



26 SEPT 2011

Liquor Privatization Initiative Loses Ground

Support for Initiative 1183, which would privatize liquor sales in Washington, has slipped in the last month according to the current *Elway Poll*.

Only 46% of the Washington voters interviewed last week were inclined to vote in favor of I-1183, compared to 50% last month. At the same time, those inclined to vote “no” increased from 38% to 40%. Those who were “definitely for” the measure remained at 30% while the proportion “definitely against” nearly doubled from 15% to 28%.

The change from last month is not statistically significant, but it is politically noteworthy. The campaign has begun in earnest. Both sides are up with television ads and any movement is claimed as evidence of momentum.

In both surveys, respondents were read the official ballot title and asked how they were “inclined to vote as things stand today.” They answered “definitely yes,” “probably yes,” “probably no,” or “definitely no.”

Supporters and opponents were asked why they intended to vote as they did. The question was open-ended, that is, respondents were not prompted or read a list of possible reasons.

Those planning to vote for liquor privatization were doing so mainly on philosophical grounds. By far the most common reason for supporting the measure was some variation of “getting the state out of the liquor business.” More than 4 in 10 volunteered that response. Another 7% simply said there was “too much government control.”

The next most-cited reason for favoring the measure had to do with state government revenue—either be generating more revenue for the state or by saving money. Other reasons given for supporting the measure had to do with convenience, lower prices and creating jobs.

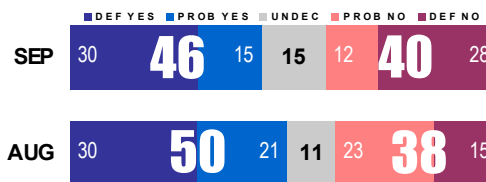
Those opposed to I-1183 were not as singular in their rationale but tended to focus on one of three reasons: Keeping the state in control of liquor, keeping the revenue for state government, and limiting the availability of liquor—especially to minors.

- A total of 35% of the “no” voters said they preferred the state to maintain control of liquor sales: 18% just wanted to keep the state in control, another 9% said that would result in better regulations and another 8% said that the state would do “a better job” of liquor sales.
- A total of 29% of the “no” voters were mainly concerned about the availability of liquor: 13% were concerned about sales to minors, 10% wanted to limit availability in general, and another 6% wanted to keep liquor out of mini-marts and other small outlets.

The campaign thus appears to hinge on voter understanding of regulation and revenue. According to this survey, nearly 4 in 10 voters are basing their vote on their philosophical position of whether or not the state government should be in the business of selling liquor. Philosophical voters seem unlikely to change their position during the course of a campaign.

It appears, therefore, that the outcome will be decided on the basis of the next-most potent decision variables for voters: 1) how easy/difficult it will be for people—especially minors—to obtain hard liquor, and 2) which option produces more revenue for state government.

I-1183: PRIVATIZE LIQUOR SALES



REASONS FOR

Get State Out of Liquor Biz	43%
Savings or Revenue	14%
Convenience	7%
Too much Govt Control	7%
Create Jobs	4%
Lower Prices	4%

REASONS AGAINST

Keep State Control	18%
Need the Revenue	14%
Sales to Minors	13%
Availability of Liquor	10%
Better Regulated	9%
State Does Better Job	8%
Keep out of Mini Marts	6%
Will Cost Jobs	6%

%s may not add due to rounding

Sample Profile

Telephone interviews were conducted by live, professional interviewers with 408 registered voters selected at random from registered voter lists in Washington state Sept. 20-21, 2011. 9% of the calls were completed on cell phones. The margin of sampling error is ±5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means, in theory, had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within ±5% of the results reported here at least 95 times.

REGION

King County.....	30%
Pierce + Kitsap.....	14%
North Sound (Snohomish to Whatcom).....	18%
Western Washington (Clallam to Clark).....	18%
Eastern Washington.....	20%

GENDER

Male.....	50%
Female.....	50%

AGE

18-35.....	10%
36-50.....	19%
51-64.....	39%
65+.....	29%

PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Democrat.....	27%
Republican.....	25%
Independent.....	49%

HOUSEHLD INCOME

<\$25,000.....	9%
\$25-50,000.....	24%
\$50-75,000.....	20%
\$75,000+.....	30%
No Answer.....	17%

VOTE HISTORY (Last 4 Elections)

0 - 1 votes cast.....	26%
2.....	15%
3.....	24%
4 of 4 ("Perfect Voters").....	36%

This being an "off year" election, voter turnout could be expected to play a significant role in the outcome. These results indicate that there is not a straight-line relationship between turnout to results

I-1183 led 47% to 36% among likely voters—those who have voted in at least 3 of the previous 4 elections. This is slightly better than the results among all voters.

Among "perfect voters" (4 of 4 votes cast) however, support dropped 7 points from 53% in August to 46% last week. This is significant because in an off-year election, "perfect voters" are likely to account for more than half of all votes cast. The lower the overall turnout, the higher the proportion of "perfect voters" in the total vote.

What's more, about 56% of all "perfect voters" are over age 60. A change in support among seniors, therefore, has a significant impact on the outcome in a low-turnout election.

Survey respondents over 65 were the most likely to want to get the state out of the liquor business on the pro side, and the most concerned about sales to minor on the con side.

I-1183 opponents have been winning among this key voter group. There was 20-point drop in support among voters over age 65—the most significant difference between the August and September surveys.



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