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**Most Minnesotans Say Government's Top Priority  
Should Be Improving the Economy**

*Most Satisfied With Minnesota's Efforts to Address Energy and Environmental Challenges*

ST. PAUL, Minn. – More than three-quarters of Minnesotans believe the government's top priority should be to improve the economy, according to a survey of Minnesotans released by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. Nearly seven in 10 people, meanwhile, are satisfied with Minnesota's efforts to address energy and environmental challenges, and nearly the same number believe that global warming issues are primarily a federal and international responsibility.

“The survey results indicate that Minnesotans want our state leaders to focus on invigorating the economy and creating and sustaining jobs,” Minnesota Chamber of Commerce President David Olson said. “This means that our legislators need to carefully weigh proposals on whether they will boost the economy or jeopardize it.”

The survey's most significant findings include:

- 76 percent believe that improving the economy should be the government's top priority, in contrast to 18 percent who think that combating global warming should be the top priority.
- 51 percent named jobs and the economy as the most important issue facing the state, followed by health care and taxes – each at 14 percent.
- 68 percent are satisfied with Minnesota's efforts to address energy and environmental challenges.
- 40 percent believe that, in general, Minnesota is heading in the right direction, compared to 45 percent who believe the state is going in the wrong direction.
- 65 percent believe that the federal government or an international governing body, such as the United Nations, is most responsible for addressing global warming issues.

“People are clearly most concerned about basic pocketbook issues right now, and they don't want to experiment with questionable new environmental policies that may get in the way of our economic recovery,” Olson said.

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### **Opposition to a low-carbon fuel standard**

One of the issues that the Minnesota Chamber is watching closely this legislative session is a low-carbon fuel standard proposal. While touted as a higher environmental standard for transportation fuels, the Chamber is concerned about the dire economic consequences it could have. A majority of Minnesotans apparently share the Chamber's concern; the survey found that 61 percent believe Minnesota should not pass the standard.

"If this new legislation is passed, it would force Minnesota fuel suppliers to find sources of lower-carbon crude oil than our current – primarily Canadian – sources," Olson said. Currently, more than 80 percent of Minnesota's crude oil comes from Canada.

"This is a reliable source with a proven transportation system that goes directly from our Canadian neighbors to Minnesota," he said. "Giving this up could cause higher fuel prices and supply issues for Minnesota businesses and consumers. Minnesota jobs also depend on using and maintaining this well-established infrastructure."

The results of the Chamber's survey indicate that 87 percent believe that Minnesota's oil supply should come from North American sources, such as Canada, and that 72 percent are concerned about Minnesota becoming dependent on Middle Eastern nations for its oil supply.

### **Support for Minnesota's ethanol industry**

The survey also found that 51 percent of Minnesotans would be less likely to support a low-carbon fuel standard if it affects the ethanol industry. Because the standard could consider land-use as part of the full life-cycle analysis used for measuring ethanol's carbon emissions, the growing and harvesting of corn used to make ethanol would disadvantage it as a fuel option in Minnesota.

Minnesota has passed some of the country's most aggressive environmental laws over the past several years. These laws include the boldest ethanol mandate in the United States and one of the nation's highest renewable energy standards.

"We are geographically blessed to have access to a reliable fuel supply in Canada," Olson said. "Canada is America's largest source of petroleum, with more than 80 percent of the crude we use in Minnesota and throughout the Upper Midwest coming from our next-door northern neighbor. Our proximity to Canadian crude and our pipeline and refining infrastructure provide an important economic advantage that we should protect rather than punish with policies that could cause higher fuel prices and supply issues for Minnesota businesses and consumers."

### **Concern about the cap-and-trade system**

Another issue that the Minnesota Chamber is monitoring closely is the cap-and-trade system. Under this system, a "cap" would be set for overall emissions and divided into allowances that are distributed among participating entities. A participant could "trade" credits with other entities depending on whether it exceeds or stays within its allotted emissions allowance.

In the survey, 48 percent of respondents said Minnesota should not participate in cap-and-trade policies, while 42 percent said Minnesota should.

“People are questioning whether Minnesota should participate in cap-and-trade policies, and there is justification for their questions,” Olson said. “If one region or nation has strict regulations, there is a real danger that companies in that region or nation will choose to relocate to a place where they can operate at a lower cost with less environmental oversight. If that happens, the environment will gain nothing, and more regulated jurisdictions will pay a high price economically. Minnesota needs to consider cap-and-trade policies with serious scrutiny.”

**About the survey**

The telephone survey was conducted in February 2009 with 501 registered voters across Minnesota.

**About the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce**

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce is the state’s largest business advocacy organization, representing approximately 2,400 businesses and more than a half-million employees on state public policy and regulatory issues.

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