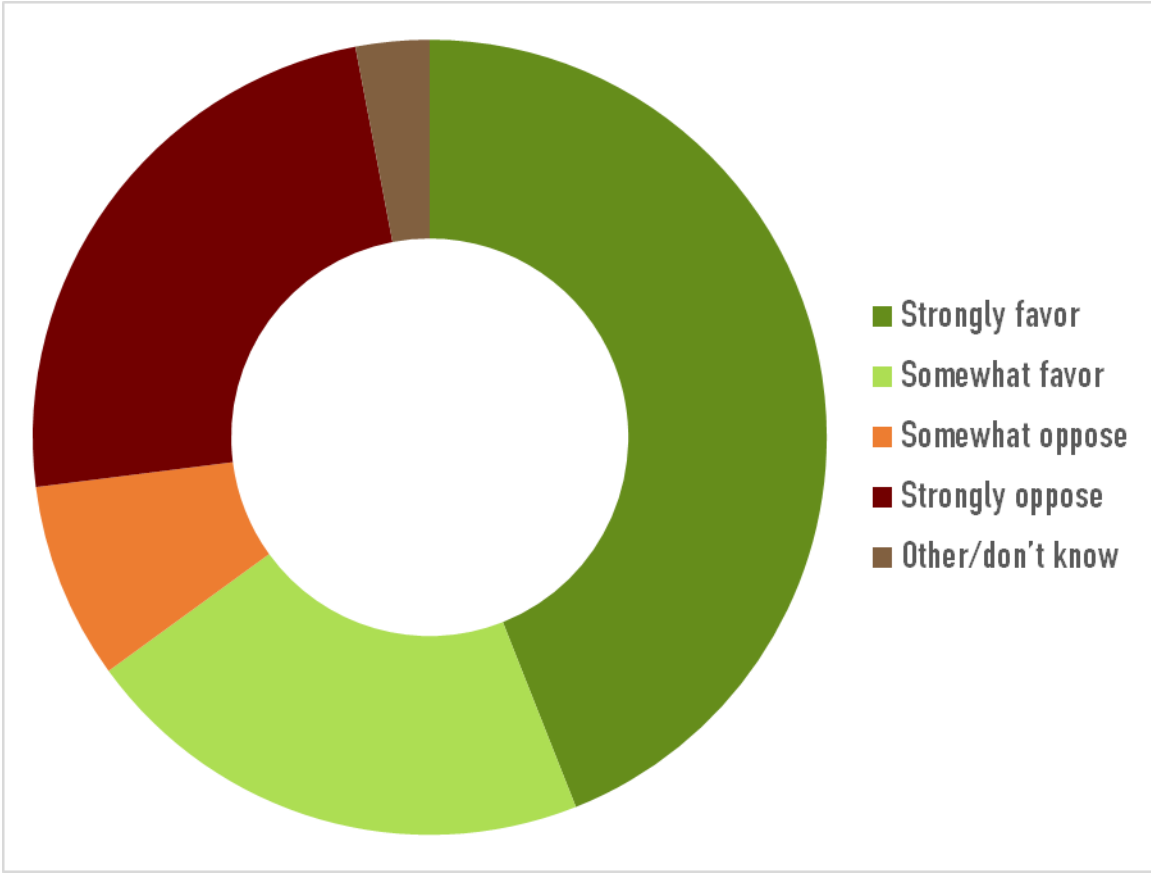


Most states surrounding Illinois require lawmakers to wait at least one year after leaving office before accepting jobs with firms that lobby their state legislatures after leaving office. Illinois does not. Should Illinois require lawmakers to wait at least a year before registering as a lobbyist?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Yes	85%
No	11%
Other/don't know	5%

Would you favor or oppose a proposal to change the Illinois Constitution to allow a graduated income tax – that is, tax rates would be lower for lower-income taxpayers and higher for upper-income taxpayers?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Favor	65%
<i>Strongly favor</i>	44%
<i>Somewhat favor</i>	21%
Oppose	32%
<i>Somewhat oppose</i>	8%
<i>Strongly oppose</i>	24%
Other/don't know	3%



Do you favor or oppose a proposal to impose an extra 3 percent state tax on all income above \$1 million a year?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Favor	68%
<i>Strongly favor</i>	51%
<i>Somewhat favor</i>	17%
Oppose	30%
<i>Somewhat oppose</i>	8%
<i>Strongly oppose</i>	22%
Other/don't know	2%

Demographic Crosstabs

REDISTRICTING

(n=1000)

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Favor	67%	66%	58%
Oppose	21%	21%	25%
Other/Don't know	13%	13%	17%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Favor	68%	67%	60%
Oppose	21%	18%	27%
Other/Don't know	11%	15%	13%

PENSION BENEFITS

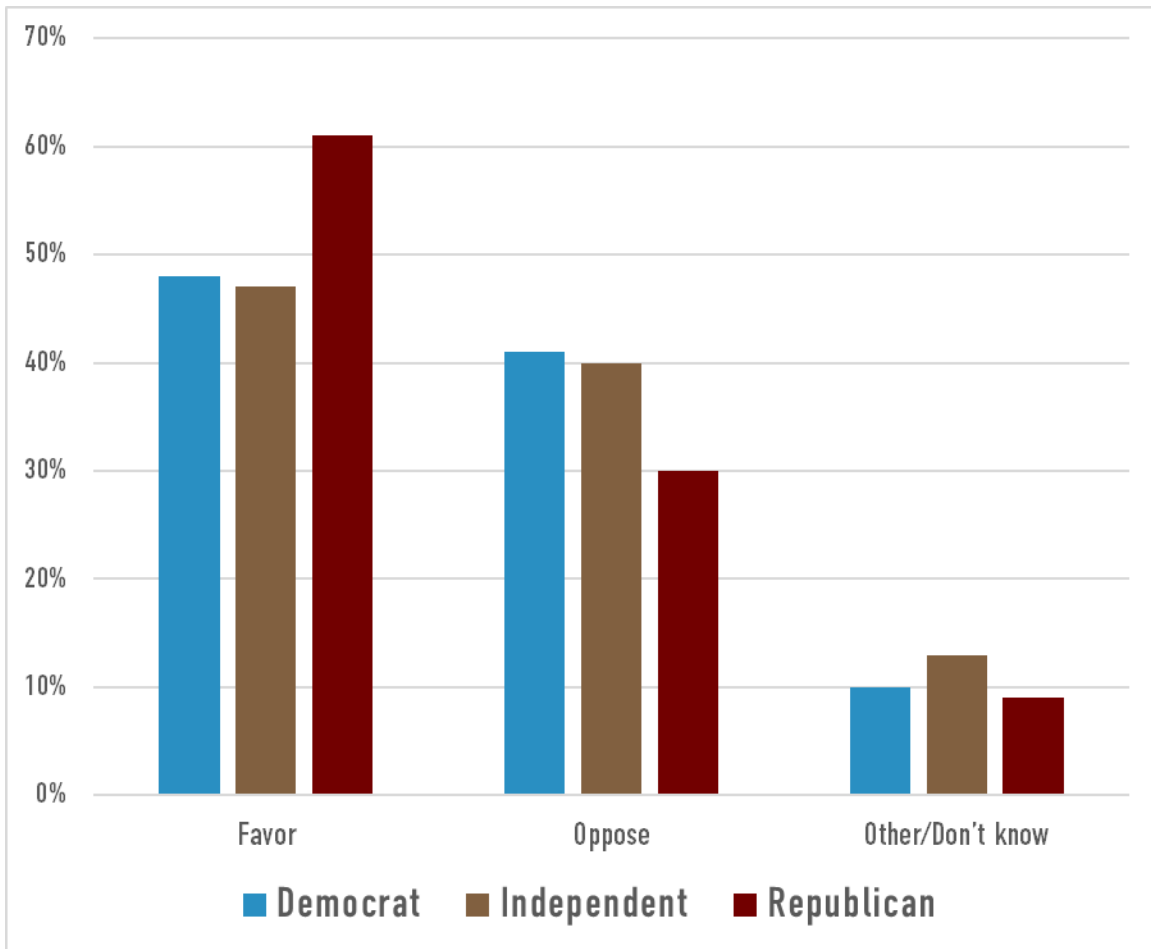
(n=1000)

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Favor	55%	51%	48%
Oppose	35%	39%	37%
Other/Don't know	11%	10%	15%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Favor	48%	47%	61%
Oppose	41%	40%	30%
Other/Don't know	10%	13%	9%



PAID LOBBYING

(n=1000)

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Favor	66%	59%	61%
Oppose	28%	36%	32%
Other/Don't know	7%	5%	6%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Favor	63%	62%	59%
Oppose	32%	33%	34%
Other/Don't know	5%	4%	7%

WAIT BEFORE LOBBYING

(n=1000)

By AREA

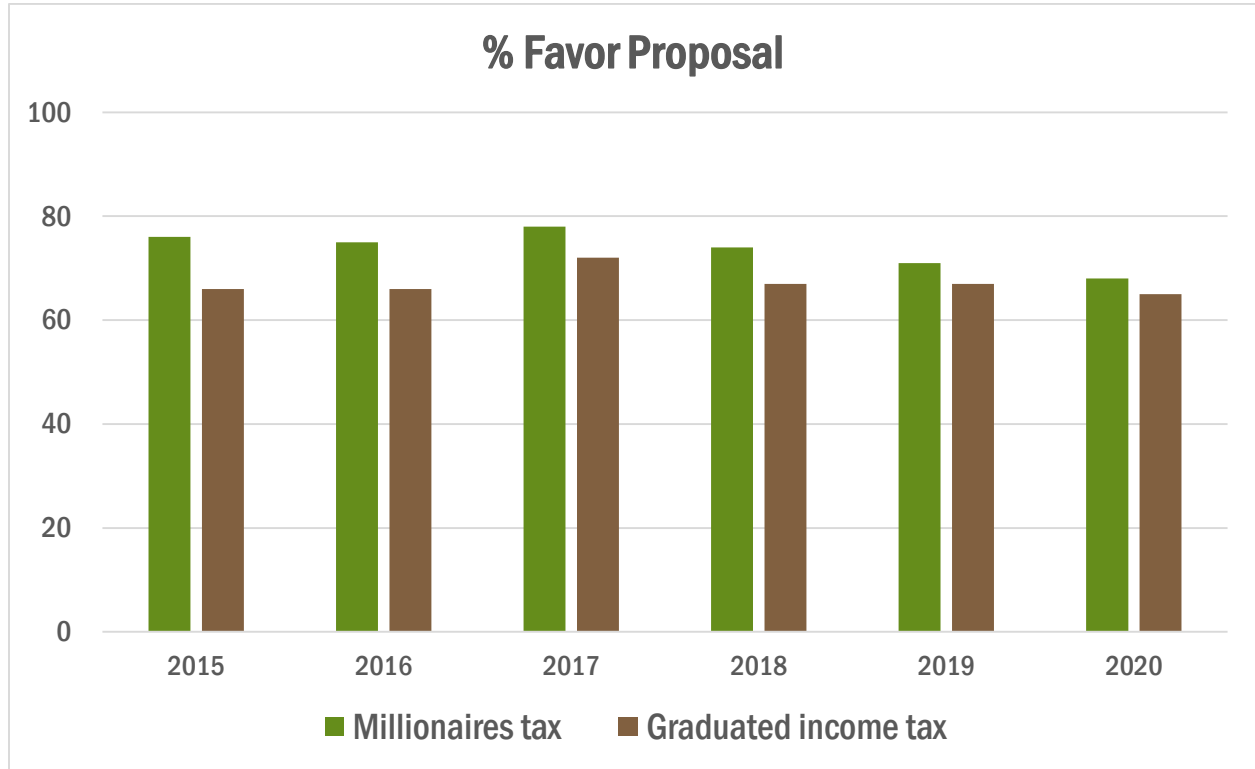
	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Yes	85%	84%	87%
No	10%	12%	8%
Other/Don't know	6%	4%	5%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Yes	84%	86%	88%
No	11%	10%	9%
Other/Don't know	5%	4%	3%

TAXES
(n=1000)

HISTORIC TREND



GRADUATED

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Favor	73%	68%	55%
Oppose	25%	30%	40%
Other/Don't know	3%	2%	5%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Favor	83%	59%	41%
Oppose	15%	37%	55%
Other/Don't know	2%	4%	3%

MILLIONAIRES

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Favor	72%	69%	63%
Oppose	26%	28%	35%
Other/Don't know	3%	2%	2%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Favor	84%	62%	48%
Oppose	14%	36%	50%
Other/Don't know	2%	3%	2%