



DATE: November 14, 2018

TO: Meredith Smith
State Innovation Exchange

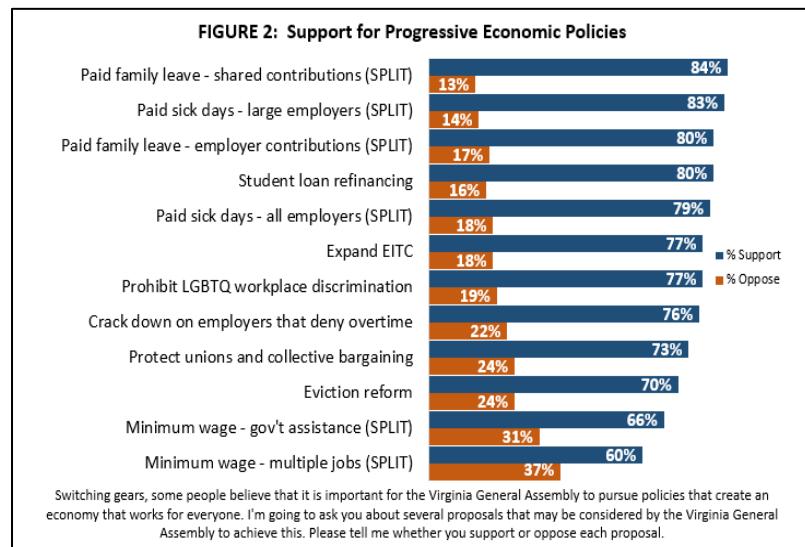
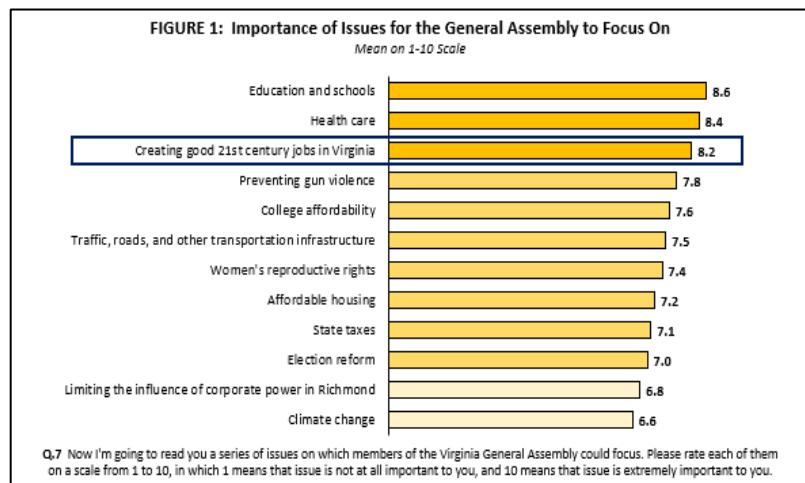
FROM: Ben Lazarus and Emily Gill
TargetSmart

RE: Virginia statewide polling results around progressive agenda

An Economy that Works for Everyone

Our recent statewide poll of registered voters across the Commonwealth of Virginia paints the picture of an electorate that is not only broadly supportive of a progressive economic agenda but views these issues through a lens of substantial urgency and import. Though *education and schools* and *health care* emerge as the overall highest issue priorities for Virginia voters, *creating good twenty-first century jobs in Virginia* is also a top tier concern, as shown in [FIGURE 1](#) here.

These attitudes underpin the broad support we measure for an array of policies that aim to create an economy that works for everyone in the Commonwealth. As shown in [FIGURE 2](#), broad majorities of Virginia voters support nearly every policy prescription tested in this framework, including paid family and medical leave, earned paid sick leave, expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), raising the minimum wage to fifteen dollars an hour, cracking down on wage theft, reforms to the state's eviction laws, creation of a student loan refinancing authority,



prohibitions against LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace, and the protection of workers' rights to form unions and collectively bargain.

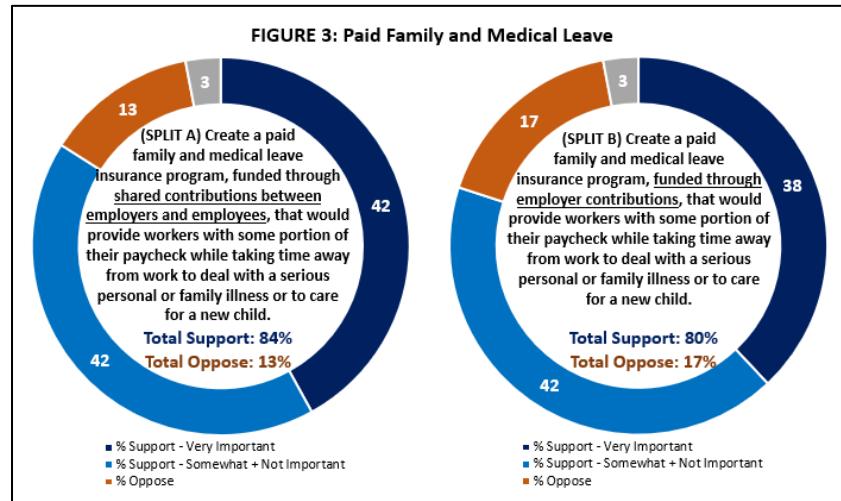
Paid Family Leave

This poll tested a new paid family and medical leave (PFL) insurance program using a split sample methodology. Half of the sample reacted to PFL as funded through shared contributions between employers and employees and the other half reacted to PFL as funded through only employer contributions.

Notably, BOTH formulations are incredibly popular.

Eighty-four percent support the shared contributions formulation and 80 percent support the employer contributions formulation.

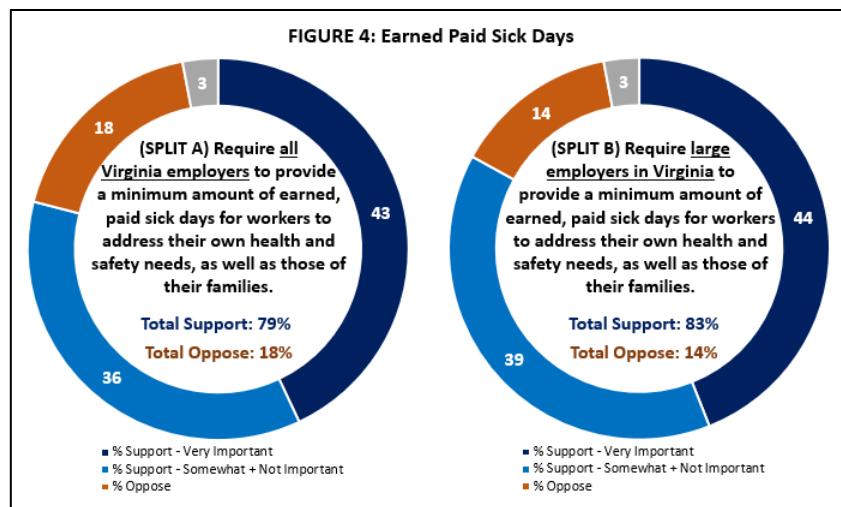
What's more, as shown in [FIGURE 3](#), roughly 4-in-10 voters support these policies and believe them to be *very important* for the General Assembly to pursue.

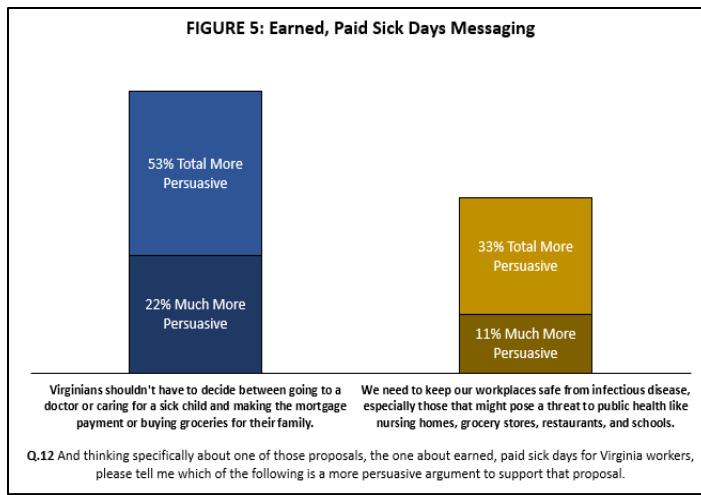


Earned Paid Sick Days

We also tested two different approaches to presenting voters with a policy that requires employers to provide a minimum amount of earned paid sick days with the key distinction being whether *all* employers or *large* employers would be subject to the requirement. Notably, as shown in [FIGURE 4](#), we see very little difference in this exercise, with 8-in-10 voters supportive of both formulations, and 43 to 44 percent pluralities of voters saying they support the proposed requirement and believe it to be *very important*.

Support for earned paid sick days is broad across the partisan spectrum, though closer examination reveals that conservative Republicans are significantly more likely to support a requirement on *large* employers (71 percent support) than they are to support a requirement on *all* employers (50 percent support). We also see a 15-point gap among



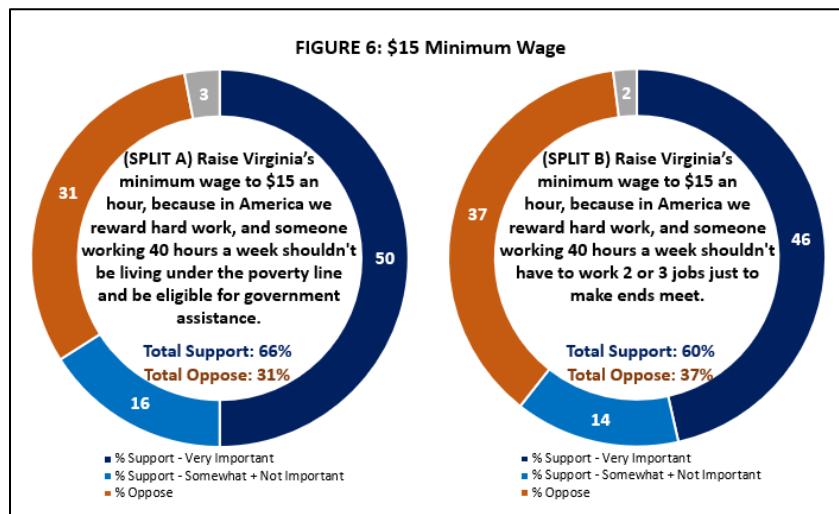


independent voters as 86 percent support a requirement on *large* employers while 71 percent support a requirement on *all* employers.

We also conducted a quick messaging pair on earned paid sick days to understand the relative pull of pocketbook and public health messaging on this issue. As shown in **FIGURE 5**, voters anchor to the pocketbook implications by a 20-point margin over the public health implications.

\$15 Minimum Wage

Depending on how we frame the argument for it, anywhere from 6-in-10 to 2-in-3 Virginia voters support raising the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour (see **FIGURE 6**). This level of support is not quite as broad as the support we measure for paid family and medical leave and paid sick days, but there is marginally more intensity of support behind raising the minimum wage. Also tested using a split



sample methodology, we find that voters are a little more likely to support raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour when we couch the policy change in an argument that asserts someone working forty hours a week shouldn't be living under the poverty line and eligible for government assistance.

FIGURE 7: \$15 Minimum Wage Support by Key Demographics

	Total Support	Total Oppose	Support - Oppose
Total	66%	31%	+36
ID Democrat	91%	5%	+86
ID Independent	62%	36%	+26
ID Republican	37%	58%	-20
Men	56%	40%	+16
Women	75%	23%	+52
White	60%	37%	+22
Non-white	90%	7%	+82
Rural	50%	45%	+5
Suburban	70%	28%	+42
Urban	79%	19%	+60

The minimum wage increase engenders a little more opposition than many of the other progressive economic policies tested in this poll. As we look beneath the surface, we find the debate to be relatively polarizing along partisan lines. Democrats are broadly supportive of increasing the minimum wage and independents lean towards support, but Republicans lean towards opposition. As shown in **FIGURE 7**, voters of color, women, and those who live in suburban to urban census blocks are

particularly supportive of raising the minimum wage.

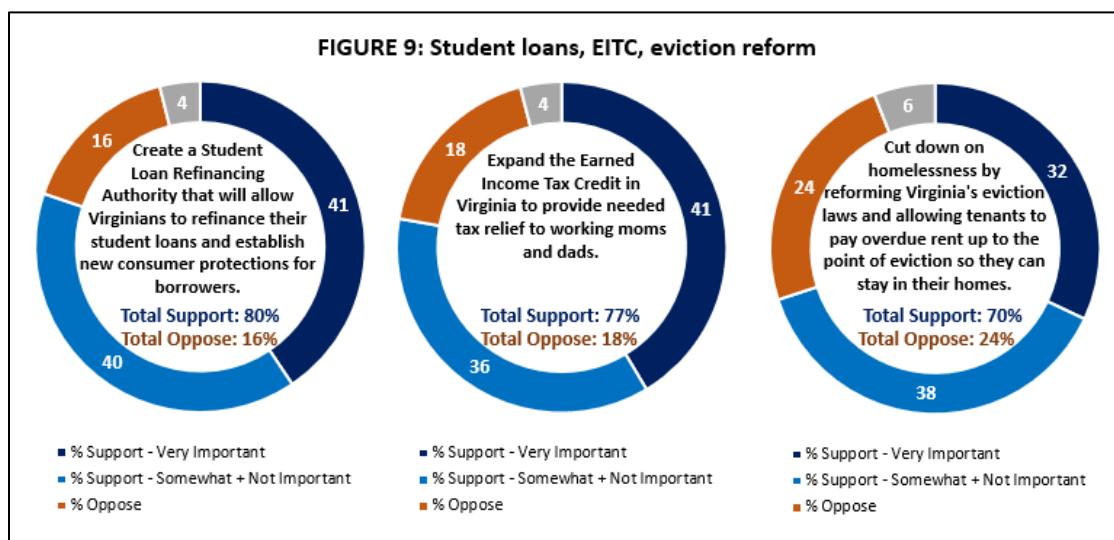
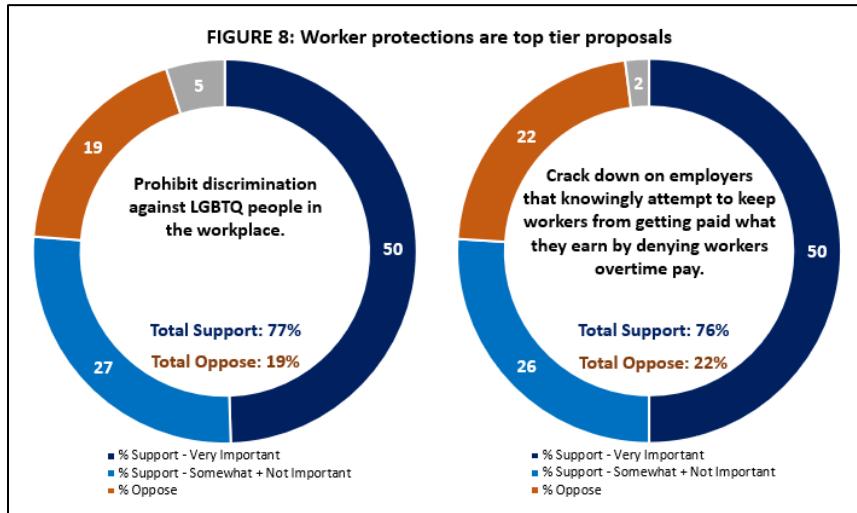
Worker Protections

Two of the top tier policy proposals in this poll fall into this category as roughly 3-in-4 Virginia voters support prohibitions on LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace and cracking down on employers that knowingly attempt to keep workers from getting paid what they earn by denying them overtime pay. What's more, as shown in

[FIGURE 8](#), half of voters believe both policies are *very important* for the General Assembly to pursue. These are not only consensus policy positions but remedies most Virginia voters place significant urgency behind.

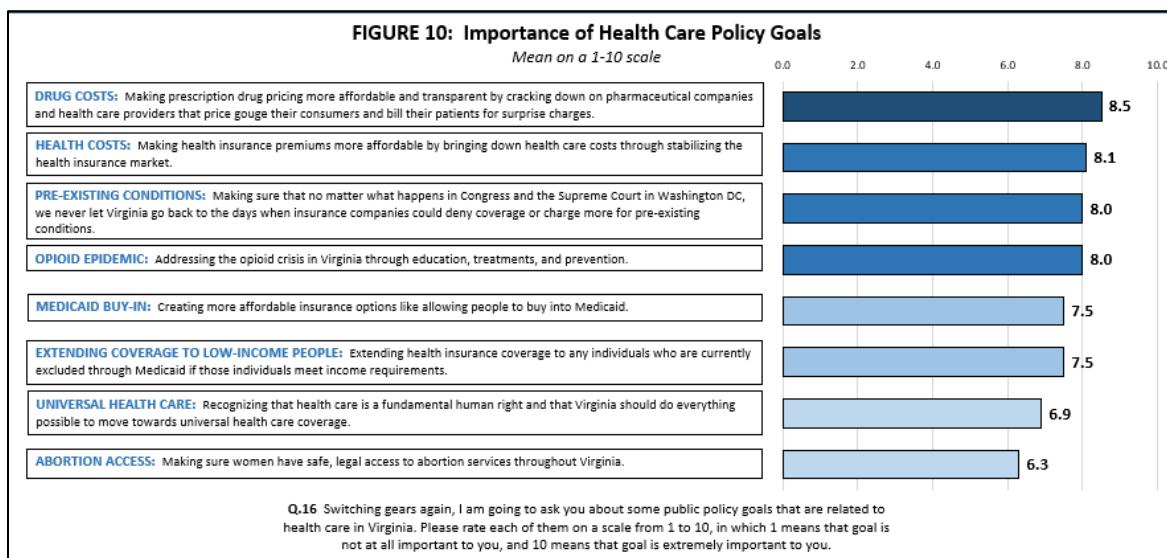
Other Proposals: EITC, Eviction Reform, and Student Loans

Three other very popular proposals round out our examination of public opinion on these various policy prescriptions for creating an economy that works for everyone. As shown in [FIGURE 9](#) below, about 8-in-10 voters support expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the creation of a Student Loan Refinancing Authority that will allow Virginians to refinance their student loans and establish new consumer protections for borrowers, and about 4-in-10 believe these policies to be *very important*. Roughly 7-in-10 voters support reforming Virginia's eviction laws, and about 1-in-3 voters across the state view this policy as *very important*.

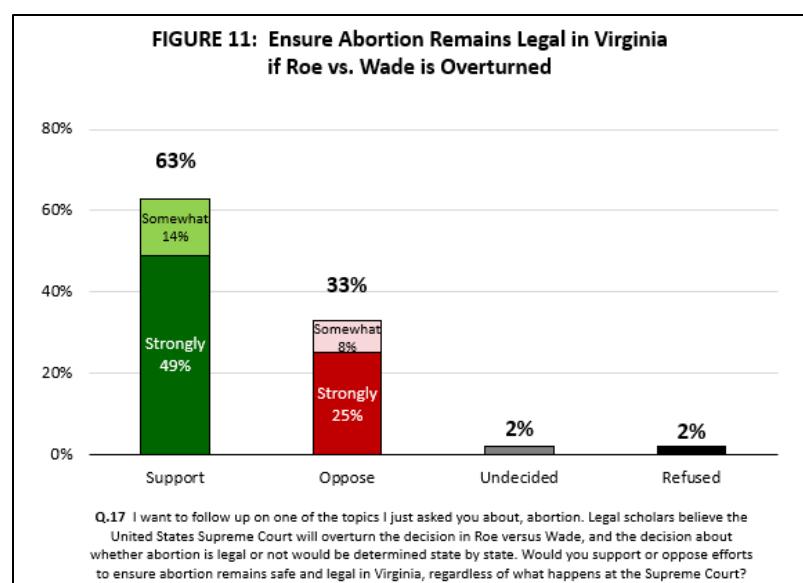


Health Care

As highlighted at the beginning of this memo, Virginia voters view health care as an incredibly important issue (8.4 rating on a 1 to 10 scale, #2 most important issue behind education and schools). To provide progressive advocates with some focus on this issue, the poll investigated a series of potential health care policy goals. As shown in [FIGURE 10](#), Virginia voters place the most importance on making prescription drugs more affordable. Bringing down health care costs more broadly and making premiums more affordable is also a top health care priority. Maintaining coverage for pre-existing conditions and addressing the opioid crisis are tied in third place for health care policy importance. Allowing people to buy into Medicaid and extending Medicaid coverage to more low-income people form a third tier, while recognizing health care as a human right and making sure women have safe, legal access to abortion services rank as lower priority health care goals.



Though abortion access is comparatively less pressing than out-of-pocket costs, pre-existing conditions, and the opioid crisis in particular, a separate exercise demonstrates that Virginia voters are broadly committed to preserving access to abortion. As shown in [FIGURE 11](#), nearly 2-in-3 Virginia voters



support efforts to ensure abortion remains safe and legal in Virginia, regardless of what happens at the Supreme Court. Nearly half are strongly supportive, while just 1-in-4 voters strongly oppose these efforts.

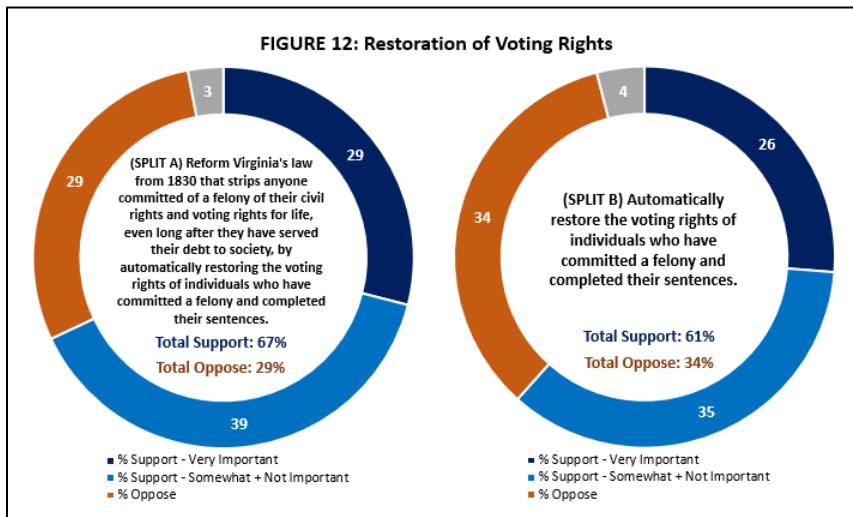
Progressive Reform Agenda

In addition to the economic and health care policy areas investigated in this poll, we also explored a variety of reform policies that members of General

Assembly could consider in the next legislative session. On the whole, these proposals are marginally less popular than the more economically-focused agenda discussed in this memo up to this point. That said, almost all of them draw majority support.

Restoration of Voting Rights

Most Virginia voters are supportive of efforts to restore voting rights for individuals who have committed a felony and completed their sentences. As shown in [FIGURE 12](#), providing more information about the antiquated nature of Virginia's current law that disenfranchises felons for life results in marginally more support and marginally more urgency for changing the law. A majority of voters across



the partisan spectrum (84 percent among Democrats, 62 percent among independents, and 52 percent among Republicans) support the policy in the longer, more detailed formulation. In the shorter, more straightforward formulation we see similar numbers of Democrats behind the policy (83 percent) but softening among independents (56 percent) and especially Republicans (40 percent).

Driver's Licenses Regardless of Immigration Status

Roughly two thirds of Virginia voters support reforms that will allow all Virginians, regardless of their immigration status or ability to pay fines, to get driver's licenses. As shown in [FIGURE 13](#), there is slightly more support and intensity behind the policy when it is framed around the societal benefits rather than individual benefits. However, given the marginal differences and realities of sampling error, there is no statistically significant difference between these two formulations. As one might expect, this is a rather partied debate. As shown in [FIGURE 14](#) on page 7, Democrats are at least twice as likely as Republicans to support this policy. Notably, a majority of independent voters also come down on the side of support.

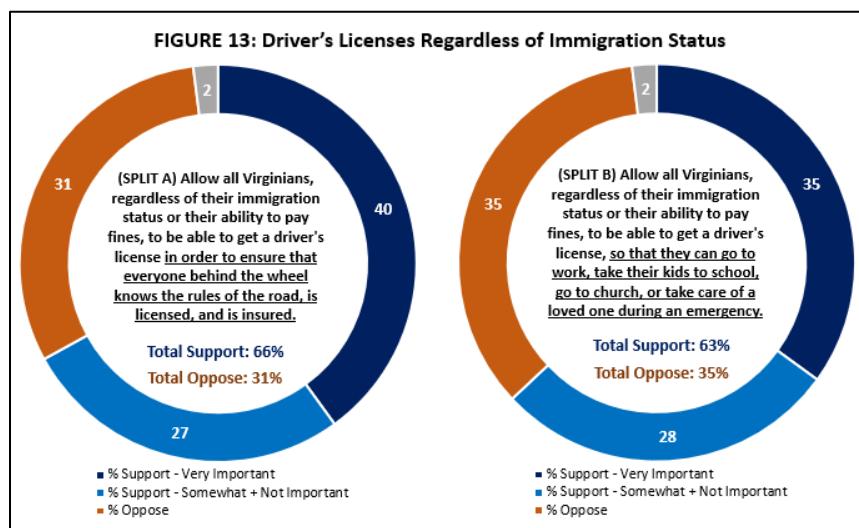


FIGURE 14: Support for Driver's License Policy by Party ID

	Total Support	Democrats Support	Independents Support	Republicans Support
(SPLIT A) Allow all Virginians, regardless of their immigration status or their ability to pay fines, to be able to get a driver's license in order to ensure that everyone behind the wheel knows the rules of the road, is licensed, and is insured.	66%	88%	61%	43%
(SPLIT B) Allow all Virginians, regardless of their immigration status or their ability to pay fines, to be able to get a driver's license so that they can go to work, take their kids to school, go to church, or take care of a loved one during an emergency.	63%	92%	53%	36%

Survey Methodology

TargetSmart designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. The survey reached 700 adults (600 weighted), age 18 or older, who indicated they were registered to vote in Virginia. The survey was conducted from August 14-18, 2018.

The sample was randomly selected from TargetSmart's enhanced voter file. Fifty-two percent of respondents were reached on wireless phones (53 percent weighted). Quotas were assigned to reflect the demographic distribution of registered voters in Virginia. The data were weighted by gender, age, modeled partisanship, modeled race, and region to ensure an accurate reflection of the population.

A representative base sample of 600 respondents was augmented by an oversample of 100 "surge" respondents who voted in the November 2017 general election but did not vote in the November 2015 general election though they were eligible to vote in Virginia at that time. The oversample was weighted into the base sample such that the overall effective sample size is 600.

The overall margin of error is +/-4.0%. The margin of error for the surge population is +/-6.0%. The margin of error for other subgroups varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding.