

As a service to our legislators as well as those lobbying in support of Delaware House Bill 99 (H.B. 99), we include below the complete May 9, 2002 poll results of Hickman-Brown Public Opinion Research re H.B. 99 as commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign. **Note should be taken that whether for or against the bill, a full 78% of Delaware voters believe that H.B. 99 should be voted out of committee to the full Senate.**



The information contained in this memorandum is based on a survey of 500 registered voters in the state of Delaware. The telephone interviewing was conducted from May 5th through May 7th. The data was weighted to reflect accurately the party registration and age of voters by county according to statistics compiled by the Delaware Department of Elections. The margin of error for the entire sample is plus or minus 4.4 percentage points. Hickman-Brown Research is one of the nation's most successful Democratic polling firms. They have worked for more than twenty current and former United States Senators and Governors and have done extensive polling in Delaware, including for campaigns of Senator Tom Carper and former Vice President Al Gore.

Key Findings

The results of our poll show that a strong majority of Delaware voters (69%) support the passage of House Bill 99 that would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. Delaware voters also say that they would be more likely to vote for a state legislative candidate who voted in favor of the legislation. Also, almost eight in ten Delaware voters (78%), including a wide plurality of the bill's opponents, believe the bill should be brought to a vote in the state Senate. Delaware voters also back by a wide margin the proposed federal legislation to ban discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation.

Opinions on HB 99

Almost seven in ten (69%) of Delaware voters favor HB99 while less than one quarter (23%) say that they oppose it. Almost half of Delaware voters (46%) respond that they 'strongly support' it compared to just 11% who 'strongly oppose' it.

As you may know, the Delaware legislature is currently considering House Bill 99 which would prohibit discrimination against persons on the basis of sexual orientation in housing, employment, public works contracting, public accommodations, and insurance. Would you favor or oppose passing this bill to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation?

Strongly Favor.....	46%
Somewhat Favor.....	24%
Somewhat Oppose.....	12%
Strongly Oppose.....	11%
Don't Know.....	8%
Total Favor.....	69%
Total Oppose.....	23%

The support for the bill varies by regional, partisan, and demographic subgroups, but it has broad backing throughout the state:

- Voters in New Castle County are the most positive toward the bill (74% favor/20% oppose) followed by voters in Kent (65% favor/27% oppose) and Sussex (60% favor/30% oppose) counties.
- Registered Democrats (83% favor/12% oppose) and registered Independents (76% favor/16% oppose) are very supportive of the bill while a narrow plurality of Republican voters (48% favor/43% oppose) also favor it.
- Voters under 40 are the most likely to support the bill (82% favor/15% oppose), followed by those 40 to 59 (66% favor/24% oppose). Even though voters over 60 are less likely to favor the bill than younger voters, still a comfortable majority (54% favor/34% oppose) are in favor of the legislation. The difference by age groups is also evident within partisan groups. For example, registered Republicans under 45 back the bill by a clear margin (57% favor/37% oppose), but older Republicans are one of the few groups in the electorate where a plurality opposes it (39% favor/49% oppose).
- Liberals (89% favor/9% oppose) and moderates (75% favor/16% oppose) overwhelmingly support the legislation while conservative voters are evenly split (45% favor/45% oppose).

Delaware voters also respond that they would be much more likely to favor a state legislative candidate who voted in favor of the bill than support someone who opposed the legislation. More than six in ten (61%) say that they would be more likely to favor a candidate who voted for the bill compared to just 21% who would prefer a state legislative candidate who opposed the bill.

<i>In voting for candidates for the state legislature, would you be more likely to vote for:</i>	
A candidate who favors passing a new law to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.....	61%
A candidate who opposes a new law to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.....	21%
Neither.....	2%
No Difference.....	11%
Don't Know.....	6%

Finally, almost eight in ten Delaware voters (78%) believe that the state Senate should have a vote on HB 99. Even a strong plurality of the voters who oppose the bill believe that the Senate should vote on it (49% should/29% should not).

As you may know, currently the bill to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation has passed the state House, but the chairman of the state Senate committee considering the bill will not allow the full Senate to vote on the bill. Do you think the state Senate should or should not be given the opportunity to vote on the bill?

Should..... 78%
Should Not..... 10%
Don't Know..... 12%

Opinions on Federal Employment Discrimination Bill

Opinion on the proposed federal legislation to ban discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation are nearly identical to those on HB99, with the overall percentages matching exactly. Almost seven of ten (69%) of Delaware voters want their congressman to vote in favor of a proposed federal bill to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Regardless of how you feel about the bill in the Delaware state legislature, as you may know, the United States Congress is also considering a federal bill that would prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Would you want your congressman to vote in favor or vote against the federal bill to prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation?

In Favor..... 69%
Against..... 23%
Don't Know..... 8%

The patterns of support for the federal bill mirror those for HB99:

- Voters in New Castle County are the most positive toward the bill (70% favor/21% oppose) followed by voters in Kent (67% favor/25% oppose) and Sussex (66% favor/27% oppose) counties.
- Registered Democrats (82% favor/12% oppose) and registered Independents (79% favor/13% oppose) are very supportive of the bill while a narrow plurality of Republican voters (47% favor/43% oppose) wants their congressman to support it.
- Voters under 40 are the most likely to support the federal bill (79% favor/16% oppose), followed by those 40 to 59 (69% favor/24% oppose). Even though voters over 60 are less likely to favor the bill, still a comfortable majority (53% favor/32% oppose) is in favor of the legislation. The difference by age groups is also evident within partisan groups. For example, registered Republicans under 45 support the bill by a clear margin (58% favor/33% oppose), but older Republicans are one of the few groups in the electorate where a majority want their congressman to oppose it (37% favor/51% oppose).

- Liberals (85% favor/11% oppose) and moderates (74% favor/17% oppose) overwhelmingly support the proposed federal legislation while conservative voters barely favor it (48% favor/42% oppose).