

Poll: Support slips in North Dakota for Trump tariff policies

Trump approval remains high, but softening; war, economy top concerns

By Michael Standaert, North Dakota News Cooperative

Support for President Donald Trump's tariff and economic policies slipped in North Dakota since he took office, a new North Dakota Poll has found.

Asked whether they approved or disapproved of the U.S. Supreme Court decision to strike down Trump's tariffs in February, 48% approved and 39% disapproved.

Approval for reversing the tariffs was strongest among those identifying as Independents and Democrats and residents in the eastern half of the state.

The biggest approval of the decision came in Fargo/Cass County at 61%. A total of 88% of Democrats and 54% of Independents also approved the decision to strike down the tariffs. A total of 59% of Republicans disapproved of the Supreme Court decision.

The February decision by the U.S. Supreme Court said the president lacked the authority under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose sweeping, across-the-board retaliatory tariffs.

"I think this reflects the fact that North Dakotans are starting to see the impacts of tariffs on the everyday things they buy," said John Bitzan, Menard Family Director of the Sheila and Robert Challey Institute for Global Innovation and Growth at North Dakota State University.

The numbers indicate a sharp drop in support from North Dakota Poll numbers released last August, which showed 60% supported the use of tariffs and 57% approved of Trump trade policies.

Another North Dakota Poll in December last year found 53% of voting-age residents reported everyday necessities like groceries and gas had become less affordable.

"Although the full costs of the tariffs have not yet been passed on to consumers by retailers, larger portions get passed on to consumers the longer they stay in place," Bitzan said. "While the IEEPA tariffs have been removed, at least a 10 percent tariff still remains in place on most products until the end of July."

Bitzan said that doesn't guarantee other tariffs won't be implemented to take their place and that 50% tariffs on steel, aluminum and copper also remain in place, impacting costs.

Trump approval high, but softening on economic policy

Overall, Trump's approval ranking remains high in North Dakota. The poll found 56% approve of his performance, with 39% disapproving.

The highest approvals came in Western North Dakota, with 73% happy with his performance; the lowest was in Fargo/Cass County where only 35% approved. Independent respondents were somewhat split, with 39% approving, 48% disapproving, and 13% not sure.

"Trump's very popular. He won a resounding percentage of the vote all three times he ran in North Dakota, so that's not surprising," said Mark Jendrysik, a professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of North Dakota.

"I think the main interesting point was the obvious difference between Cass County and the rest of the state, which I don't think is that much of a surprise, but it's definitely growing in importance as Fargo grows larger and that area becomes a higher percentage of the state's overall population," Jendrysik said.

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Op-Ed submission

Armstrong: State budget needs balance, not unsustainable growth

By Gov. Kelly Armstrong

For two decades, North Dakota has experienced remarkable growth. We've invested heavily in critical infrastructure, expanded behavioral health services, improved water systems and supported our communities in meaningful ways.

Much of that growth was necessary. But alongside it came a steady expansion in the size and cost of state government – growth that is no longer sustainable at its current pace.

Conservative budgeting isn't pessimistic – it's prudent.

We face a structural imbalance. Ongoing general fund expenditures are outpacing ongoing revenues. It's not a crisis today, but it is a slow-building storm that threatens our future if we fail to act.

The responsible course is clear: We must balance the dollars coming in with the dollars going out. That was the message I delivered to our state agency leaders last week in presenting budget guidelines for the upcoming 2027–29 biennium.

The good news is that North Dakota is financially strong. Revenues are steady, our reserves are healthy, and our economy remains resilient and diverse. That didn't happen by accident – it's a credit to our citizens, our entrepreneurs and industries, and the dedicated state employees who keep government running effectively every day.

But strength today doesn't guarantee stability tomorrow.

Recent events remind us how quickly circumstances can change with the volatility of oil prices. That's why any short-term revenue gains from higher oil prices should be treated as temporary, not as a foundation for ongoing spending.

Our approach for next biennium reflects that reality. We're asking agencies to hold the line: no new full-time positions, no new building projects, and any request for new ongoing

spending must be matched with reductions elsewhere. For smaller agencies, that means holding budgets flat. For others, it means identifying responsible reductions ranging from 3% to 10%.

We're not asking agencies to weaken their most effective programs. In fact, we're asking the opposite: Take a hard look at what works, what doesn't, and where taxpayer dollars can be better spent. After 20 years of budget growth, it's time to evaluate – not just expand.

At the same time, we remain committed to supporting our current workforce. Fully funding existing positions and maintaining competitive salaries remains a priority. Right-sizing government is not about doing less; it's about doing better with what we have.

I served in the Legislature in 2015. I remember the downturn in oil prices and the allotment process that followed, and I understand how painful reactive cuts can be. By identifying contingency reductions now, we can avoid scrambling later. We must prepare for the worst while hoping for the best.

Our long-term goal is to eliminate deficit spending in the general fund and restore balance between ongoing revenues and expenses by 2032. That won't happen overnight, and it won't happen without tough decisions. But the sooner we begin, the more manageable those decisions will be.

North Dakota's future depends on getting this right. We can't assume energy markets will always be in our favor or rely on one-time revenues to sustain ongoing commitments.

The path forward isn't about cutting for the sake of cutting. It's about building a state government that is efficient, effective and fiscally responsible.

Kelly Armstrong is the 34th governor of North Dakota.

North Dakotans reminded to call before you dig

Governor Kelly Armstrong proclaimed April as Safe Digging Month in North Dakota. In recognition, the North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) reminds everyone of the potential dangers and consequences of digging without first clicking or calling 8-1-1, North Dakota's Call Before You Dig number.

"Spring has arrived, and with it comes a surge of outdoor projects. Before any digging begins, the North Dakota Public Service Commission has an essential reminder: always call 811 first," said Commissioner Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, who oversees the damage prevention portfolio. "This simple step is one of the most effective ways to prevent dangerous and costly accidents. Underground utility lines – whether gas, electric, communications, water, or sewer – are closer to the surface than many people realize. Striking one can create serious safety hazards and contribute to billions of dollars in damages each year. By making a quick call to 811, you're protecting yourself, your property, and your community. Safe digging starts with knowing what's below – don't take the risk."

North Dakota law requires anyone excavating to notify 811 at least two business days in advance of digging. This is a free service to homeowners and farmers working on their own property/land. Personnel will be sent to mark the locations of the underground facilities, typically within a couple of days. The markings are valid for 21 days after they are placed as identified on your excavation notice ticket. This process is coordinated through North Dakota One Call. The PSC's role is to enforce the requirements of the state's damage prevention

laws and act when violations are reported to the Commission. The PSC can levy a fine up to \$25,000 per violation, depending on severity.

Each year, North Dakota's underground utility infrastructure is jeopardized by unintentional damage from those who fail to call 811 to have underground facilities located prior to digging. Since 2009, the PSC has received and processed 384 complaints related to violations of the Call-Before-You-Dig law. In total, approximately \$473,000 in fines have been assessed against companies or individuals who have violated the law. The consequences of striking an underground utility can be severe including explosions resulting in injury or death, service interruptions or damage to the environment.

For more information about 8-1-1 and to begin your excavation notice, visit the North Dakota One-Call Board's website at www.ndonecall.com. For safety tips, best practices and other information, visit the Common Ground Alliance website at www.commongroundalliance.com.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state, including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

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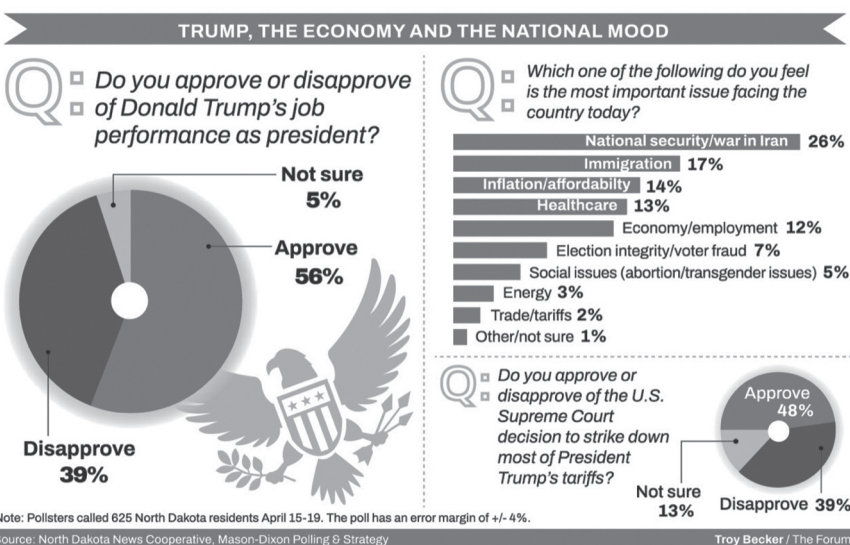
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