

Religion and Public Life in Alabama:

- **Strong Support for Public Display of the Ten Commandments**
- **Religion Should Have a Greater Influence on Alabama Politics & Public Life**
- **Support for State Constitutional Ban on Gay and Lesbian Marriages**

(Auburn, August 30) The Center for Governmental Services at Auburn University announces the results of a statewide public opinion survey on the perceptions and attitudes of Alabamians regarding the public display of religious symbols, the influence of religion on politics, and Constitutional prohibition of gay/lesbian marriages¹. The *Ask-Alabama* poll indicates that Alabamians favor the display of the Ten Commandments in public venues, but also believe that too much attention has been given to the controversy.

The *Ask-Alabama* poll also points out that most Alabamians believe that the influence of religion on Alabama politics and public life is not extreme. Finally, Alabamians parallel the views of much of the nation in opposition to recognition of gay or lesbian marriages.

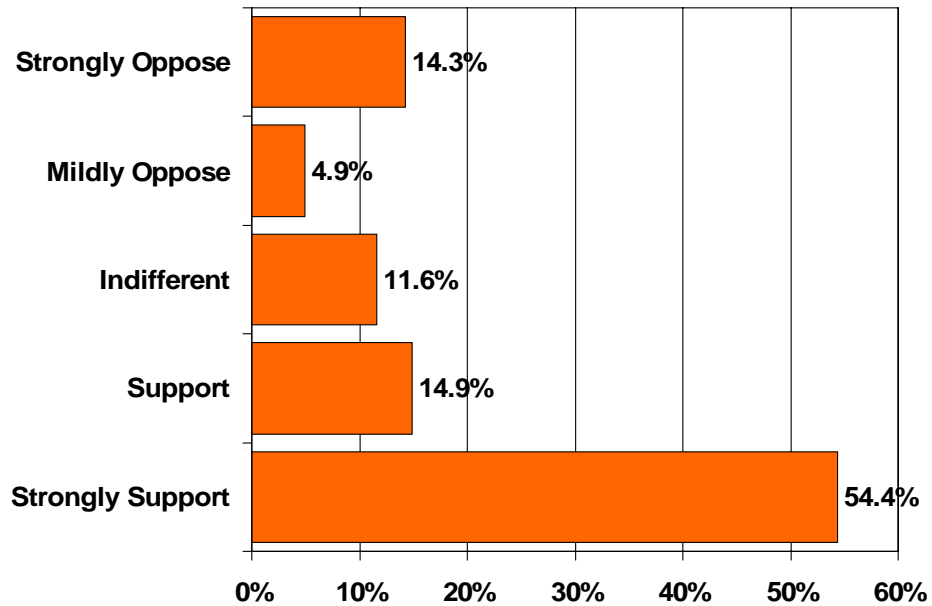
Religion and Public Life

A majority of Alabamians (55%) *Strongly Support* the display of a monument to the Ten Commandments in public schools or government buildings, and an additional 15% *Support* these displays. On the other side of the issue, only 14% of the public *Strongly Oppose* the display of monuments to the Ten Commandments in public venues, and an additional 5% express some reservations or weak opposition to these displays.

While supportive of the display of the Commandments, 58% of respondents opined that *Too Much Attention* is being paid to this issue, and only 30% felt that the issue needed more attention.

¹ The survey of a random telephone sample of 609 Alabamians was conducted during the summer of 2004. The estimated margin of error is +/- 4%.

Alabamians Support the Public Display of Monuments to the Ten Commandments

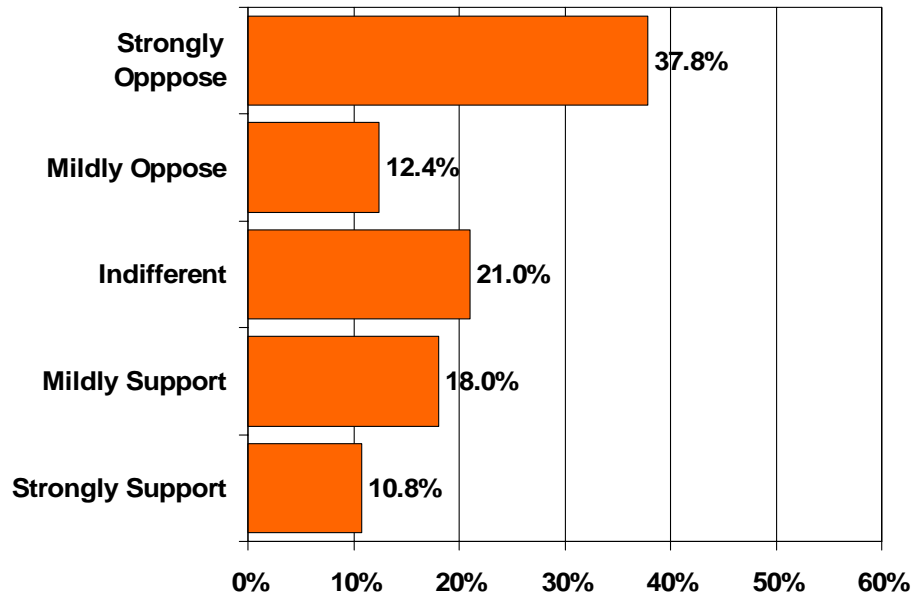


How Much Attention is Being Given to the Issues of the Display of Religious Monuments in Public Buildings in Alabama

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Too Little Attention	179	29.4	30.4	30.4
Just Enough Attention	70	11.5	11.9	42.3
Too Much Attention	339	55.7	57.7	100.0
Total	588	96.6	100.0	
Missing System	21	3.4		
Total	609	100.0		

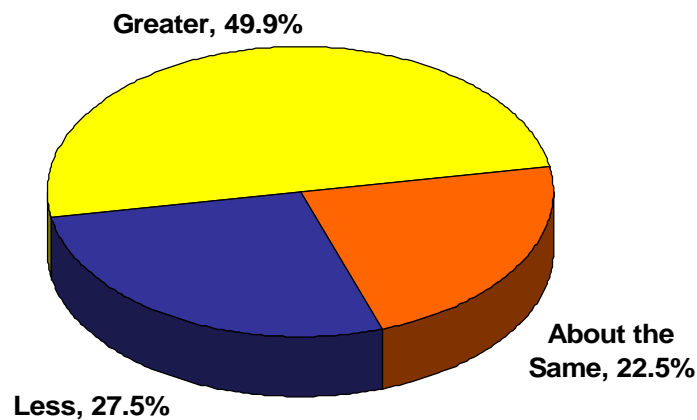
Alabamians are somewhat selective about the types of religious symbols to be displayed in a public building. Half of the sample oppose or strongly oppose the display in a public setting of a verse from a non-Christian religion, and only 11% would strongly support such a display.

Alabamians are Not Supportive about the Display of Verse from Non-Christian Religious Texts Such as the Koran or Torah



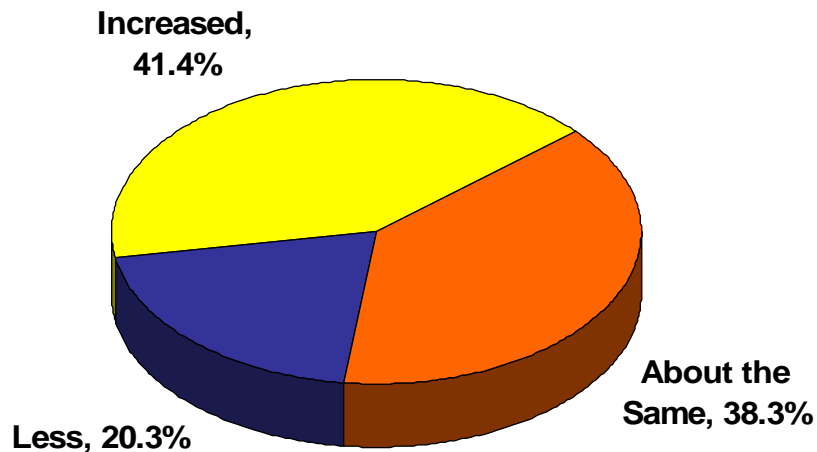
The issue of the display of a monument to the Ten Commandments brings to the fore the question about the appropriate influence of religion on politics and public life in Alabama. Approximately one half of the respondents (49.9%) would prefer to see religion have a greater influence on Alabama politics and public life than now, and about a fifth (22.5%) view that the current influence of religion on politics is just right.

In the Future, What Should be the Influence of Religion on Politics and Public Life in Alabama?



When assessing the current influence of religion on public life in the State, twenty percent of Alabamians (20.3%) perceived that the influence of religion on public life in the State has declined. More than twice that proportion (i.e. 41.4%), however, believe that the influence of religion has increased on politics and public life in Alabama.

How Has the Influence of Religion on Politics and Public Life in Alabama Changed Over the Past Few Years?

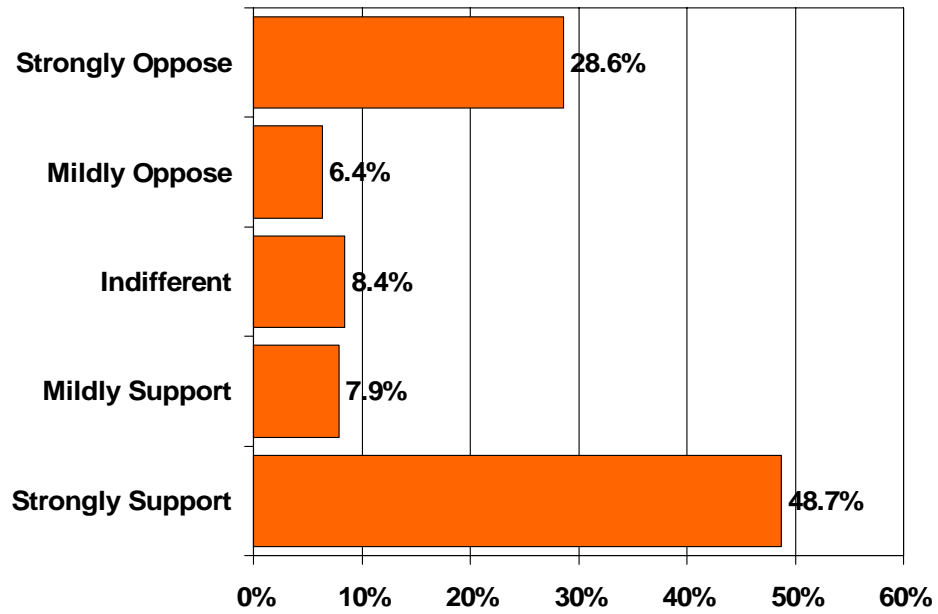


Legal Recognition and Protection of Gays and Lesbians in Alabama

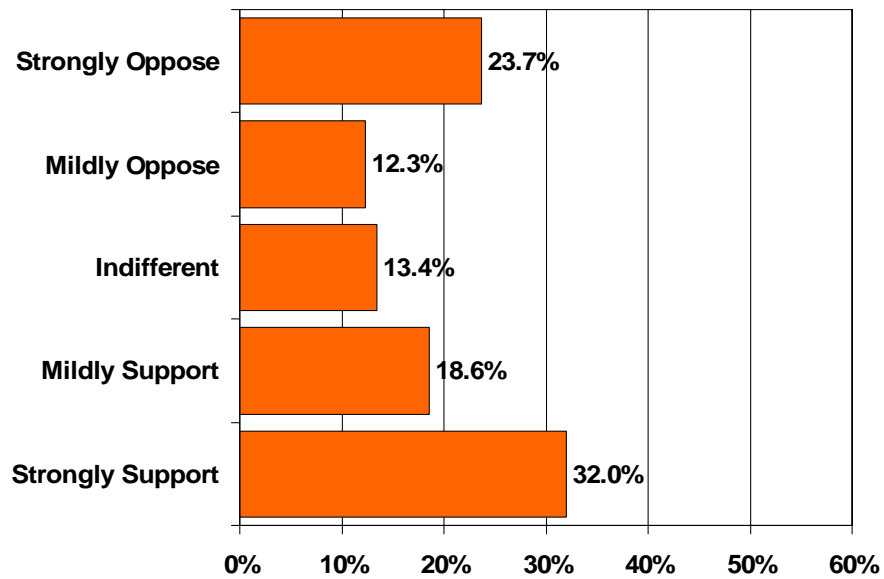
Throughout much of the nation, there has been considerable controversy about the role of the state in sanctioning marriage between gay or lesbian couples, and in most localities there is opposition to authorizing such marriages. Alabama is not an exception. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the respondents *Support* or *Strongly Support* an amendment to the State Constitution which would ban such marriages in Alabama, and less than 10% are indifferent about this issue.

The issue of banning gay or lesbian marriages should not be construed as widespread support of the public to discriminate against gays and lesbians. Approximately half of the public (50.6%) would support laws making it illegal to discriminate against gays or lesbians, and less than a quarter (23.7%) would strongly oppose such legislation.

Support for a State Constitutional Ban on Gay or Lesbian Marriages



Support of Legislation to Prohibit Discrimination against Gays or Lesbians



Summary of Findings

- Alabamians favor the display of the Ten Commandments in public and governmental buildings.
- Fifty-eight percent of the public believe that too much attention has been given to the issue of the display of the Ten Commandments.
- While supportive of the Ten Commandments' public display, there is much less support for public display of verses from non-Christian sources such as the Koran or Torah.
- A majority of Alabamians would prefer to see more influence of religion on politics and public life, but also believe that religion has not become less influential in public life during the last few years.
- State residents support a constitutional ban against gay and lesbian marriage, but would support legislation to prohibit discrimination against gays or lesbians.