

DECATUR POLL: By a 12-1 Margin, Decatur Registered Voters Reject City Plan to Spend \$700,000 in Taxpayer Money on another Internet Network

Voters reject taking on more city debt while there are needs in other city services, including improved streets and public safety; opposition to city council internet proposal is overwhelming

SPRINGFIELD, IL - A recent poll of registered voters in Decatur shows that 85 percent of voters prefer that the city spend taxpayer dollars on improved streets, sidewalks, enhanced public safety and other city services, rather than on another internet network for businesses.

Voters preferred other city services over another internet network by more than a 12-1 margin.

More than 85 percent of respondents said they preferred that the city of Decatur spend taxpayer money on city services, while less than 7 percent said they preferred the spending on another internet network. Less than 8 percent were unsure.

Decatur city officials and members of the Decatur City Council currently are considering a plan to borrow \$700,000 of Decatur taxpayers' money to expand a city-owned high-speed internet network.

The poll was commissioned by the Illinois Telecommunications Association and performed by We Ask America. It asked 588 registered voters in Decatur three questions about the city's plan to borrow \$700,000 of taxpayer money to expand a city-owned internet network to businesses. The poll was conducted May 12, 2016, has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.03 percent.

"By a 12-1 margin, Decatur voters reject taking on more city debt for another internet network while there are needs in other city services, including improved streets and public safety," said Randy Nehrt, president, Illinois Telecommunications Association. "Governments are responsible for addressing important issues, including public safety, clean drinking water and improved roads, streets and infrastructure. Decatur voters clearly say the city should focus on basic needs instead of incurring debt on an internet network."

Communications companies have already invested millions of dollars in Decatur to build high-speed internet networks at no cost to taxpayers. Now the city of Decatur is considering a plan to spend Decatur taxpayer money to expand a city-owned internet network to compete against the companies that invested in Decatur.

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On another question, when voters were told that many U.S. cities tried to build city-owned networks but failed, leaving local taxpayers on the hook for millions of dollars in debt, they remained overwhelmingly opposed to the city's plans. By a 10-1 margin, Decatur voters did not want city leaders to risk tax dollars to build out a city-owned internet network.

More than 84 percent of respondents said they did not want the city of Decatur to risk taxpayer dollars to try to build a city-owned network. Less than 8 percent said they did want to see the city take that risk. Less than 8 percent were unsure.

On the question of who would do a better job of protecting online information from hackers, Decatur voters said communications companies would do a better job than city officials or contractors by more than a 2-1 margin. More than 53 percent said communications companies while 21.4 percent said city workers. Nearly a quarter of voters were unsure on this question.

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We Ask America - Poll Questions and Results

Date of Poll: 05/12/2016

Responses: 588 RV

Margin of error: ±4.03%

1. As you may know, communications companies have already spent millions of dollars to build a high-speed internet network for businesses in Decatur. We'd like to know if you think that the City of Decatur should spend 700,000 taxpayer dollars to build another internet network for businesses, or instead spend that money on improved streets, sidewalks or enhanced public safety and other city services for residents?

Response Percentage

Network	6.78%
City services	85.88%
Unsure	7.34%

2. Many U.S. cities tried to build city-owned Internet networks but failed, leaving local taxpayers with millions of dollars in debt to pay. If you knew that, would you want the City to risk Decatur taxpayer dollars to try to build a city-owned internet network?

Response Percentage

Yes	7.91%
No	84.75%
Unsure	7.34%

3. Businesses store private financial and medical records securely online. Who do you think would do a better job of protecting that private information from hackers and security threats: communications company experts or City of Decatur employees and contractors?

Response Percentage

Communication companies	53.67%
City workers	21.47%
Unsure	24.86%