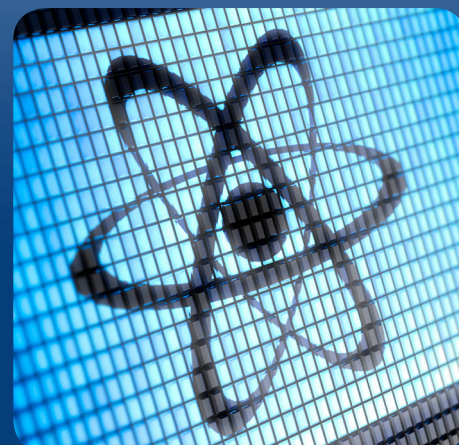




# NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN: Views from a Red State, a Blue State and a Swing State



**A survey of the Citizen Cabinets  
in Oklahoma, Maryland and Virginia**

**Conducted by the Program for Public Consultation,  
School of Public Policy, University of Maryland**

Primary Investigator: Steven Kull  
Research Staff: Clay Ramsay, Evan Lewis and Eric Pierce

June 2015



## HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

### Citizen Cabinet Surveys

Citizen Cabinet surveys are unique in that they take respondents through a process called a 'policymaking simulation' which seeks to simulate the process that policymakers go through in making a policy decision. Respondents receive a briefing on the issue, are presented current policy options, evaluate arguments for and against the various policy options and finally make their recommendations on what action should be taken.

### Development of the Survey Content

This policymaking simulation was developed by the Program for Public Consultation (PPC) of the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland. The briefing and arguments were initially developed from an analysis of the policy discourse on how the United States should deal with Iran's nuclear program, with special reference to speeches given on the Senate and House floor. The briefing and arguments were then vetted and refined with Congressional staffers (Republican and Democratic) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, as well as several outside experts.

Because the survey went into the field before the draft framework was announced, 22% of the sample was presented a description of a possible deal in terms of the broader outlines being discussed at the time. After the framework announcement on April 2, respondents saw a more detailed description with the primary terms of the draft agreement. This did not have a significant effect on final recommendations.

### Survey Sample

A total of 1,754 registered voters completed the survey. In all cases the sample was weighted according to the demographics of registered voters in each state and district. This was broken down by state as follows:

**Virginia:** A statewide sample of 513. The margin of error for the state was 4.4%.

**Maryland:** A total of 626 including a statewide sample of 475 plus an oversample of the Seventh Congressional district (primarily the city of Baltimore and surrounding areas) to bring the total for that district up to 210. The margin of error for the state was 4.5% and for MD-7 was 6.8 %.

**Oklahoma:** A total sample of 615 including a statewide sample of 479, plus an oversample of the Fourth Congressional district to bring the total for the district up to 232. The margin of error for the state was 4.5% and for OK-4 was 6.5%.

### Recruitment

The entire sample was recruited from a probability-based sample of registered voters in each state and district provided by two organizations.

The Program for Public Consultation (PPC) provided 932 registered voters from a panel recruited by mail and telephone, using a random sample of households provided by Survey Sampling International. Telephoning and mailing was conducted by the research firm Communications for Research in all states; for Virginia by the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia; and for Oklahoma by the Public Opinion Learning Laboratory at the University of Oklahoma. Recruits without Internet access were provided a tablet and a device.

Scarborough Research provided 822 registered voters from a larger national panel recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households provided by Survey Sampling International.

### Fielding

The survey was fielded from Feb. 17 – June 12, 2015 for the PPC sample, and from June 4 – June 16, 2015 for the Scarborough Research sample.



## OVERVIEW

Iran, the United States, and five other nations (the other permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) are in intensive negotiations on a deal that would impose limits on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the sanctions on Iran. June 30 has been set as a deadline for coming to an agreement.

Within the United States, and especially in Congress, there has been an intense debate about these negotiations, especially on the question of whether the US should make a deal that would allow Iran a limited uranium enrichment program. A limited uranium enrichment program enables Iran to provide fuel for its nuclear energy program, but it also moves Iran a step closer to being able to develop a nuclear weapon.

In this survey a representative sample of Americans evaluated the two primary options that have dominated this debate:

- For the US to continue to pursue an agreement that would accept some enrichment by Iran, but with substantial limits that would preclude Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, and intrusive inspections to ensure those limits are met, in exchange for the lifting of some sanctions.
- For the US to not accept any Iranian enrichment. Instead, the US would continue trying to get other nations to impose new economic sanctions in an effort to persuade Iran to cease enrichment completely.

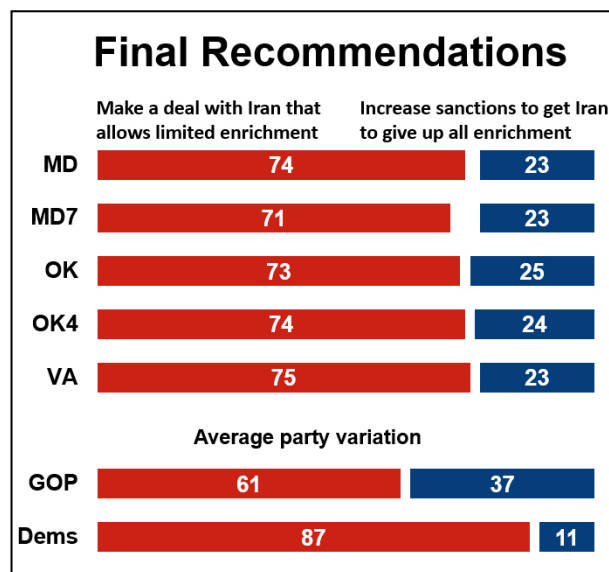
Respondents were first given a briefing on the broader issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program, presented the two primary options, and asked to evaluate strongly stated arguments for and against each one. The briefings and the arguments were vetted and refined with Congressional staffers from both parties and other experts. Finally, respondents were asked to make their recommendation.

In the course of the deliberative phase of the survey:

- Respondents were not well informed about the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and only about half knew that as part of the NPT Iran had agreed to not develop nuclear weapons.
- Asked to evaluate each policy option separately in terms of how acceptable or tolerable they would find it, in all states and districts at least six in ten found the option of pursuing a nuclear deal acceptable. Approximately a third found the idea of ramping up sanctions acceptable, but about half found it at least 'just tolerable.'
- Respondents evaluated a series of arguments for and against each option that had been vetted with advocates and opponents of the options. Nearly all were found at least somewhat convincing by substantial majorities. In all states arguments in favor of a deal and against sanctions did better than arguments against the deal and for sanctions, however in all states the opposite was true of Republicans.

When respondents were asked to provide their final recommendation:

- More than seven in ten in all three states and districts recommended making a deal that allows limited uranium enrichment rather than ramping up sanctions in an effort to get Iran to terminate all enrichment. Six in ten Republicans in all states recommended a deal, as did eight in ten Democrats and two in three independents.





## BRIEFING

**Respondents were briefed about issues surrounding Iran's uranium enrichment program and the current negotiations. Respondents were not well informed about the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and only about half knew that as part of the NPT Iran had agreed to not develop nuclear weapons.**

The briefing provided background on the Non-Proliferation Treaty, covering the following points:

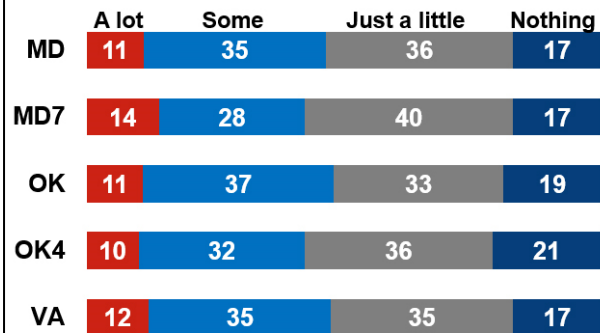
- Under the NPT, Iran can have a nuclear energy program, though not a nuclear weapons program.
- Iran is required as an NPT member to provide information to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and accept IAEA inspections, to assure that its program is purely peaceful.
- For nuclear energy purposes, enrichment of uranium to the 5 percent level is adequate; a nuclear weapon usually requires a 90% level.
- In 2002 the IAEA determined that Iran had been building an enrichment facility without informing the agency, and had other activities that could be related to developing a nuclear weapon.
- From 2003 to 2006, Iran suspended work towards enrichment and cooperated with IAEA as part of an international effort to resolve the issue, but no final agreement resulted and Iran resumed enrichment.
- The UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding that Iran suspend enrichment-related activities and imposing some economic sanctions.
- The US had stopped virtually all its trade with Iran well before it imposed new sanctions.
- The US' new sanctions, related to Iran's nuclear program, are aimed at other countries' business with Iran and have indeed reduced such business. Iran, nonetheless, persisted in enriching uranium and substantially increased its capacity to do so.
- The negotiations focus on creating a system for limiting Iran's enrichment to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy, ensured through intrusive inspections.
- Negotiations have made progress and Iran has cooperated in its short-term obligations, but a long-term agreement has not been reached.

While a large majority said they knew at least "just a little" about the NPT, less than half said they knew "some" or more. (see box)

### Knowledge of NPT

The US, Iran, and most other countries are members of the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty that aims to prevent new countries from acquiring nuclear weapons.

How much have you heard about the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT?



Only about half knew that as part of the NPT, Iran had agreed to not develop nuclear weapons, ranging from 45% in OK4 to 54% in VA. Republicans show greater awareness of this: on average, 56% of Republicans said they were aware of it, as compared to 50% of Democrats.





## INITIAL EVALUATION OF OPTIONS SEPARATELY

**Respondents were presented the two major options for dealing with Iran and asked to evaluate each separately, in terms of how acceptable or tolerable they would find it if the US pursued that approach. In all states and districts at least six in ten found the option of pursuing the nuclear deal acceptable. Approximately a third found the idea of ramping up sanctions acceptable, but about half found it at least ‘just tolerable.’**

Respondents were presented the two alternative policies between which they would ultimately decide:

- making a deal that allows Iran to enrich but only to a low level, provides more intrusive inspections and gradually lifts some sanctions;
- not continuing the current negotiations, imposing more sanctions, and pressing Iran to agree to end all uranium enrichment.

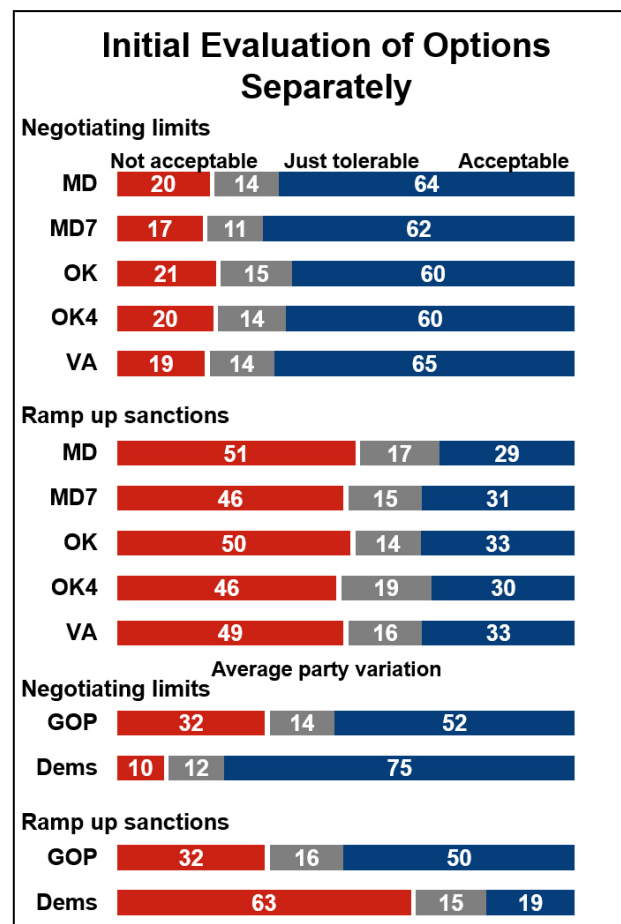
Respondents were asked to evaluate each option on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being completely unacceptable, 10 being completely acceptable and 5 being ‘just tolerable.’

**Maryland:** Initially two thirds of Marylanders (64%) rated the option of pursuing a nuclear deal acceptable (6-10 on the response scale), while another 14% rated it as just tolerable. The option of increasing sanctions was acceptable to just 29% and another 17% found it tolerable; 51% rated it as unacceptable. MD-7 voters were not significantly different. Democrats overwhelmingly endorsed making a deal (75%), while 63% rated increased sanctions as unacceptable. Republicans rated both options similarly, though sanctions did a bit better: 53% rated a deal as acceptable (plus 14% tolerable), while 50% rated more sanctions as acceptable (20% tolerable).

**Oklahoma:** Initially six in ten Oklahomans rated the option of pursuing a nuclear deal as acceptable (6-10), while another 15% rated it as just tolerable.

The option of increasing sanctions was acceptable to just 33% and another 14% found it tolerable; 50% rated it as unacceptable. OK-4 voters were not significantly different. Democrats overwhelmingly endorsed making a deal (72%), while 67% rated increased sanctions as unacceptable. Republicans rated both options almost exactly the same: 50% rated a deal as acceptable (15% tolerable), while 49% rated more sanctions as acceptable (15% tolerable).

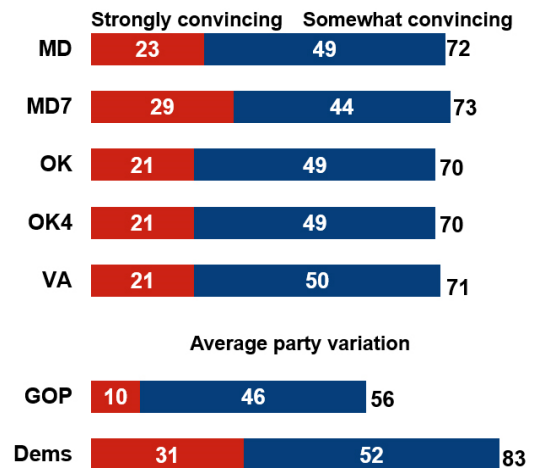
**Virginia:** Initially two thirds of Virginians (65%) rated the option of pursuing a nuclear deal as acceptable (6-10), while another 14% rated it as just tolerable. The option of increasing sanctions was acceptable to just 33% and another 16% found it tolerable; 49% rated it as unacceptable. Democrats overwhelmingly endorsed making a deal (77%), while 60% rated increased sanctions as unacceptable. Republicans rated both options almost exactly the same: 53% rated a deal as acceptable (plus 14% tolerable), while 52% rated more sanctions as acceptable (14% tolerable).



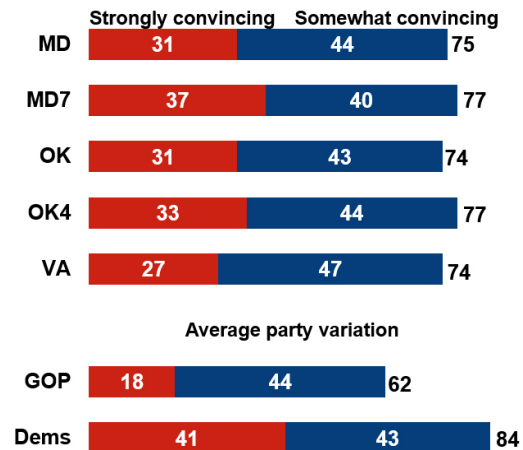


## ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A DEAL

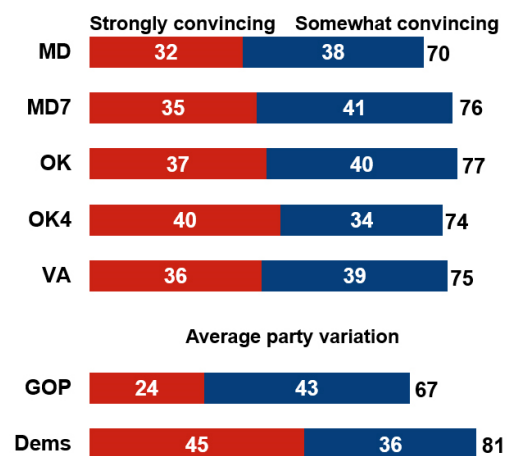
The only real option is to make a deal with the Iranian government. We have been applying sanctions for years now and yet Iran's uranium enrichment program has only grown. Bombing Iran's nuclear facilities would just lead Iran to kick out the IAEA inspectors and rebuild the program underground. Invading and occupying is completely unrealistic given that Iran is a huge country, with a substantial military, and a large population that would likely be very hostile. Given that the Iranian government says that it is ready to make a deal based on a commitment not to build nuclear weapons, we should give this option a chance.



No matter what happens, making a deal with Iran to limit its enrichment will put us ahead of where we are now. If Iran sticks with the deal, we'll know they aren't making a nuclear weapon. If they try to break out of the deal, with more intrusive inspections, we will have much better means to spot it immediately and it will be so completely clear that we will be better able to mobilize the world against them. Either way we come out ahead.



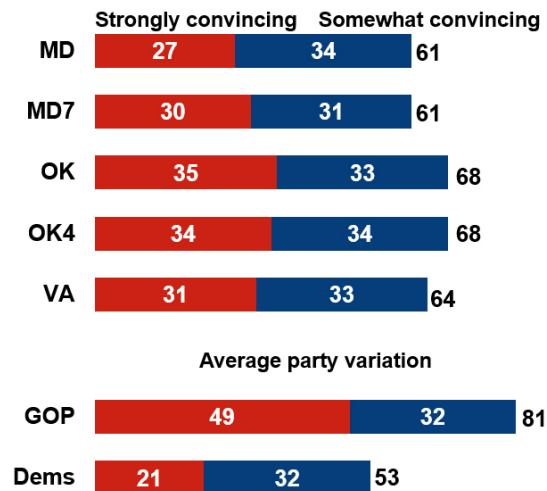
Getting Iran to limit its enrichment is the only reasonable goal. As a Member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran agreed not to have nuclear weapons, but it never agreed not to enrich uranium. The Treaty even recognizes all nations' right to a nuclear energy program. We would never let other countries tell us whether or not we can make our own nuclear fuel.



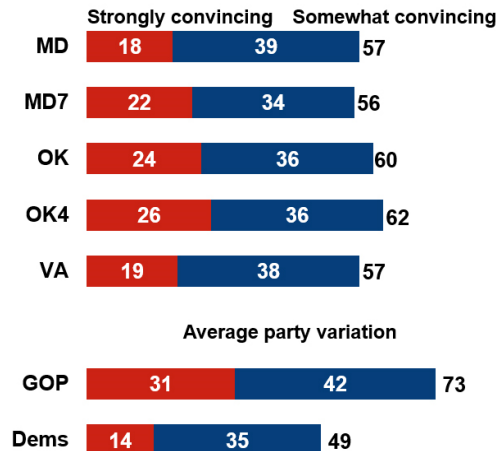


## ARGUMENTS AGAINST A DEAL

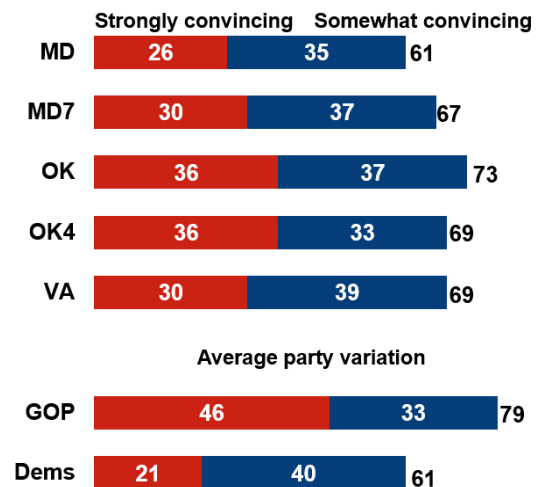
The UN Security Council told Iran to stop enrichment. But Iran has been defiant. We should not reward Iran's defiance by giving in and letting it go ahead and enrich. This will lead others to defy international rules to extract concessions. We need to set an example and make it clear that countries that defy the international system will eventually regret it. The international community needs to stick to its guns.



If we have an agreement that lets Iran enrich to the 5% level, it does not mean that their progress toward a nuclear weapon will be completely stopped. They will be able to continually refine their know-how on enrichment. Thus, should they decide to break out of the agreement, they will be able to move toward getting a nuclear weapon even faster than they could now. The only way to stop their movement toward a nuclear weapon is to stop all enrichment.



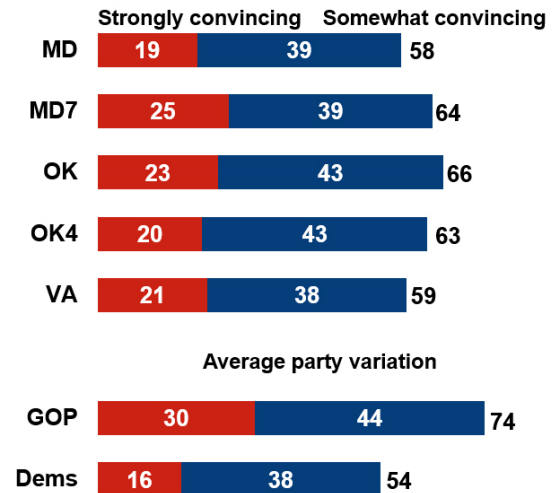
Giving up the international sanctions that have been so difficult to put in place is very risky. If the international sanctions are dismantled, at some point Iran could decide it is safe to break out of the treaty and race for nuclear weapons. Then it could take so long to reassemble the international system of sanctions that Iran could make so much progress that we could end up facing a nuclear-armed Iran.



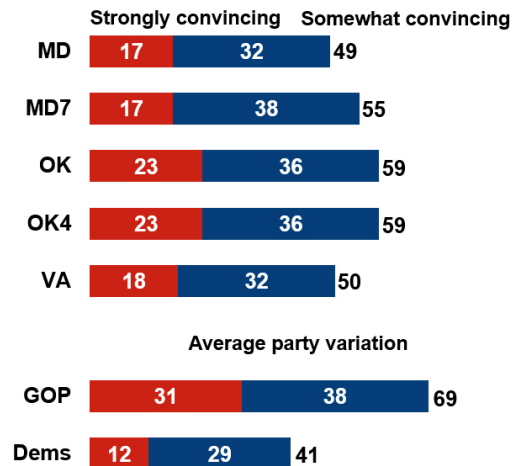


## ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF INCREASED SANCTIONS

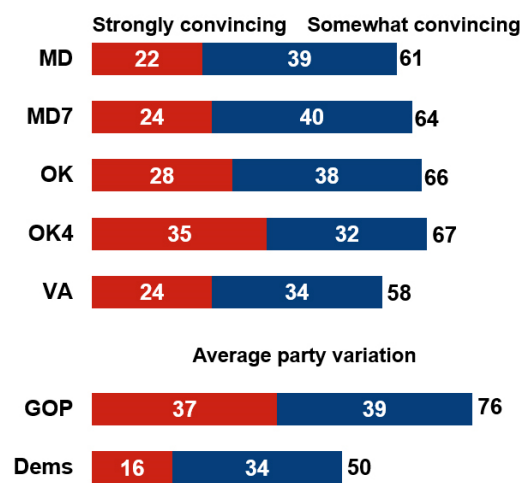
Clearly we need to stick with sanctions and ratchet them up higher. We can see they are working. The Iranian economy is suffering and the Iranian people have had enough. That is why they elected a new president that was willing to come to the table. Eventually, the Iranian people are going to get tired of the economic pain that comes from the sanctions, and this will lead them to demand that Iran give up its enrichment program. We should stick with the sanctions until Iran gives up enrichment entirely.



Given how hard the Iranian leadership resists giving up enrichment, despite all of the sanctions so far, they must really be motivated by a desire for nuclear weapons. Negotiating limits on their enrichment will not make this desire go away among the Iranian leadership. Our only hope is to ratchet up the sanctions until they are painful enough that the leaders will finally give up that desire.



We have the international sanctions in place now, along with the UN Security Council resolutions calling for Iran to stop its enrichment. It's no time to ease off and accept limited enrichment. We need to keep this momentum going and get other countries to cut their business ties to Iran until it complies with the UN resolutions. And we have to keep ramping up these sanctions until the Iranians scrap their enrichment program.

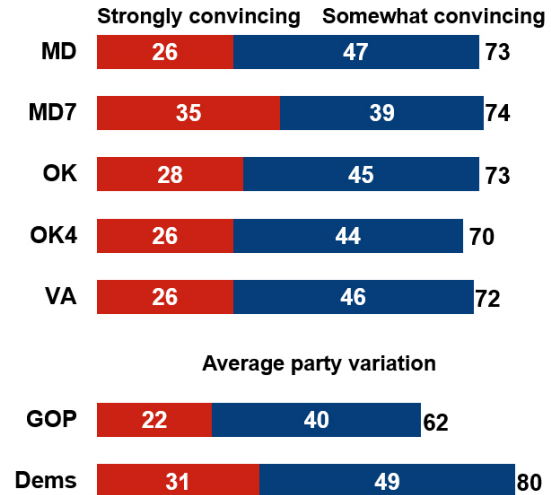




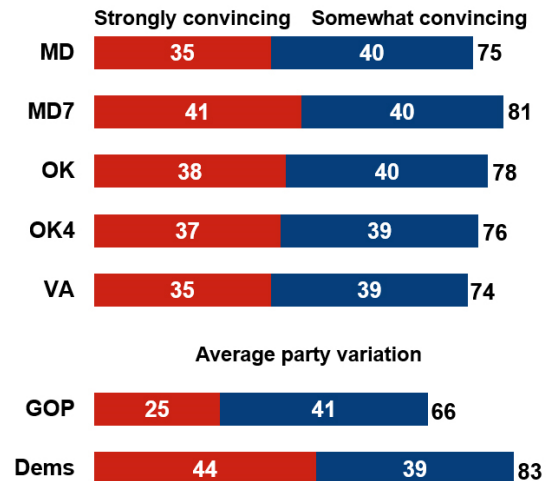


## ARGUMENTS AGAINST INCREASED SANCTIONS

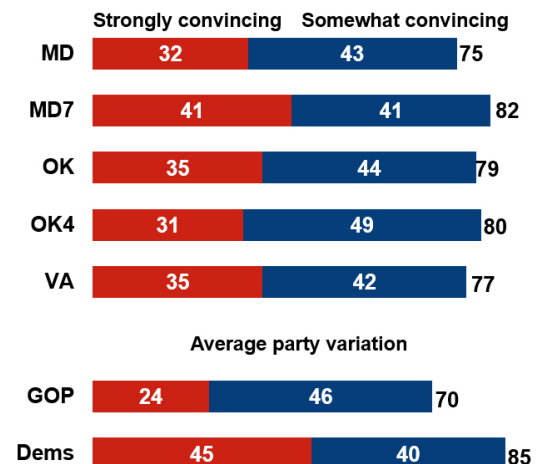
We need to really face the fact that sanctions have not worked to get Iran to give up enriching. Even as countries imposed more and more sanctions on Iran, it increased its level of enrichment activities, building more and better centrifuges and even enriching somewhat above the 5% level. On the other hand, the sanctions have helped to bring Iran to the table to negotiate limits on its enrichment and have led Iran to already accept some limits. We need to be realistic, take advantage of what has worked, and stop pursuing approaches that do not work.



Because the US has already stopped its trade with Iran, the only way Congress has been able to impose new sanctions is by threatening other countries, some of them allies, with sanctions unless they stop their business relations with Iran. Sometimes, we have actually punished their companies with fines. Many countries resent this. Cutting off trade with Iran hurts other countries' economy and they do not like being pushed around. This harms our relations with other countries, including friends and allies.



We need to remember that the system of sanctions on Iran requires the cooperation of other countries, who want the US to negotiate a deal with Iran so that we limit their nuclear program, allowing us to move away from the sanctions that harm their own economies too. If the US ramps up sanctions and pulls out of the negotiations now, when Iran says it is ready to make a deal, other countries will get annoyed and probably resume trading with Iran. The whole system of sanctions on Iran may well unravel, and then it will be even harder to get a deal with Iran. But if we show we would accept a deal that can be fully verified, these other countries are more apt to stick with us.





## EVALUATION OF PRO AND CON ARGUMENTS

Respondents evaluated arguments for and against each option. Nearly all arguments were found at least somewhat convincing by substantial majorities. In all states, arguments in favor of a deal and against sanctions did better than arguments against the deal and for sanctions; however, the opposite was true of Republicans.

Respondents were presented three arguments for and three arguments against each of the two options—a total of twelve arguments. Nearly all arguments were found at least somewhat convincing by majorities, suggesting that respondents were genuinely deliberating on the issue.

**Maryland:** Arguments in favor of a deal were found convincing by an average of 72% and arguments against sanctions by 74%. Arguments against the deal were found convincing by 60%, and for sanctions by 56%. For Republicans, however, arguments for sanctions (average 73%) and against the deal (77%) did better than arguments for the deal (61%) and against sanctions (63%).

**Oklahoma:** Arguments in favor of a deal were found convincing by an average of 74% and arguments against sanctions by 77%. Arguments against the deal were found convincing by 67%, and for sanctions by 64%. For Republicans, however, arguments for sanctions (76%) and against the deal (79%) did better than arguments for the deal (64%) and against sanctions (70%).

**Virginia:** Arguments in favor of a deal were found convincing, on average, by 73%; arguments against sanctions averaged 74%. Arguments in favor of sanctions were found convincing by 56% and against the deal by 63%. For Republicans, however, arguments for sanctions (average 70%) and against the deal (77%) did better than arguments for the deal (61%) and against sanctions (66%).

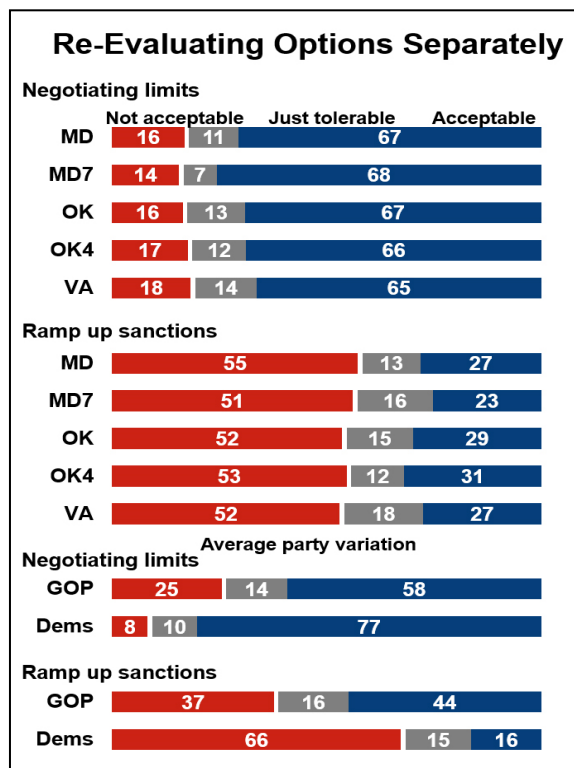
## RE-EVALUATION OF OPTIONS SEPARATELY

After considering arguments, respondents reassessed the options. Negotiating a deal was found slightly more acceptable, and increasing sanctions slightly less so—primarily because fewer Republicans found increased sanctions acceptable.

**Maryland:** Those finding a deal acceptable rose from 64 to 67%, while those finding more sanctions acceptable dropped from 29 to 27% (at least tolerable: 40%). Republicans finding a deal acceptable rose from 53 to 62%, while those finding more sanctions acceptable slipped from 50 to 46% (though 60% still found it at least tolerable).

**Oklahoma:** Those finding a deal acceptable rose from 60 to 67%, while those finding more sanctions acceptable dropped from 33% to 29% (at least tolerable: 44%). Among Republicans, this dropped from 49% to 43% (at least tolerable: 58%).

**Virginia:** Those finding a deal acceptable stayed steady at 65%, while those finding more sanctions acceptable dropped from 33% to 27% (45% found it at least tolerable). Among Republicans, this dropped from 52% to 42% (at least tolerable: 61%).





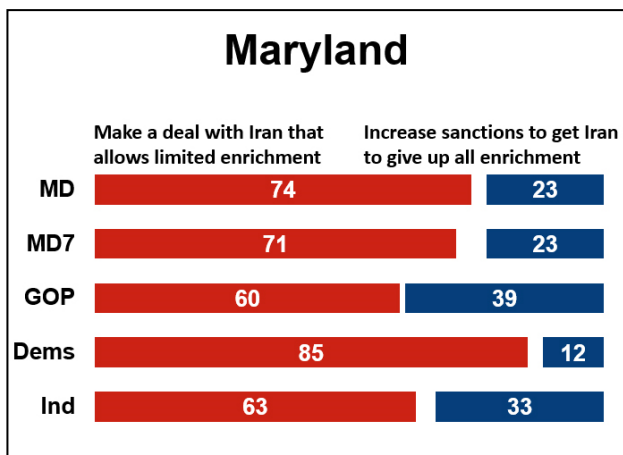
## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

**Asked for their final recommendation, more than seven in ten in all three states and districts recommended making a deal that allows limited uranium enrichment rather than ramping up sanctions in an effort to get Iran to terminate all enrichment. Six in ten Republicans in all states recommended a deal, as did eight in ten Democrats and two in three independents. Those with higher levels of education were more supportive of a deal.**

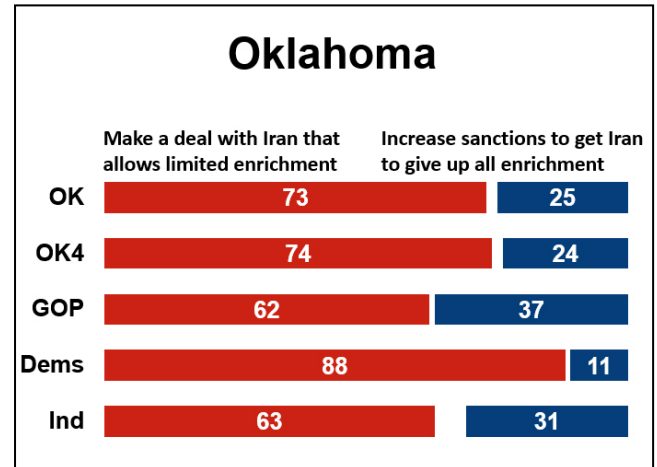
Finally, respondents were asked to make a definitive choice between the two positions. Both positions were re-presented to them in full and in exactly the same language as before.

For all jurisdictions and party affiliations a clear majority recommended pursuing a deal ranging from 60% of Republicans in Maryland to 88% of Democrats in Oklahoma. Support for not negotiating such an agreement, but rather imposing new sanctions ranged from 11% of Democrats in Virginia and Oklahoma to 39% of Republicans in Maryland.

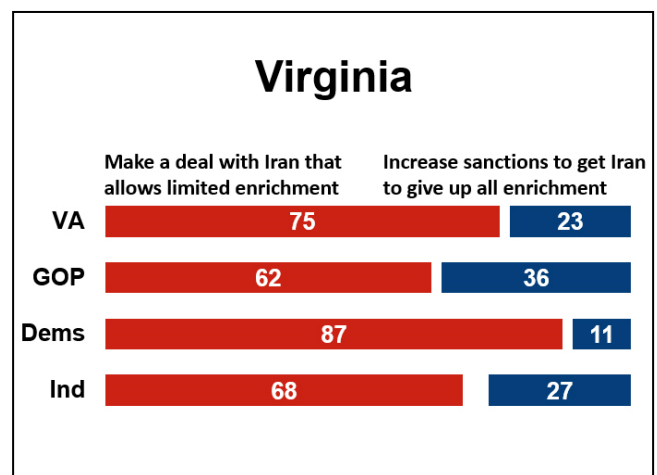
**Maryland:** Overall 74% of Marylanders recommended pursuing a deal with 23% recommending increasing sanctions. MD-7 was slightly lower at 71% for a deal. Interestingly Maryland Republicans were the lowest in support of a deal, but still 60%, and also highest in support of increasing sanctions (39%). Maryland Democrats overwhelmingly supported a deal (85%) as did 63% of independents.



**Oklahoma:** Overall 73% of Oklahomans recommended pursuing a deal with 25% recommending increasing sanctions. OK-4 was essentially the same at 74% for a deal. Sixty-two percent of Republicans recommended the deal with 37% favoring increased sanctions. Oklahoma Democrats had the highest level of support for a deal (88%), with 63% of independents agreeing.



**Virginia:** Three quarters of Virginians (75%) supported a deal while 23% favored ramping up sanctions. Sixty-two percent of Republicans recommended the deal with 36% favoring increased sanctions. An overwhelming 87% of Democrats favored a deal, as did 68% of Independents.





**Voice Of the People** is a non-partisan organization that seeks to re-anchor our democracy in its founding principles by giving ‘We the People’ a greater role in government. VOP furthers the use of innovative methods and technology to give the American people a more effective voice in the policymaking process.

VOP is working to urge Congress to take these new methods to scale so that Members of Congress have a large, scientifically-selected, representative sample of their constituents—called a Citizen Cabinet—to be consulted on current issues and providing a voice that accurately reflects the values and priorities of their district or state.



## PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

The **Program for Public Consultation** seeks to improve democratic governance by consulting the citizenry on key public policy issues governments face. It has developed innovative survey methods that simulate the process that policymakers go through—getting a briefing, hearing arguments, dealing with tradeoffs—before coming to their conclusion. It also uses surveys to help find common ground between conflicting parties. The Program for Public Consultation is part of the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is supported by generous grants from the Democracy Fund, Hewlett Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Circle Foundation.

Communications for Research recruited the members of the Oklahoma, Maryland and Virginia Citizen Cabinet panels, with additional recruitment efforts in Oklahoma by the Public Opinion Learning Laboratory at the University of Oklahoma. Scarborough Research provided additional registered voters from a larger national panel recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households provided by Survey Sampling International.

Touchstone Research programmed the Citizen Cabinet panel registration intake process and the Social Security policymaking simulation that the panel members completed.

Richard Parsons, VOP’s Executive Director, and Rich Robinson, VOP’s Director of Communications, managed communications with U.S. Congressional offices and the press, and contributed to the writing of the report.

Allison Stettler managed the panel development and the design and production of the report with assistance from Antje Williams and Brandon Juhaish.