

A poll finds that New Mexico voters say that crime prevention should be a priority over punishment.

The group Center for Civic Policy, a progressive group based out of Albuquerque, commissioned the poll from Third Eye Strategies. The group opposes many of the bills to increase penalties that have been introduced this year.

The poll comes as Republicans, especially leadership in the House, have focused the early days of the session largely on legislation that increases penalties for certain crimes.

House Democrats have instead focused much of their attention on ethics, though the legislation they introduced has not yet been given the OK to be heard by Gov. Susana Martinez.

A polling memo showed some of the questions; when asked about expanding the three strikes law “for anyone who commits three violent crimes” against focusing “more resources on programs like early-education, drug abuse treatment, mental health service and family crisis intervention” 35 percent favored “harsher penalties” while 49 percent favored “crime prevention programs.”

“Clearly, the proven way to protect our communities is to invest more resources in programs like early-education, drug abuse treatment, drug courts, mental health services, and family crisis intervention,” Oriana Sandoval, Executive Director of the Center for Civic Policy said. “New

Mexicans understand this and they deserve better than the knee-jerk proposals in front of our legislature now."

The poll also asked about "teen curfew laws." On this question, the poll found that 47 percent favor, while 46 percent oppose allowing municipalities to impose such laws; more strongly favor (30 percent) than strongly opposed (26 percent).

In other words, it was evenly split.

"Three strikes laws and mandatory teen curfews are failed policies and simply don't reduce crime rates," Sandoval said. "Diverting important police resources to criminalizing our youth, not to mention the increased costs of incarceration, are also important factors to consider this year, as state budget revenue is much reduced."

The poll also found that the top two issues for voters were "schools" and "education."

However, this poll came well before the session began and well before much of media attention in the state focused on crime.

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