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New poll shows voters overwhelmingly want the San Diego region to take a leadership role in California in reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Survey by The San Diego Foundation finds that nearly eight in 10 believe we can have a clean environment and a strong economy without having to choose one over the other

SAN DIEGO (September 22, 2010) – The San Diego Foundation released a survey of San Diego County voters today which assessed their views, values and perspectives on the local impacts of climate change and the public's appetite for policies needed to address it.

The survey results show that voters are concerned about the impacts of global warming and want the San Diego region to take a statewide leadership position in addressing it. This high level of support cuts across many demographic groups, including majorities of Republicans, Democrats, independents, moderates and

liberals, and voters of every level of education, ethnic background, age group and income level.

When asked about two of California's landmark greenhouse gas emission reduction laws – AB 32 and SB 375 – San Diego voters demonstrated strong support for each, as well as for specific steps that might be taken to implement these laws. More broadly, three times as many voters believe that addressing global warming will create more rather than fewer jobs. By a large margin, voters share the opinion that we can have a strong economy and a healthy environment.

“It is imperative that we take action today to preserve San Diego's clean water, forests, wildlife habitat, coastline and the San Diego region's spectacular natural beauty for future generations to enjoy,” said The San Diego Foundation's president and CEO Bob Kelly. “The San Diego Foundation is committed to leading community and governmental dialogue on how cities, the County and regional transportation, water, and planning agencies can best address the impacts of climate change on the region.”

San Diego Port Commissioner Scott Peters is heading this effort with The Foundation, as Chair of its Climate Initiative. Over the past few years, The Foundation has collaborated with leading scientists, policy experts and regional leaders to invest in research that will inform this dialogue. A report published by the Foundation, *“San Diego's Changing Climate: A Regional Wake Up Call,”* highlights a number of potential impacts from global warming to the San Diego region, including more frequent wildfires, threats to water quality and supplies, coastal area flooding, loss of natural areas, plants and animals, health impacts, such as asthma and heat-

related illness, and rising energy consumption due to warming temperatures. Scientists at Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) worked closely with The Foundation in creating this report. "Effects of global climate change in the San Diego region will grow stronger in the future, including likely reductions in water supplies, increased wildfires and threats to human health. Our community will need an ongoing assessment, using the best science available, to evaluate these impacts so that we can better prepare for and adapt to them," said Dr. Dan Cayan, Climate Researcher with Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego.

Since 2007, The Foundation has invested over \$1.5 million in grants for research, technical expertise, and community efforts to advance the region's leadership in setting goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while decreasing local vulnerability to potential effects of global warming on the local economy and quality of life. More recently, The Foundation has been working with the University of San Diego, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, California State University San Marcos and The Steve Alexander Group, to develop a regional communications program on the impacts of global warming on regional quality of life. Funded by the National Science Foundation, this program will develop a practical blueprint for how best to engage and communicate with communities in a productive dialogue around the impacts of climate change on the region.

"This survey will certainly help this communications program," said Scott Peters. "It shows that the people of our region want to make investments in more energy-efficient technology to create new, high-quality jobs and expand business opportunities here in San Diego County. We can put thousands of people to work

and create a strengthening economy while having a clean and healthy environment.”

According to the survey:

- Eight in 10 San Diego voters are concerned that global warming could reduce local water supplies and increase the risk of severe wildfires.
- Seven in 10 are concerned about the loss of coastal lands and beaches as sea levels rise and erosion increases. A similar proportion of people are concerned about the threats to human health, including more cases of asthma and other respiratory diseases.
- Many San Diegans – more than seven in 10 – believe that addressing global warming would create more jobs for people in the County. By a two-to-one margin, they agree with the principles of AB 32, the state law that requires California to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions back to 1990 levels by the year 2020.
- Likewise, seven in 10 voters hold a favorable view of SB 375 and support its implementation by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). SB 375 requires SANDAG to develop a regional plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, promote shorter commutes and conserve open space and natural areas in San Diego County through a variety of methods, including focusing the building of new homes in areas near jobs and schools, reducing commutes and traffic and providing more transportation choices.

“Nearly 260,000 adults and children in San Diego County are suffering from asthma, and high smog levels trigger more frequent and severe asthma attacks,” said Jan Cortez, Executive Director of The American Lung Association in California – San Diego. “Using cleaner, renewable energy and offering more alternatives to driving as well as shortening commutes will help make families healthier.”

San Diego County voters also support key policies that would be implemented under these two laws:

- Three quarters or more of voters support key provisions of AB 32, such as expanding the use of clean energy and clean technology, as well as requiring industrial plants, oil refineries and commercial facilities to reduce their emissions.
- Many voters also prefer more compact and transit-friendly development, with a strong preference for expanding public transit over the expansion of roads and highways.

“Any effort to protect our clean air and reduce pollution will require communities and local governments to work together throughout the region. This survey will help inform how we approach our work on these issues,” said San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts, who also serves as a member of the California Air Resources Board. The Foundation has worked closely with Supervisor Roberts over the past year, given his role as member of the California Air Resources Board, which oversees programs to protect the region’s air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

The San Diego Foundation's CEO Kelly expects the survey will serve as a tool for policy makers and planners to better understand community opinions and enable all stakeholders to work together as local climate change policies are developed and implemented.

About The San Diego Foundation

The San Diego Foundation is San Diego's leading resource for information about charitable giving and community needs. The Foundation encourages, supports and facilitates meaningful dialogue on issues affecting each of the region's communities, and works with philanthropists to develop creative solutions to meet critical community needs. Since its inception in 1975, The San Diego Foundation has helped public-spirited citizens find ways to address community problems. Funds managed now number in the thousands. Through them, donors support numerous organizations and serve a variety of extraordinary causes. Donors and funds all share a common purpose: to make San Diego a better place to live, work and play.

The San Diego Foundation's Climate Initiative is advancing our region's leadership in setting goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while decreasing our vulnerability to wildfires, diminishing water supplies, coastal flooding, threats to human health from poor air quality, and other impacts on our quality of life. With generous support from Bank of America, Qualcomm, and numerous individual donors, The Foundation is making investments in the community to strengthen the economy with more energy-efficient technology, infrastructure, and high-quality jobs, increase public awareness and support for local action to protect our region's clean air, water, and spectacular natural beauty for all generations.

For more information on The San Diego Foundation's Climate Initiative, visit www.sdfoundation.org.

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