

2016 Primary Results Confirm Gas Tax Increase Vote Not Politically Toxic

A new analysis of eight states that passed legislation to increase their state motor fuel taxes in 2015 to pay for important new transportation improvements shows that 98 percent of Republican and Democratic lawmakers who supported the bill won their primary races in 2016.

“These results should dispel any notion that voting to increase the state gas tax is politically toxic,” says American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) Chief Economist Dr. Alison Premo Black, who conducted the research. “Voters expect lawmakers to put forward solutions to help reduce traffic congestion, improve road safety and help grow the economy. They are also willing to pay for these expanded investments.”

According to ARTBA’s Transportation Investment Advocacy Center™ (TIAC), eight states— Iowa, South Dakota, Utah, Idaho, Georgia, Nebraska, Washington, and Michigan— approved a gas tax increase or its equivalent in 2015. Six of these states had a Republican governor and Republican majority legislature at the time the legislation was passed.

For most state lawmakers who voted on a motor fuel tax measure last year, 2016 is the first time they are facing re-election.

In the eight states, 231 Democratic state legislators voted in favor of increasing state motor fuel taxes (66 percent of all Democrats in office at the time of the vote). In the 2016 primaries, 125 of these Democrats were up for re-election, with 122 winning their primary race. Just three Democrats who supported a gas tax increase and were up for re-election lost their seat in the primaries.

One hundred and thirteen Democratic lawmakers voted against a gas tax increase in 2015, with 39 of those legislators up for re-election in 2016, and one losing their seat in their primary race.

In 2015, 440 Republican state legislators supported successful legislation to increase state gas taxes (65 percent of all Republicans in office at the time of the vote). In the 2016 primaries, 293 of these Republicans ran for re-election, with 287 winning, and only six losing their seat.

Of the 228 Republicans who voted against raising their state gas tax in 2015, 172 lawmakers ran for re-election in 2016, with 167 successfully moving on to the general election, and five losing their seat in the primary.

Some conservative lawmakers had voiced concerns about their primary race as several states faced pressure from professional anti-tax groups to oppose increasing motor fuel taxes.

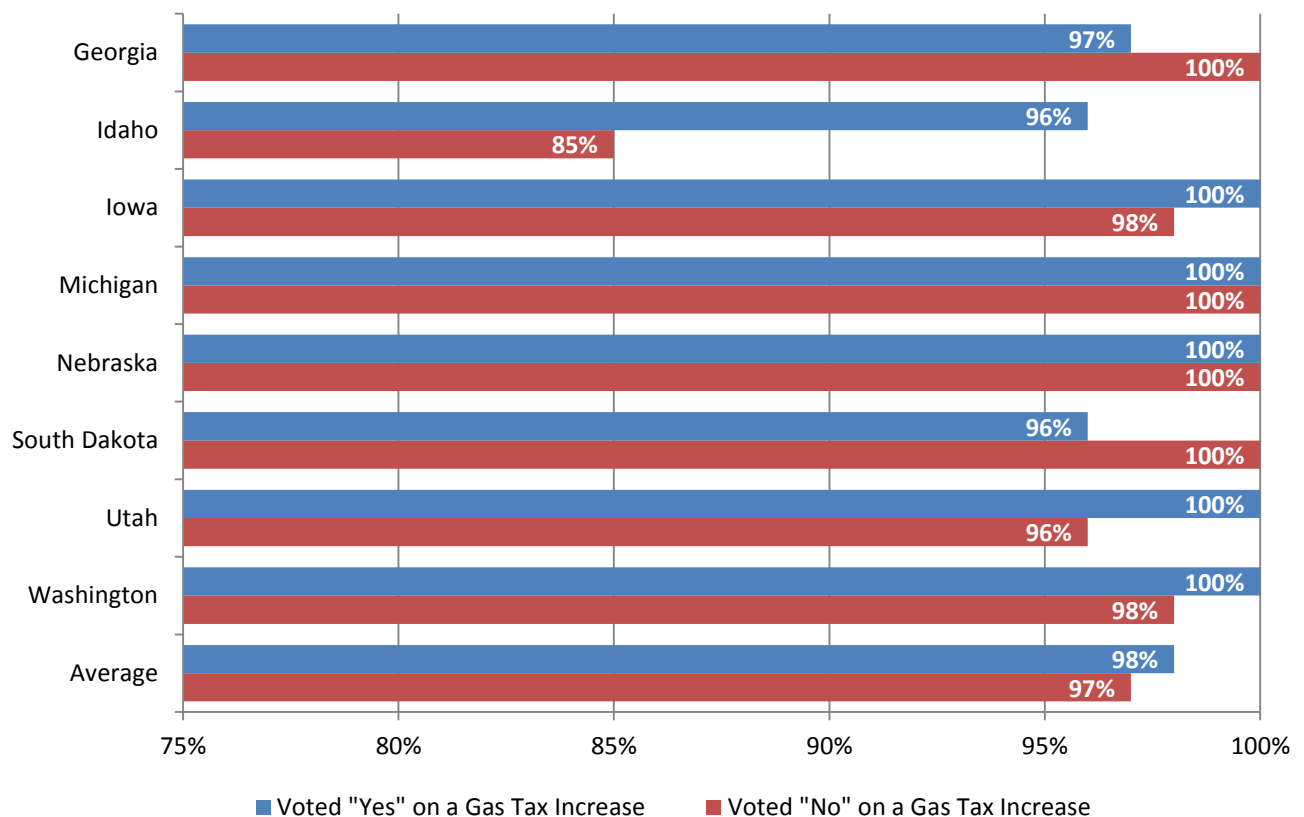
In a May 2015 report, “State Analysis Shows Gas Tax Supporters Not Hurt at Ballot Box,” the ARTBA-TIAC found that 95 percent of all Republican state legislators who voted to increase their state gas tax to invest in transportation infrastructure in 2013 and 2014, and ran for reelection in November 2014 won their races. On the Democratic side, 88 percent of state legislators who voted in favor of a state gas tax increase and ran for reelection in November 2014 were re-elected. This compared to 94 percent of

Republicans and 86 percent of Democrats who voted against a gas tax increase, and won their November 2014 re-election campaign.

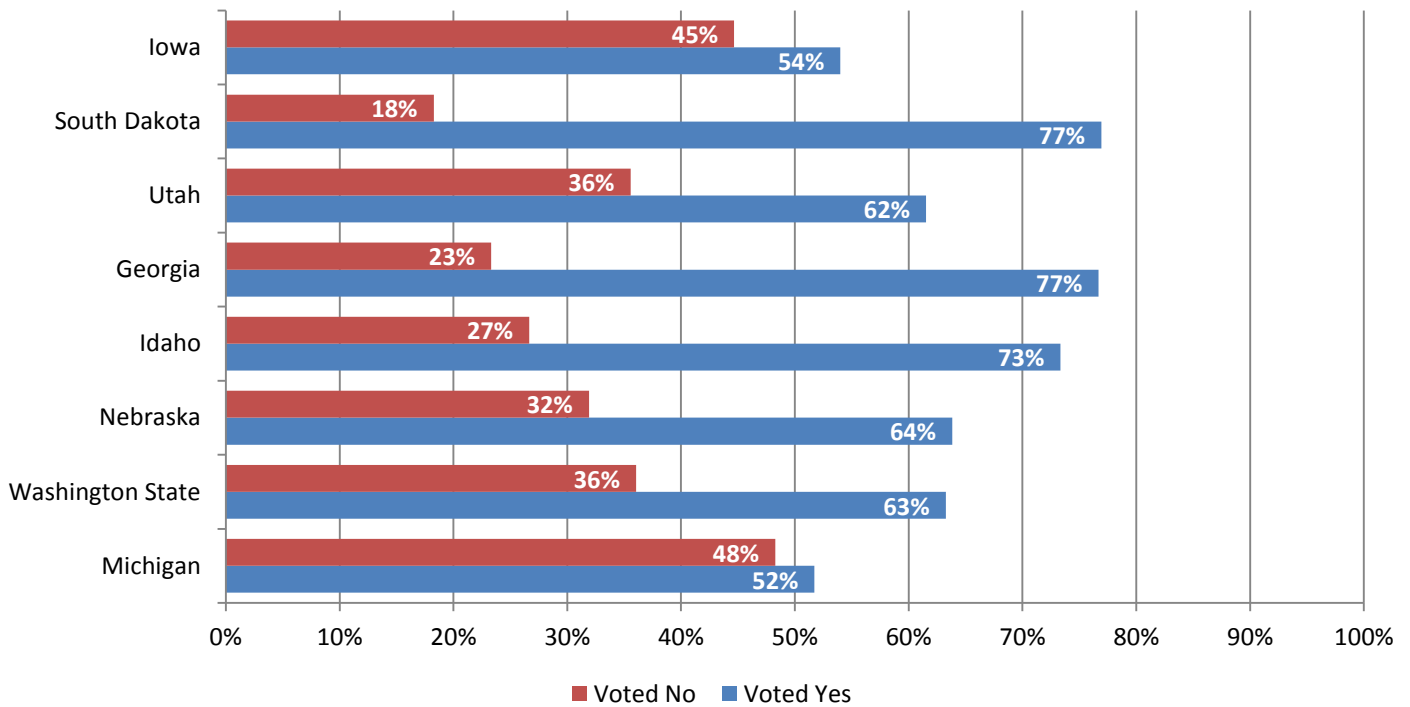
Additionally, in November 2015 every Virginia incumbent state senator was re-elected (the state House of Representatives had faced re-election in 2014 and were included in the May 2015 report). All 16 senators—12 Democratic lawmakers and four Republicans—running for re-election who had supported the bill were voted back into office. All 11 senators—10 Republican and one Democratic lawmaker—who voted against the bill and ran for re-election also retained their seats.

ARTBA-TIAC staff will continue to track and report on state elections and ballot measures for the Nov. 8, general election.

State Lawmakers Who Won 2016 Primaries After Voting on 2015 Legislation to Increase State Gas Tax to Support New Transportation Investments



Breakdown of Votes in 2015 on Legislation to Increase Gas Tax to Support New Transportation Investments



State Lawmaker Votes in 2015 to Support Legislation to Increase Gas Tax to Support New Transportation Investments

