

December 5, 2011

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Ben Tulchin and Corey O'Neil, Tulchin Research  
**Re:** **California Decline-to-State (DTS) Voters Show Strong Progressive, Pro-Environment Stance**

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Tulchin Research recently conducted a ground-breaking in-depth survey among 600 decline-to-state (DTS) voters in California on behalf of the California League of Conservation Voters Education Fund. With DTS voters increasing from 15 to 20 percent of the electorate just since 2006, the purpose of the public opinion survey was to better understand this key swing and growing segment of voters and their attitudes toward various issues. The main focus of the survey centered on environmental concerns and also included questions addressing other relevant topics.

### Executive Summary

Over the past several election cycles, statewide polling has shown decline-to-state voters routinely favoring Democratic candidates over Republicans by double-digits. Progressive candidates' consistently strong performances with these important swing voters have been a major reason why California has become such a blue (Democratic) and green (pro-environment) state. Voters' rejection of Proposition 23 in the 2010 mid-term elections serves as a prime example of voters' willingness to support conservation policies, with DTS voters playing a key role in the successful outcome of the pro-environment position in that campaign.

As we head into a presidential election year filled with intrigue in California in the form of new legislative and Congressional districts due to redistricting and a new "top two" primary system, the question to ask moving forward is will DTS voters continue to lean towards more progressive candidates with strong pro-environment values or can more conservative candidates make a competitive run at them?

To answer this question, CLCV Education Fund asked Tulchin Research to conduct a first-of-its-kind statewide survey among DTS voters to gain a better understanding of these swing voters and to quantify their attitudes on a range of touchstone issues, particularly on conservation issues. The bottom line is that the survey results are very encouraging for progressive, pro-environment candidates running for office and provide little solace for conservative candidates looking to break a losing streak.

Overall, the statewide survey found DTS voters are relatively progressive on a range of issues and are especially progressive and consistently so when it comes to conservation issues. Notably:

- **A solid 60+% routinely take a pro-conservation side** when given a choice;
- **Two-thirds (65 percent) of DTS voters consider themselves "conservationists";**

- **They believe environmental regulations are a benefit to society and can help improve the economy** and create jobs;
  - By a 2-to-1 margin, DTS voters believe climate change is a serious problem and want to see it addressed.
- Furthermore, DTS voters:
  - Support Barack Obama over Mitt Romney for president;
  - Are pro-choice;
  - Favor marriage equality;
  - Are aware of and agree with the Occupy Wall Street movement.
- Beyond their opinions on political issues, the survey also found that DTS voters are generally more technologically “connected” than all voters statewide;
  - They have a greater tendency to use social media sites than voters overall;
  - They show a large increase in Smartphone use compared to a year ago.

We highlight the key findings below.

### DTS Voters Are Strongly Pro-Conservation

The survey found that **DTS voters are solidly pro-environment and support conservation policies even when faced with a choice.**

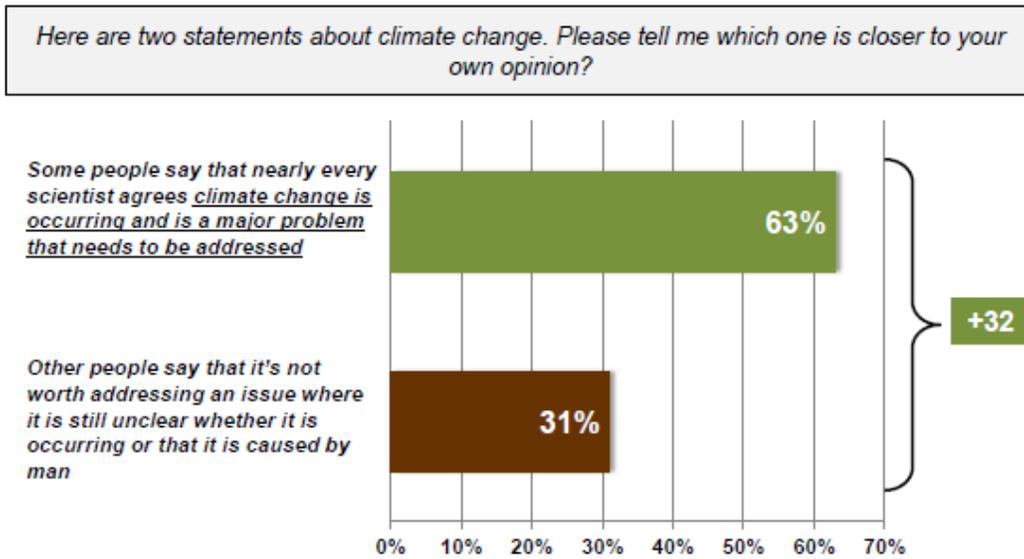
In fact, two-thirds (65 percent) consider themselves to be *conservationists* (32 percent strongly, 33 percent somewhat). Conversely, just over a quarter (26 percent) of DTS voters do not consider themselves as conservationists and 9 percent are unsure.

#### Graphic 1: DTS Voters as Conservationists

| <i>Do you consider yourself a <u>conservationist</u>?</i> |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Total Yes</b>  | <b>65%</b> |
| Yes, strongly   | 32%        |
| Yes, somewhat   | 33%        |
| <b>No</b>   | <b>26%</b> |
| Don't know  | 9%         |
| <b>Yes - No</b>   | <b>+39</b> |

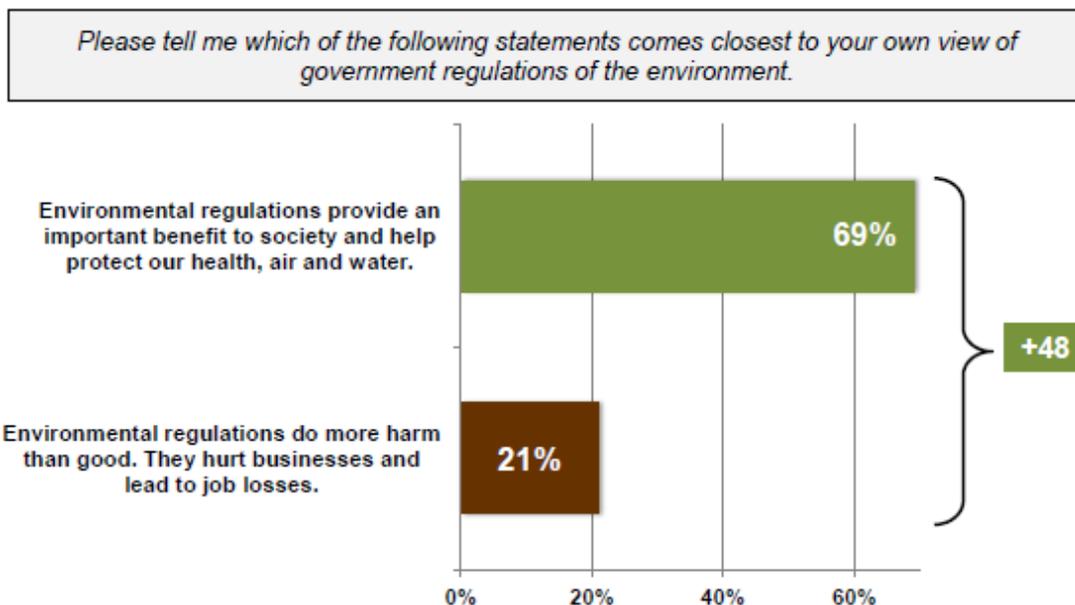
DTS voters believe climate change is a serious problem and want action taken to deal with this concern. Notably, DTS voters agree *climate change is occurring and is a major problem that needs to be addressed* by a 2-to-1 margin (63 percent), while nearly a third of voters (31 percent) believe climate change is not an issue worth addressing.

**Graphic 2: DTS Voters' Attitudes on Climate Change**



With a struggling economy, there has been a concerted effort to roll back environmental regulations by arguing that this will benefit the economy. In this context, we asked DTS voters how they feel about environmental regulations and their impact on the economy and society and whether or not they should be cut back. When DTS voters were asked about their opinions on environmental regulations made by our lawmakers, an overwhelming 69 percent believe *environmental regulations provide an important benefit to our society and help to protect our air, land and water*. Just 1-in 5 voters (21 percent) believe *environmental regulations do more harm than good*.

**Graphic 3: DTS Voters' Attitudes on Environmental Regulations**

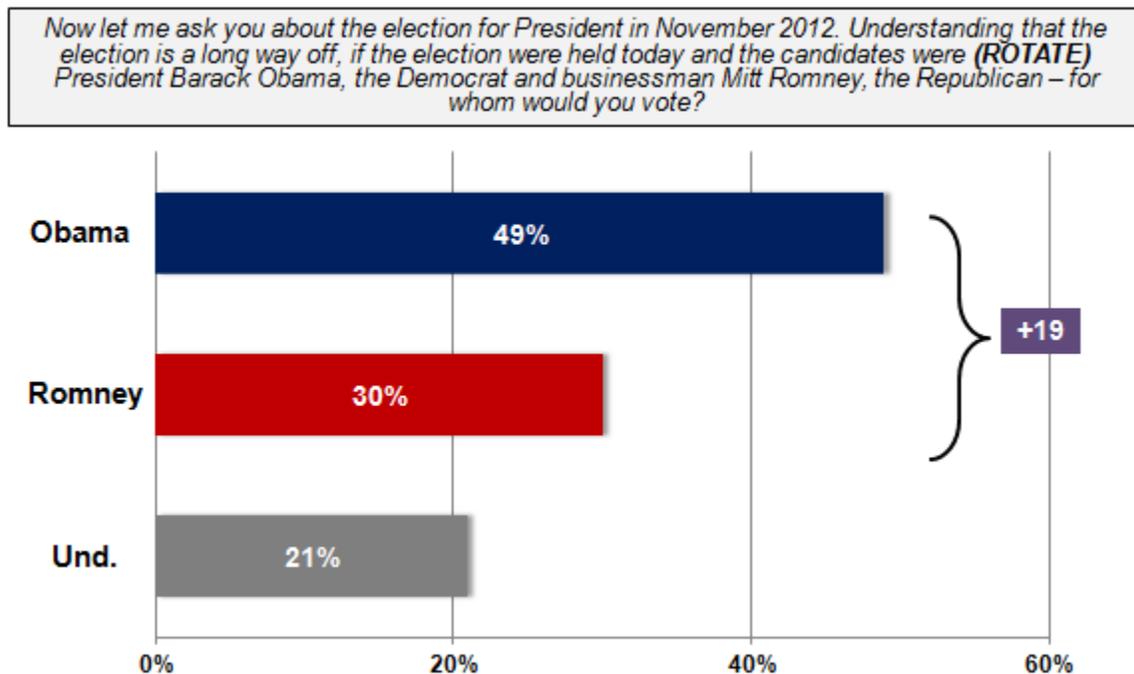


### Strong and Consistent Progressive Values

To gain a deeper and broader understanding of DTS voters and their political views, we asked a range of questions covering some of the most timely and polemical social and political issues. The results show a consistently progressive bent to DTS voters that explain their progressive voting behavior in recent years and indicate they will most likely favor a progressive candidate over a conservative candidate through the next election cycle and likely beyond that as well.

**Presidential Vote:** We asked DTS voters about their opinions on the presidential race which helps to provide context for their views on several progressive issues. President Obama currently has a commanding lead over former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. Specifically, nearly half of DTS voters (49 percent) support the President in a two-way match-up over the Republican who is supported by just 30 percent of voters in the state. Currently one out of five voters (21 percent) remain undecided.

Graphic 4: The 2012 Presidential Vote



**Pro-Choice or Pro-Life?** Among issue-based questions, a woman’s reproductive right proves to be one of the issues garnering the most progressive support. Nearly two-thirds of DTS voters (63 percent) believe abortion should be *legal in all cases* (26 percent) or *legal in most cases* (37 percent). Just over a quarter (27 percent) believes abortion should be *illegal in all* (10 percent) or *most cases* (17 percent), a gap of 36 points favoring a woman’s right to choose over the pro-life position.

### Graphic 5: Opinions on Abortion

| <i>When it comes to your view on abortion, do you believe abortion should be (ROTATE) legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases?</i> |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Total Pro-Choice</b>  | <b>63%</b> |
| Legal in all cases   | 26%        |
| Legal in most cases  | 37%        |
| <b>Total Pro-Life</b>  | <b>27%</b> |
| Illegal in most cases  | 17%        |
| Illegal in all cases   | 10%        |
| Don't know   | 9%         |
| <b>Pro-Choice – Pro-Life</b>   | <b>+36</b> |

**Gay Marriage:** DTS voters also show strong support for the LGBT community and marriage equality. By a 2-to-1 margin, three out of five (60 percent) DTS voters *support allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally*, with a resounding 44 percent who *strongly* support legal avenues to marriage. In contrast, less than a third (30 percent total oppose) oppose legalizing marriage for gay and lesbian couples and less than one out of ten is undecided.

### Graphic 6: Opinions on Gay Marriage

| <i>Do you support or oppose allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally?</i> |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Total Support Gay Marriage</b>  | <b>60%</b> |
| Strongly support   | 44%        |
| Somewhat support   | 16%        |
| <b>Total Oppose Gay Marriage</b>   | <b>30%</b> |
| Somewhat oppose  | 6%         |
| Strongly oppose  | 24%        |
| Don't know   | 9%         |
| <b>Support - Oppose</b>  | <b>+30</b> |

**Occupy Wall Street:** With the Occupy Wall Street movement taking up much of the media bandwidth this fall, we asked voters how much they have heard about the movement and whether or not they agree with it. More than four out of five DTS voters (85 percent) say they have heard about the movement with close to a majority (48 percent) who say they have heard *a lot* and a quarter (25 percent) who say they have heard *some* while just 15 percent say they have not heard anything about the movement.

### Graphic 7: Awareness of Occupy Wall Street

| <i>Have you heard, read, or seen anything recently about the Occupy Wall Street protests and similar protests in other cities?</i> |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Total Yes</b>   | <b>85%</b> |
| Yes, a lot   | 48%        |
| Yes, some  | 25%        |
| Yes, only a little   | 11%        |
| <b>No</b>  | <b>15%</b> |
| Don't know   | 1%         |
| <b>Yes - No</b>  | <b>+70</b> |

In general, over a majority of DTS voters (53 percent) agree with the Occupy Wall Street protests while just under a third (32 percent) disagrees and 15 percent remain undecided about the movement. We split the sample and asked the same question with a brief description of what the protests are about, the number of DTS voters who agree with the movement jumps to 60 percent while just over a quarter (26 percent) disagree with the movement. The table below shows the language difference between the two questions and their respective results.

### Graphic 8: DTS Voters Agree with Occupy Wall Street

| <i>From what you have heard, would you say that you generally agree or disagree with the Occupy Wall Street protests?*</i> |            | <i>From what you have heard, would you say that you generally agree or disagree with the Occupy Wall Street protesters who are protesting against corporations and the wealthy who continue to get richer while not paying their fair share in taxes?*</i> |            |
|--|------------|--|------------|
| <b>Agree</b>   | <b>53%</b> |  | <b>60%</b> |
| Disagree   | 32%        |  | 26%        |
| Don't know   | 15%        |  | 13%        |

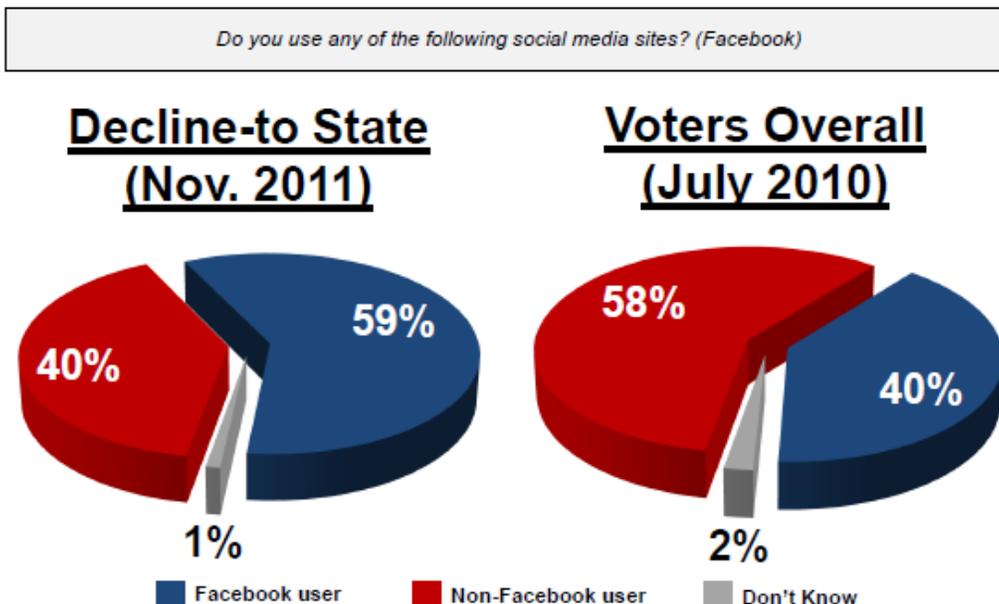
\*Each question was asked to half the sample

### Characteristics of Decline-to-State Voters

In comparing DTS voters to voters of all party designations in the state, an interesting and noteworthy discovery we found in the survey is that DTS voters are much more connected or wired technologically than the average voter overall.

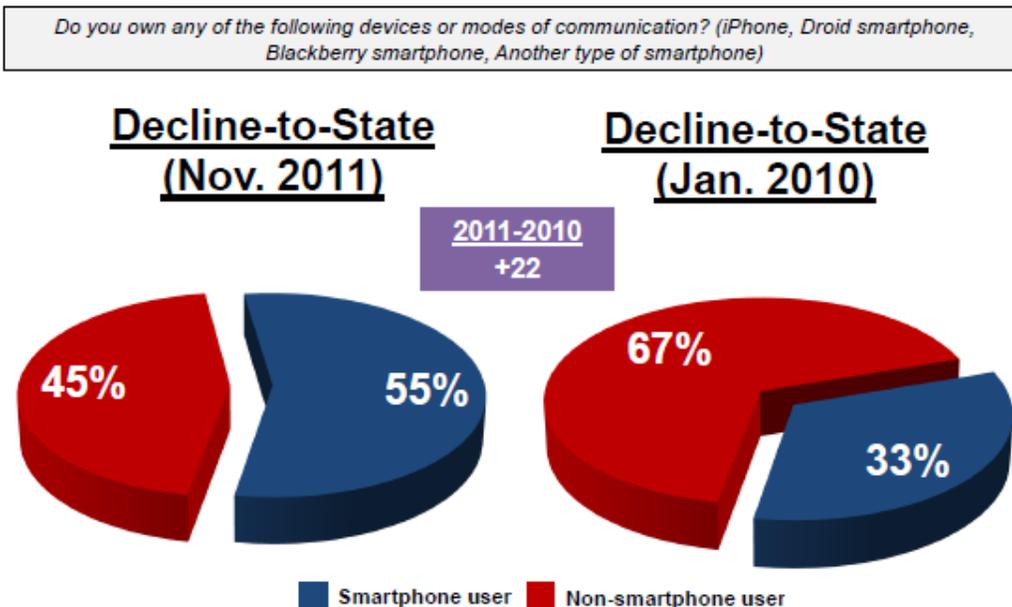
A strong majority of DTS voters (59 percent) use Facebook, which is 19 points higher than the 40 percent of voters overall who said they used Facebook in a statewide survey Tulchin Research conducted last year. These comparative results help to highlight the connected nature of DTS voters and how they receive information and communicate with others.

**Graphic 9: Facebook Use Among DTS Voters**



Similarly, Smartphone use has increased dramatically with DTS voters in the state. Since we last asked the question to voters statewide, Smartphone use has seen an increase of 22 percentage points with over a majority (55 percent) who acknowledge using of some kind of Smartphone device compared to just a third of DTS voters (33 percent) who said they were using them in January of 2010.

**Graphic 10: Smartphone Use Among DTS Voters**



These findings help to illustrate the opportunities CLCV and other environmental organizations have in tapping in to DTS voters from a technological angle and the importance of adapting to the expanded use of social media and mobile technologies that continue to evolve.

**Survey Methodology:** From October 27 – November 2, 2011, Tulchin Research conducted a telephone survey among 600 likely Decline-to-State voters in California using live, professional interviewers. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4.0 percentage points.