

Michigan residents who attended policy event willing to consider tax hikes

By [Amy Lane](#)

A weekend-long November event that brought citizens together to deliberate critical issues related to Michigan's economy and other areas resulted in higher support among attendees for increasing some taxes, according to polling results released Thursday by project organizers.

The Lansing event brought together Michigan public-policy experts, leaders and more than 300 residents to discuss and examine the difficult choices facing the state's economic future. It included a "deliberative poll" designed to demonstrate what the public would think if it were more engaged and informed.

The Michigan event was a project of By the People, a civic engagement initiative launched by **MacNeil/Lehrer Productions**, working in partnership with the Center for Deliberative Democracy at **Stanford University** and funded by a grant from the **W.K. Kellogg Foundation**.

The polling results showed attendees' opinions changed after learning more information and participating in events that included group discussions and panels of policy experts.

"One of the most interesting findings of the event is that after being informed and deliberating, these individuals wanted to raise taxes that impact their lives directly, like the income and sales taxes, and cut taxes they only see indirectly, like the business tax," said James Fishkin, director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy, in a news release.

"They were willing to accept the pain of tax increases if that might help the state's difficult financial situation."

More than half of those polled said the state should spend more on programs like education, health care and pensions, even if it means higher taxes.

Environmental areas, like "making Michigan a greener economy" and increased incentives for businesses to produce environmentally friendly products and services, also saw strong support.

A MacNeil/Lehrer television documentary on the event, "Hard Times, Hard Choices," is scheduled to air Jan. 18 on Michigan **PBS** stations.