FACT SHEET

Iowa Residents Support No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons

The choice to use nuclear weapons is one of the most significant, impactful decisions that a leader or country could ever make. A single warhead or bomb could kill hundreds of thousands of people; the use of even a small number of weapons could cause dramatic and disastrous impacts. Currently, the United States reserves the right to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict, and the authority to launch nuclear weapons lies solely with the president. A recent Zogby Analytics poll highlights how Iowa residents feel about these policies. (Due to rounding, percentages may not add to 100%.)

Acceptability of Using Nuclear Weapons First

Over half of Iowans (57 percent) say the United States should not use nuclear weapons first in a conflict, with more than 30 percent responding that the United States should never use nuclear weapons. Only one in four Iowans (26 percent) think there are circumstances in which it would be acceptable for the United States to use nuclear weapons first, while 18 percent don’t know or are unsure (Figure 1).

Importance of Presidential Candidates Discussing Views on Nuclear Weapons

According to the survey, 82 percent of Iowa residents think it is very (42 percent) or somewhat (40 percent) important for candidates in the upcoming 2020

FIGURE 1. Using Nuclear Weapons First

In your opinion, are there any acceptable circumstances for the United States to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict or should the United States only use them after a nuclear attack on the United States or one of our allies?

- Acceptable Circumstances to Use Nuclear Weapons First: 26%
- Only Use After Nuclear Attack by Another Country: 26%
- Never Use Nuclear Weapons: 31%
- Don’t Know/Not Sure: 18%
presidential election to lay out their views regarding nuclear weapons. Only 8 percent think it is not very important that they do so, 3 percent say it is not at all important, and 7 percent don’t know or are unsure (Figure 2).

**Single or Multiple Person Approval for Use of Nuclear Weapons**

Respondents were asked whether they are comfortable with the current policy of sole authority—the president is the only person who can order the use of nuclear weapons, does not need to consult with anyone, and the decision cannot be overruled—or if they would prefer that one or two other government officials be required to approve the use of nuclear weapons. Nearly half (47 percent) would prefer that one or two other government officials be required to approve of the use of nuclear weapons; an additional 17 percent responded that the United States should never use nuclear weapons. Just over a quarter of Iowans (28 percent) say they are comfortable with the current policy, while 8 percent don’t know or are unsure (Figure 3).

**Methodology**

All responses come from a poll conducted by Zogby Analytics. Out of thousands of randomly selected telephone numbers, 410 adults in Iowa were interviewed between March 11 and March 13, 2019. Weighting techniques were used to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. The sampling margin of error is +/- 4.8 percent.