

ALABAMA RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT ON RESEARCH

A Public Opinion Study for Research!America

2003

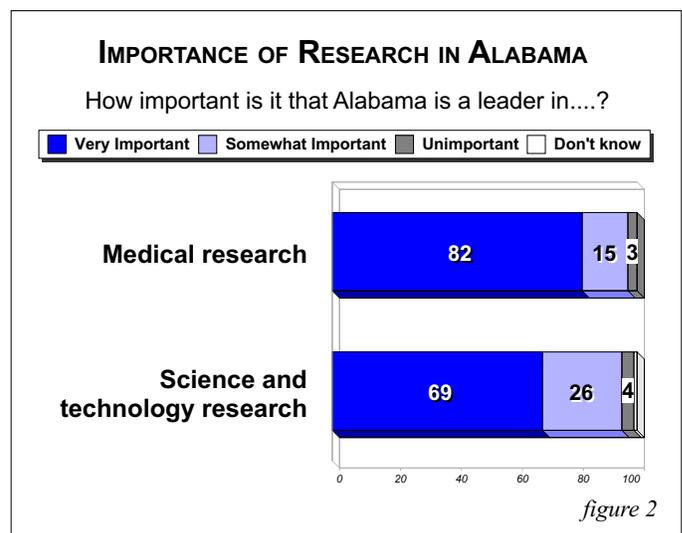
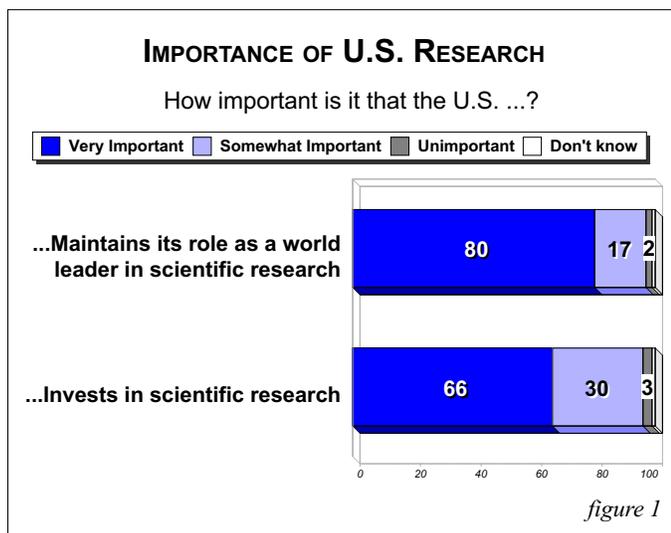
Research!America has been gauging public opinion on people's attitudes toward medical, health and scientific research since 1992. Results of the recent poll in Alabama show a high level of support and value for research conducted in both the public and private sector. These poll responses indicate there is an overwhelming belief in Alabama that research is important and is a high priority for its citizens, particularly as it impacts the state's health, education and economy.

LEADERSHIP IN RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT TO ALABAMA RESIDENTS

Investment in research is clearly important to Alabama residents (see figure 1). In fact, 97% of Alabama residents say it is important that the United States maintains its role as a world leader in scientific research, with 80% saying this is *very important*.

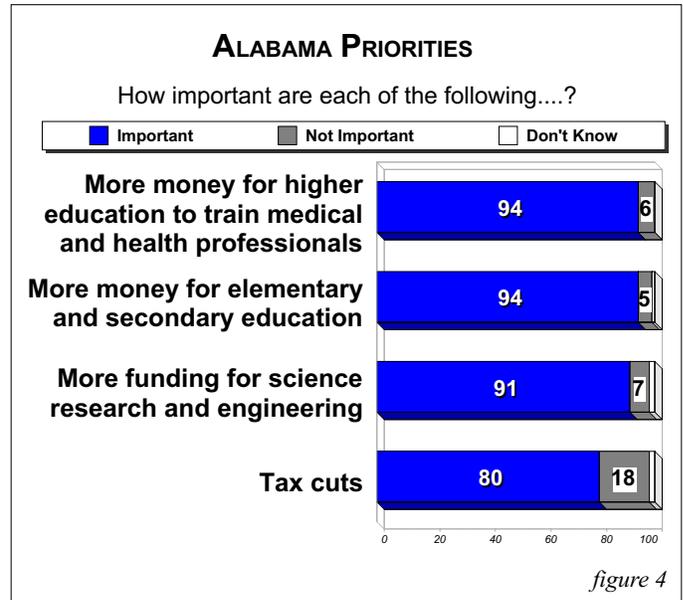
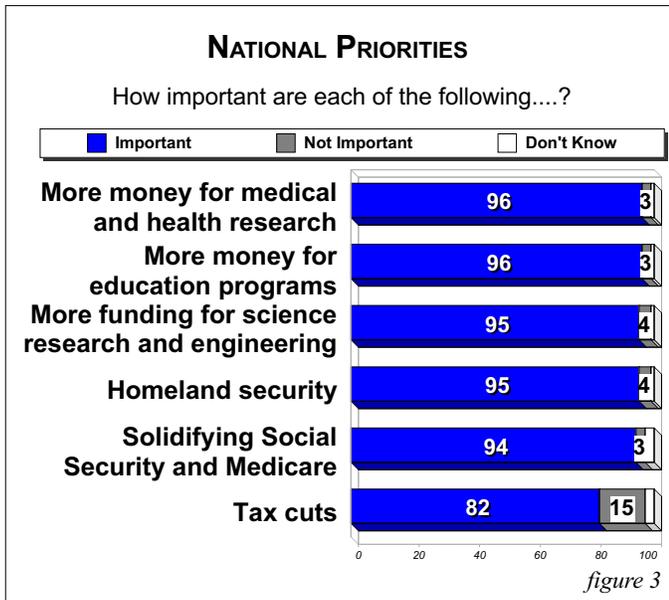
Similarly, 96% of Alabama residents agree it is important for the US to invest in scientific research in areas such as physics, mathematics, and engineering. Two thirds feel it is *very important* for the US to invest in this type of research. Furthermore, over three-quarters agree that even if it brings no immediate benefits, basic research which advances the frontiers of knowledge is necessary and should be supported by the federal government.

Ninety-five percent of residents say it is important for Alabama to be a leader in science and technology research, and 69% say it is *very important* (see figure 2). However, only 46% say Alabama is currently very much a leader. Thirty-five percent say the state is somewhat a leader, and 12% believe Alabama is not a leader. Nearly all (97%) say it is important for Alabama to be a leader in medical research, however, only 56% say Alabama is currently very much a leader in this area.



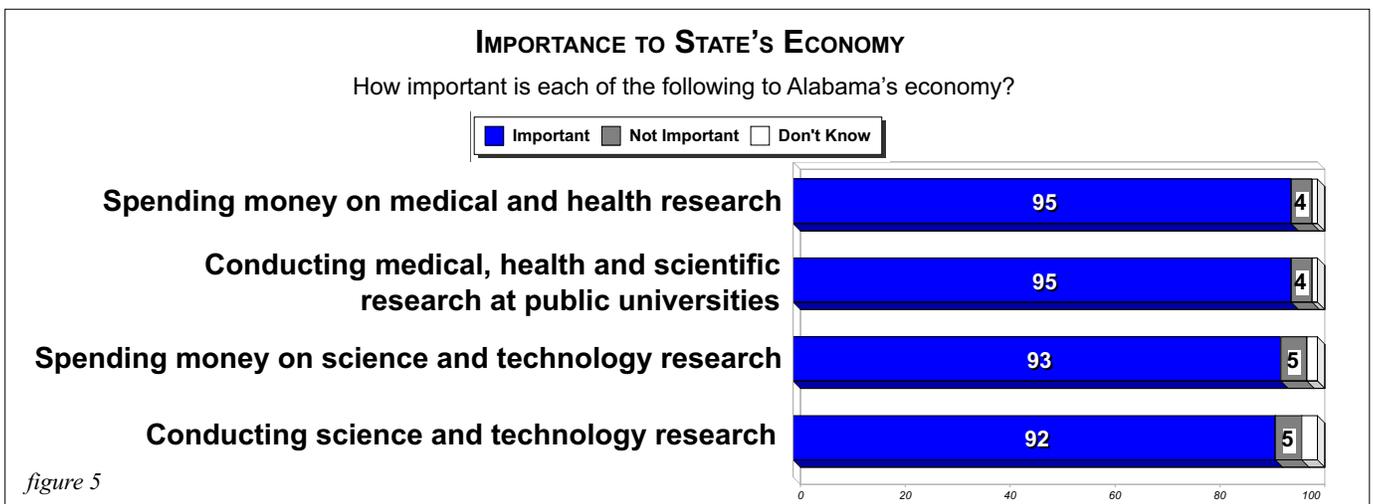
Medical research is clearly a priority to Alabama residents, even when compared with several other national priorities (see figure 3). In fact, 96% say this is an important priority. Strengthening education programs also garners high importance ratings from 96%, followed by more funding for science research and engineering (95%) and homeland security (95%). Solidifying Social Security and Medicare is similarly important at 94%. Residents consider tax cuts to be a slightly lower priority with 82% saying they are an important national priority.

In terms of priorities for their state, 94% of Alabama residents say funding to train medical students and other health professionals is an important priority, and 91% say funding for science research and engineering is important (see figure 4).



MEDICAL AND SCIENCE RESEARCH ARE IMPORTANT TO ALABAMA'S ECONOMY

Thinking in terms of jobs, incomes, and quality of life, 95% of Alabama residents feel that spending money on medical and health research is important to the state's economy (see figure 5). Sixty percent feel spending on medical and health research is *very* important to Alabama's economy, and another 35% feel it is *somewhat* important. Additionally, 95% say conducting medical and health research at public universities is important.



Likewise, 93% say spending money on science and technology research is important to Alabama’s economy, with 50% saying it is *very* important. Ninety-two percent of Alabama residents believe science and technology research conducted at public universities is important to the state’s economy, and 55% say it is *very* important.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ARE IMPORTANT

Ninety-seven percent of Alabama residents feel it is important that the state continue supporting science and engineering research that is carried on in Alabama’s state universities (see figure 6). In fact, 84% say this is *very* important, and 13% say it is *somewhat* important.

Research to advance knowledge in science, engineering and mathematics is seen as an important purpose of colleges and universities by 98% of residents, with 80% saying it is *very* important. Similarly, 96% of residents say it is important that schools in Alabama make science education a priority. Seventy-one percent say this is *very* important (see figure 7).

Alabama residents agree that the state’s universities must educate students for the high tech job market (96% agree, 74% agree *strongly*). Ninety-three percent agree the state must further develop in the high-tech job market in order to ensure economic growth in the state. However, just 67% agree that Alabama is effectively competing with other states to create high tech jobs, and 65% agree the state is effectively competing to receive its share of federally funded research.

RESIDENTS FAVOR ENHANCED SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR RESEARCH

Residents strongly support the state offering financial incentives to attract new scientific research, such as labs. In fact, 49% say they *strongly* approve of such incentives and an additional 32% say they *somewhat* approve (see figure 8). Similarly, 77% of Alabama residents agree that Congress should support tax and regulatory policies that encourage private industries to conduct more medical research.

UNIVERSITY SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH

How important is it that Alabama keep supporting science and engineering research at state universities?

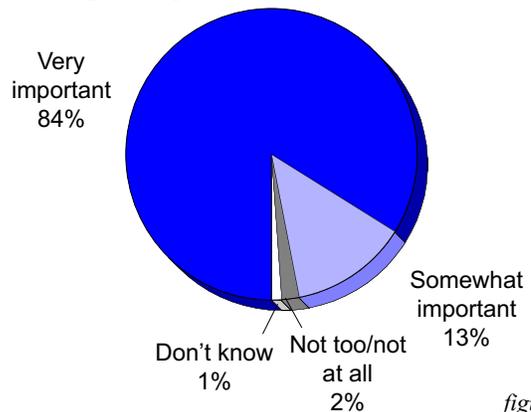


figure 6

SCIENCE EDUCATION A PRIORITY

How important is it that schools in Alabama make science education a priority?

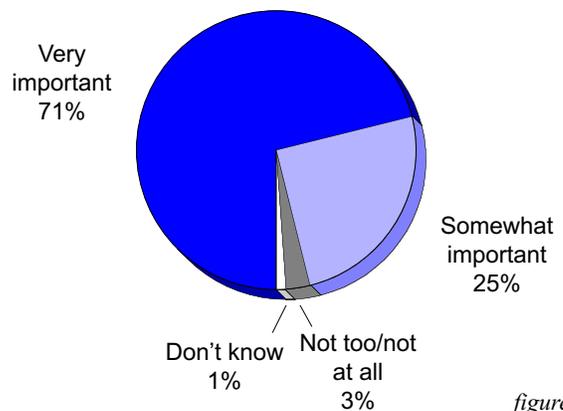


figure 7

SUPPORT FOR FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Would you approve or disapprove of Alabama offering financial incentives to attract new scientific research?

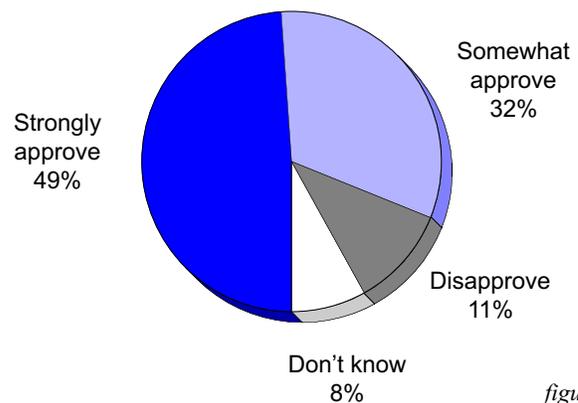
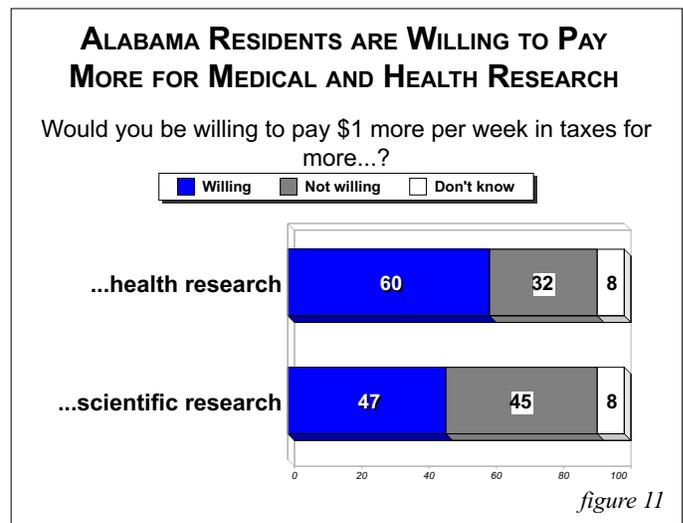
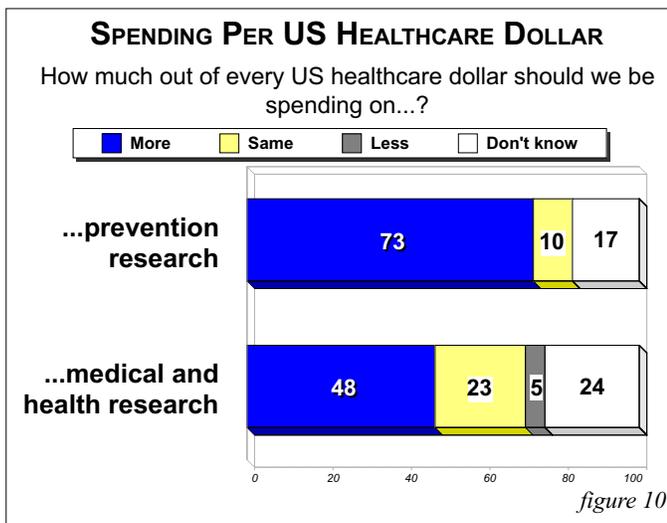
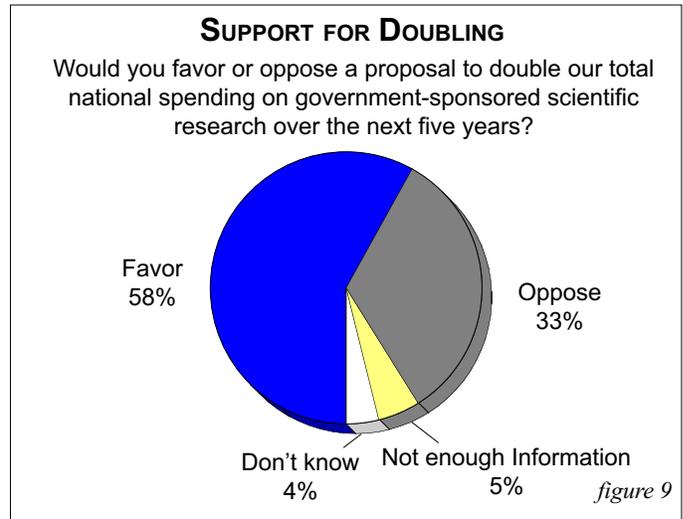


figure 8

RESIDENTS WANT MORE MONEY SPENT ON SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL AND HEALTH RESEARCH

Recognizing the value of all scientific research, 58% of residents favor a proposal to double total national spending on government-sponsored scientific research over the next five years (see figure 9).

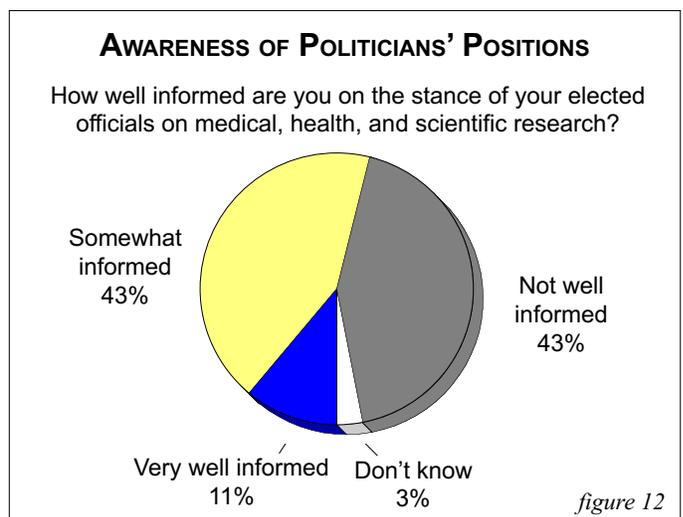
A plurality of 48% of Alabama residents believe we should be spending more than the current five to six cents per US health care dollar on medical and health research. Twenty-three percent say this is the right amount and only 5% say we should be spending less. Furthermore, 73% say we should be spending more than the current one cent out of each US healthcare dollar on prevention research. Ten percent say we should be spending the right amount and only 5% say we should be spending less. Ten percent say we are spending the right amount (see figure 10).



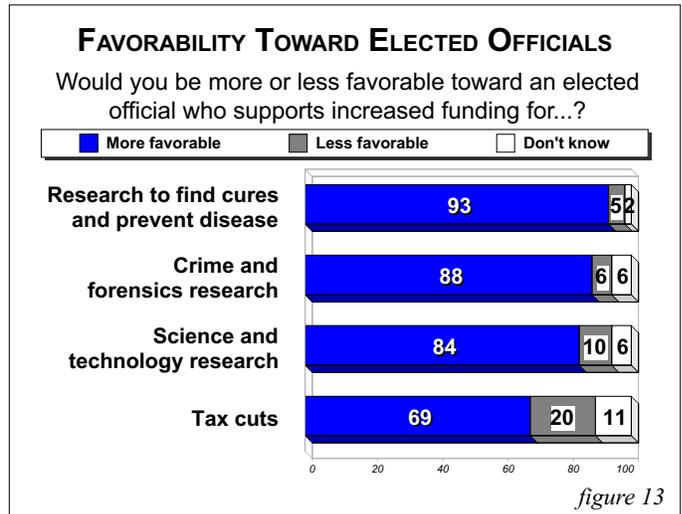
Not only do residents approve of government spending on research, they are also willing to pay more for it (see figure 11). Three-in-five say they would be willing to pay \$1 more per week in taxes for more health research. Forty-seven percent would be willing to pay \$1 more per week in taxes for more scientific research.

RESIDENTS FAVOR ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO SUPPORT RESEARCH

Although Alabama residents favor increased spending on research, 43% say they are not well informed about the stance of their elected officials when it comes to their support of medical, health and scientific research (see figure 12). When asked the position of their member of US Congress on medical research, 70% say they do not know.

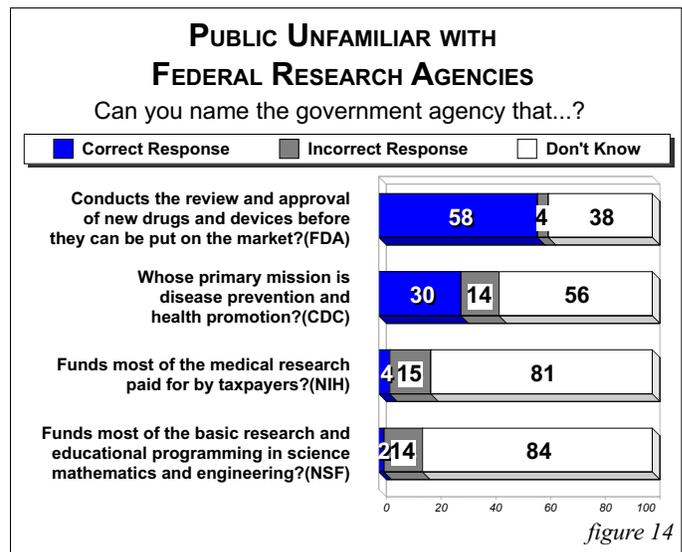


Ninety-three percent say they would be more favorable toward elected officials who support increased funding for research to find cures, treatments and prevention for disease and disabilities, with 61% saying they would be *much more likely* to support them. Similarly, 88% would be more favorable toward elected officials who support increased funding for fighting crime and forensics research, while 84% would be more favorable toward elected officials who support increased funding for science and technology research (see figure 13, previous page). By comparison, 69% would be more favorable toward an elected official who supports tax cuts.



NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION, AND CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION HAVE LOW PUBLIC RECOGNITION

Despite their willingness to support medical, health, science and engineering research efforts, Alabama residents generally do not know what federal agencies are responsible for spending their tax dollars on that research (see figure 14). Eighty-one percent say they cannot name the government agency that funds most of the medical research paid for by taxpayers, and only 4% correctly identified the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Similarly, 84% say they cannot identify the government agency that funds most of the basic research and educational programming in the sciences, mathematics and engineering in this country. Only two percent correctly identified the National Science Foundation (NSF). Finally, while 56% say they do not know the name of the agency whose primary mission is disease prevention and health promotion, 30% correctly identified the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



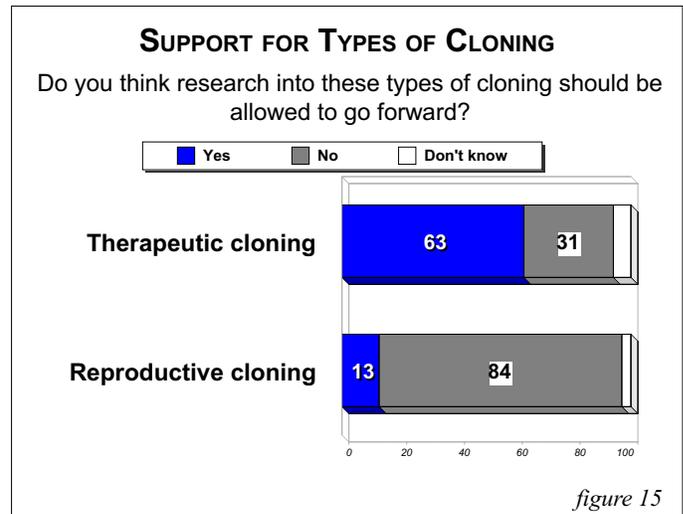
In contrast, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) garners a higher level of public recognition, with 58% correctly identifying the government agency which conducts the review and approval of new drugs and devices before they can be put on the market.

ALSO OF NOTE...

Thirty-seven percent of Alabama residents are unable to name an organization in the state where medical research is conducted. Of those mentioned, The University of Alabama at Birmingham tops the list with 29%, followed by Alabama State University (6%) and UAB Hospital (5%). All other organizations were cited by less than 5%. Similarly, 46% of Alabama residents were unable to name one institution in the United States where medical research is conducted.

Asked what concerns residents have about medical research, 36% cite no concerns. Of those who mentioned a concern, the need for more research was the most frequently cited (9%), while cloning/genetic research and wasting money were each mentioned by 7%. All other concerns were mentioned by fewer than five percent.

When given more information about types of cloning, residents express support for research into therapeutic cloning, used to help in the search for possible cures and treatments for diseases and disabilities (see figure 15). Sixty-three percent agree that research into therapeutic cloning should go forward, while about one-third feel that it should not be allowed. More than four-in-five residents say research into reproductive cloning to create a child should not be allowed to go forward, with 74% who feel *strongly* that it should not be allowed.



METHODOLOGY

Charlton Research Company conducted a telephone survey among 800 adults in Alabama. The entire sample was proportionate to the state's demographics, including geography, gender, voter registration and ethnicity. The survey, fielded November 2 through 11, 2002, has a theoretical sampling error of +/-3.5%. Please note that much of the question text in this report has been paraphrased.

This poll was commissioned by Research!America, a non-profit, membership-supported national alliance of organizations and individuals dedicated to enhancing public education and advocacy for medical, health, and scientific research. For more information about the Alabama poll, including a list of sponsoring organizations, or for other questions about public attitudes towards scientific research, contact Research!America at: 1101 King Street, Suite 520, Alexandria, Virginia 22314 · Telephone: 703/739-2577 · Fax: 703/739-2372 · e-mail: info@researchamerica.org · www.researchamerica.org.

