

## **New Poll: Half of West Virginians Believe State is Moving in the Right Direction**

Charleston, W.V. - A new poll by Orion Strategies surveys the opinions of historic likely voters in West Virginia on a number of current topics including economic issues, teacher pay, the opioid epidemic, and medical marijuana.

"When asked about the direction that West Virginia is headed, 47% believe the state is going in the right direction while 29% believe it is not," said Graham Godwin, senior researcher for Orion Strategies.

Last week's State of the State Address was only viewed by 21% of respondents. Of those who watched the speech, 55% rated it positively.

When asked which reason has the greatest impact on why West Virginia lags behind the rest of the nation economically, a plurality of 31% believe it is due to the opioid drug epidemic facing the state. This was followed by 16% who blame the state's reliance on fossil fuels, a tie of 10% each regarding the state's lack of highways and a college-educated workforce, and then the state's aging population at 9%. Only 4% suggested that the state's lack of broadband internet connectivity was a factor leading to the state's lagging economy.

One in seven respondents believe that the opioid epidemic has improved over the last year, while 31% believe it has worsened, and 44% find it to be the same. Approximately two-thirds of those surveyed know someone suffering or who has suffered from addiction to oxycodone, heroin or other opioids - a number consistent with a similar survey conducted by Orion Strategies in early 2018.

"A supermajority of 68% of historic likely voters support the legalization of marijuana for medicinal use when prescribed by a doctor," Godwin said. "Only one in four respondents are opposed."

These numbers are almost reverse on the issue of legalization of marijuana for recreational use by adults 21 and older where only 26% of respondents would support such an effort and 66% are opposed.

Sixty percent of the survey's respondents believe that West Virginia's teachers are paid too low. Only 29% feel that teachers are paid about the right amount and 5% believe they are overpaid. When the same question was fielded regarding state employees, a 46% plurality believe that the Mountain State's civil servants are paid too low and 31% feel they are paid about the right amount. Only 7% believe that state employees are overpaid.

West Virginians were asked whether they supported the hiring of Neal Brown as the new head football coach of West Virginia University. While 48% of respondents were

unsure or do not follow the sport, a massive 90% super-majority of those surveyed who do have an opinion of the hiring, support the coach.

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The live-interview telephone survey was conducted among historic, likely voters in West Virginia. A total of 310 respondents completed the entire survey - giving the survey a 5.57+/- margin of error with a 95 percent confidence rate. The sample was proportionate to each of the three congressional districts in the state. Both cell phones and landline telephones were called in all 55 counties. Partisan registration among respondents was 45 percent Democratic, 34 percent Republican and 20 percent Independent. The poll was conducted January 12, 2019.