

**To:** Mike Tidwell, Director  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network

**From:** Steve Raabe, OpinionWorks

**Date:** March 26, 2012

**Subject:** Maryland Voters Strongly Support Fracking Studies

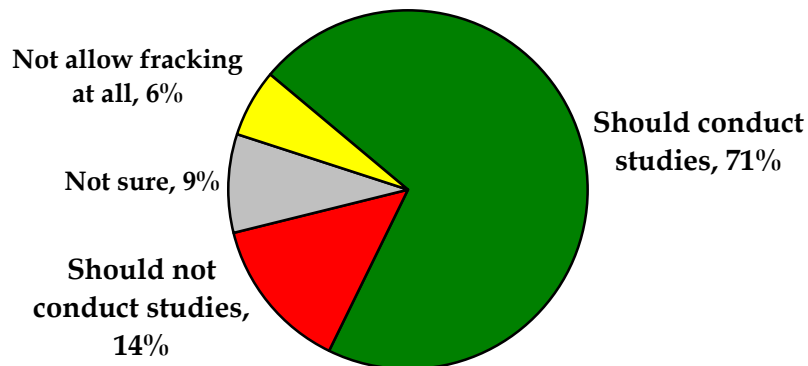
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OpinionWorks has polled Maryland voters on two issues related to proposals to drill for natural gas using a method known as hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking” for short. This statewide voter poll, conducted March 16-19, 2012 among 601 registered voters statewide, has found overwhelmingly that Marylanders want studies of the fracking method before it is permitted in the State, and that they want the energy companies to pay for those studies.

### Strong Voter Support for Conducting Studies of Fracking

Overwhelmingly, Maryland’s voters believe the State should conduct studies before permitting hydraulic fracturing, in order to develop what are known as “best practices” guidelines for energy companies to follow. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the State’s voters favor conducting such studies of fracking, while 14% would oppose them. Six percent volunteered that fracking should not be allowed at all, regardless of any studies that might be done.

### Should the State Conduct Studies before Allowing Fracking?



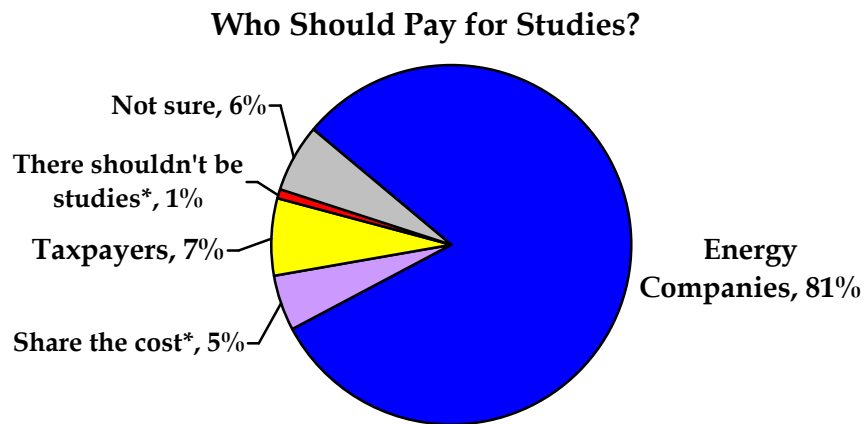
*“You may have heard of a new drilling technique for natural gas called “hydraulic fracturing” or “fracking” for short. This technique is used widely in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, but is not yet permitted in Maryland. While fracking has become a major source of natural gas, in other states fracking has led to land rights disputes and serious pollution concerns. Given these facts, do you think the State of Maryland should or should not conduct studies to develop what are known as ‘best practices’ guidelines – including environmental protection guidelines – for energy companies to follow before permitting ‘hydraulic fracturing’ when drilling for natural gas in Maryland?”*

Support for studying fracking is nearly equally strong in Western Maryland, where the drilling would be concentrated. In the three westernmost counties, 65% of voters think there should be studies, while 14% oppose them. Another 8% were not willing to support studies, because they do not believe there should be fracking at all.

There is no significant partisan divide on this issue, with 67% of Republicans and 74% of Democrats supporting conducting studies. In fact, support for conducting studies to develop guidelines for fracking does not fall below 60% among any voter subgroup we studied.

### Voters Believe Energy Companies Should Pay

If such studies were conducted, there is a near consensus on the part of voters that the energy companies should pay for them, rather than the taxpayers. Eight voters in ten (81%) believe energy companies should pay for the studies, with only 7% saying it should be the responsibility of taxpayers. Five percent volunteered that paying for the studies should be a shared responsibility.



*"If such studies were required, should the energy companies or the taxpayers pay for them?"*

*\*Volunteered responses*

The view that energy companies should pay is even more pronounced among women (83%), voters over age 50 (83%), and African-American voters (90%).

### How This Survey Was Conducted

OpinionWorks interviewed 601 randomly-selected registered voters across Maryland by telephone March 16-19, 2012. The poll has a potential sampling error of no more than  $\pm 4.0\%$  at a 95% confidence level, meaning the survey results would differ by no more than that margin at least 95% of the time if *every* registered voter in Maryland had been interviewed.

Interviewees were drawn randomly from the database of registered voters provided by the Maryland State Board of Elections and matched with telephone numbers by a commercial vendor. The sample was balanced regionally and by political party, and screened to ensure that only registered voters were interviewed. Weights were applied to bring the voter sample into strict compliance with the demographic breakdown of Maryland's registered voter population.

### Brief Background on OpinionWorks

OpinionWorks conducts frequent opinion studies in Maryland and the surrounding states. We are the polling organization for *The Baltimore Sun*, having accurately forecast the 14-point gubernatorial margin in 2010 and the Baltimore mayoral margin in 2011, and have polled for numerous other media throughout the region. We work for state and local agencies throughout the Mid-Atlantic, and for a variety of non-profit and for-profit entities within the region and nationally.