

TallahasseeVoices - Citizens' Views on Local Campaign Finance Restrictions

Citizens of Leon County demonstrate modest support for recent campaign finance restrictions considered by the Leon County Commission, but citizens prefer that commissioners spend their time and taxpayers' money on more important issues such as crime, traffic, education, and the environment.

In a *Voices*¹ Internet survey sponsored by Kerr & Downs Research and *The Tallahassee Democrat*, 505 Leon County citizens expressed their views on Leon County Commission's recent investigation into local political campaign financing restrictions. Half of Leon County citizens (48%) feel that current campaign laws are not sufficient to protect against "dirty money" influencing local elections, and only 17% believe that current campaign laws are effective. One in four citizens (24%) cynically suggests there is no reason to change campaign finance laws since clever politicians and their supporters will find ways to circumvent new laws.

Only 7% of Leon County citizens want political campaigns for local offices financed entirely from local tax dollars while 59% of citizens prefer that most, if not all, campaign funds are raised by candidates from individual and corporate contributors.

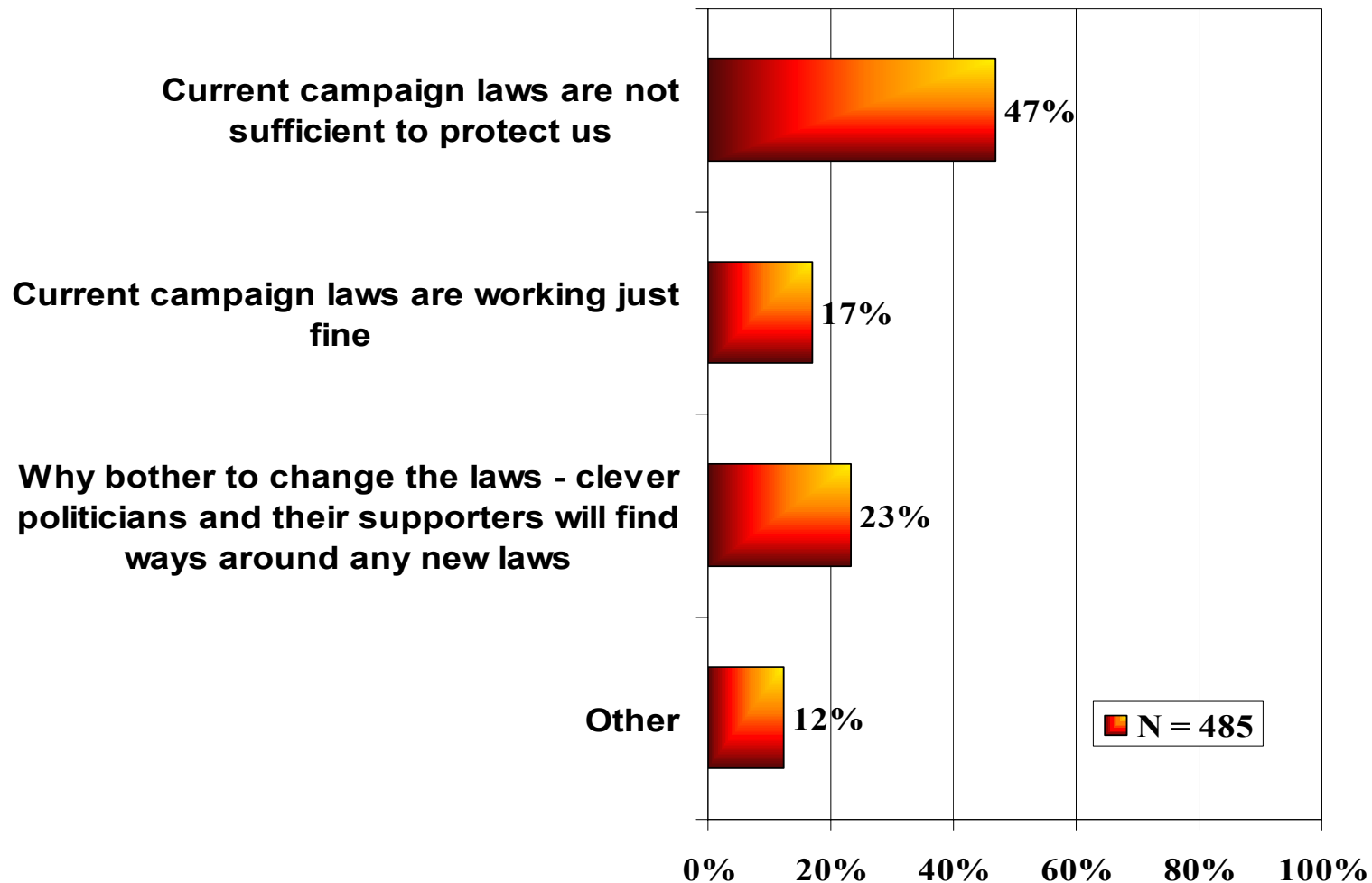
Six in ten citizens (58%) feel that Leon County commissioners should focus their efforts on more pressing issues rather than dealing with campaign finance reform. While majorities of citizens support several of the campaign finance reform issues that Leon County commissioners are considering, fewer than half believe that additional restrictions on campaign financing will be effective in accomplishing the desired goals. For example, 52% of citizens agree that new campaign finance laws are needed to make local campaigns less expensive, but only 33% believe that new laws will be effective in actually making local campaigns less expensive. Nearly two out of three citizens (63%) agree that new campaign finance laws are necessary to encourage more and better candidates to run for local offices, yet only 41% think these laws will actually convince more and better candidates to run for local office.

Four out of five citizens think elections for Leon County Commissioner, Clerk of Courts, Property Appraiser, Sheriff, and Tax Collector should be non-partisan. Two out of three citizens agree that the Leon County Charter should be amended to prohibit local candidates from accepting more than \$200 from a single contributor, and that local candidates should not be able to accept funding from people who live outside Leon County. Half of local citizens agree that the Leon County Charter should be amended to prohibit corporations from donating to local candidates, and that candidates who agree to voluntary spending limits should receive matching public funding.

¹ The *Voices* survey panel is slightly older, less racially diverse, and has a higher household income than Leon County as a whole. Over 1,700 citizens are in the *Voices* panel; 505 citizens responded to this survey conducted 7.21-23.2004. To become part of *Voices*, go to www.voices2004.com.

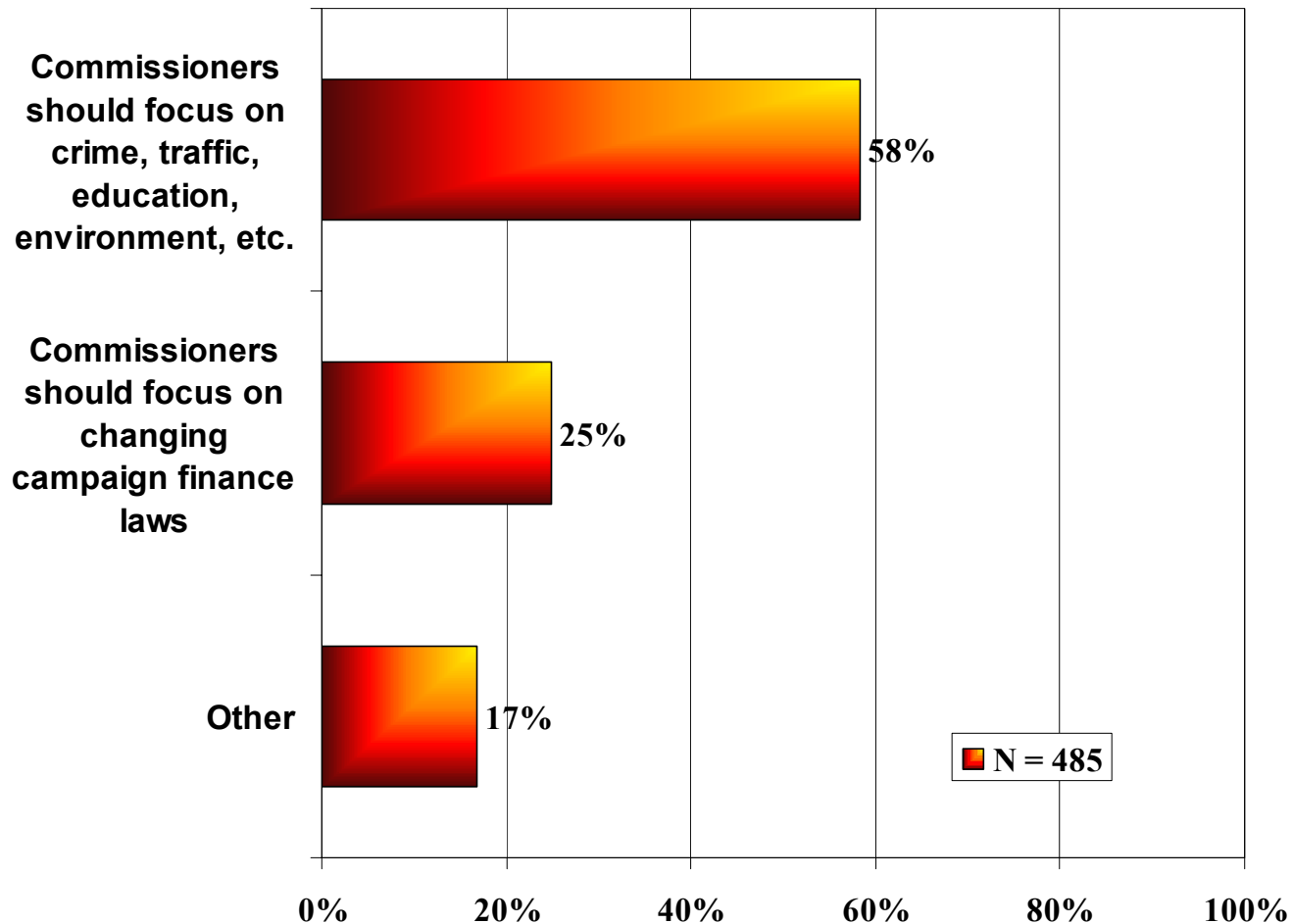
Leon County Commission Campaign Funding Survey

Current Campaign Finance Laws*



*Some people say that current campaign finance laws *are not sufficient* to protect us against “dirty money” that influences the way Leon County Commissioners and constitutional officers vote. Some people say current campaign finance laws *are working just fine*. Some people say *why bother to change* campaign finance laws – clever politicians and their supporters will find ways around any new laws. With which group do you agree?

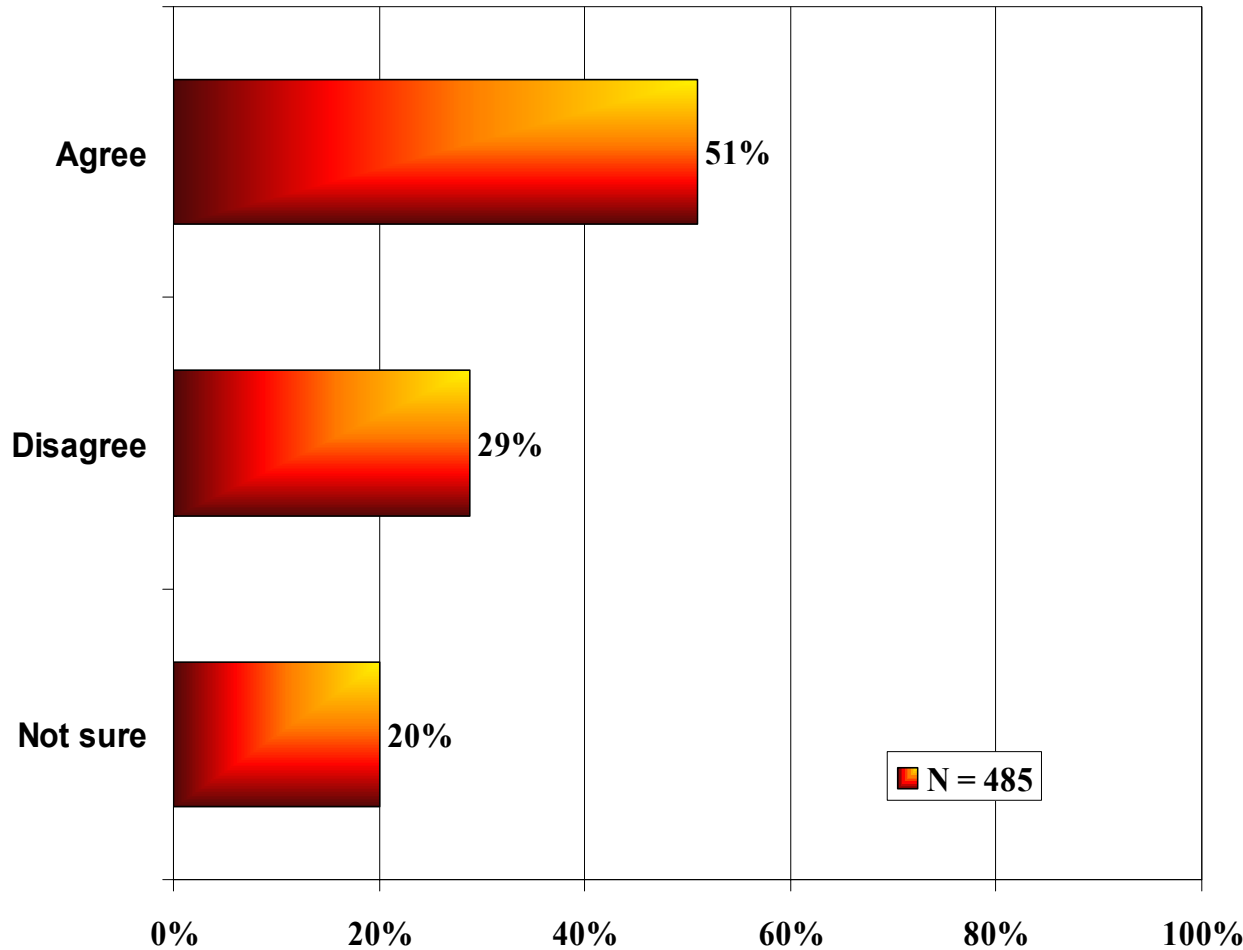
Commissioners' Focus*



*Some people say Leon County Commissioners should spend their time and our tax dollars dealing with crime, traffic, education, environment, etc., and quit spending time trying to change laws that govern campaign financing. Some people say spending their time and our tax dollars on changing laws that govern campaign financing is one of the most important things Leon County Commissioners can do. With which group do you agree?

New Campaign Finance Laws*

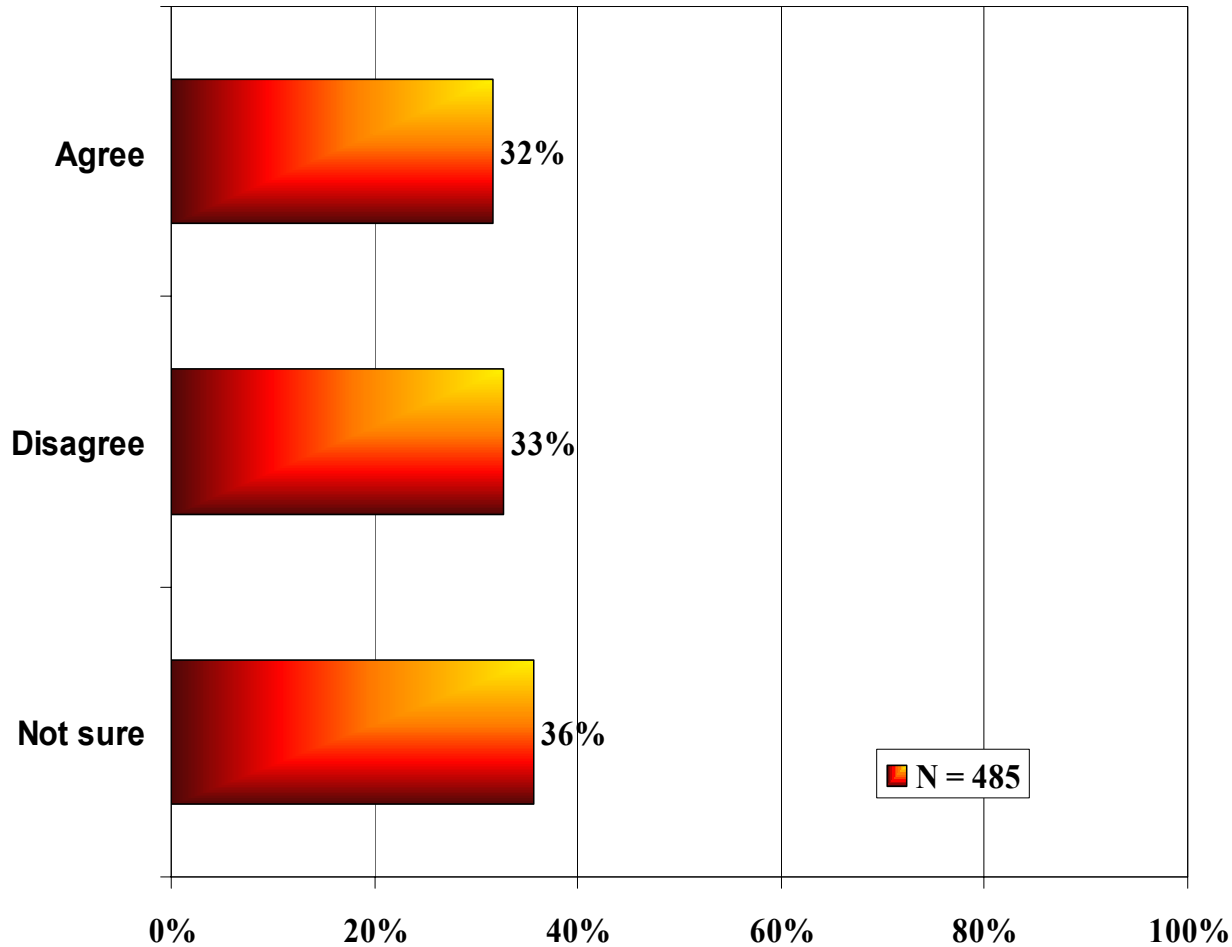
Needed for Less Expensive Campaigns



*Do you agree or disagree that new campaign finance laws **are needed** in Leon County to make campaigns for Leon County Commissioner and constitutional offices *less expensive*?

New Campaign Finance Laws*

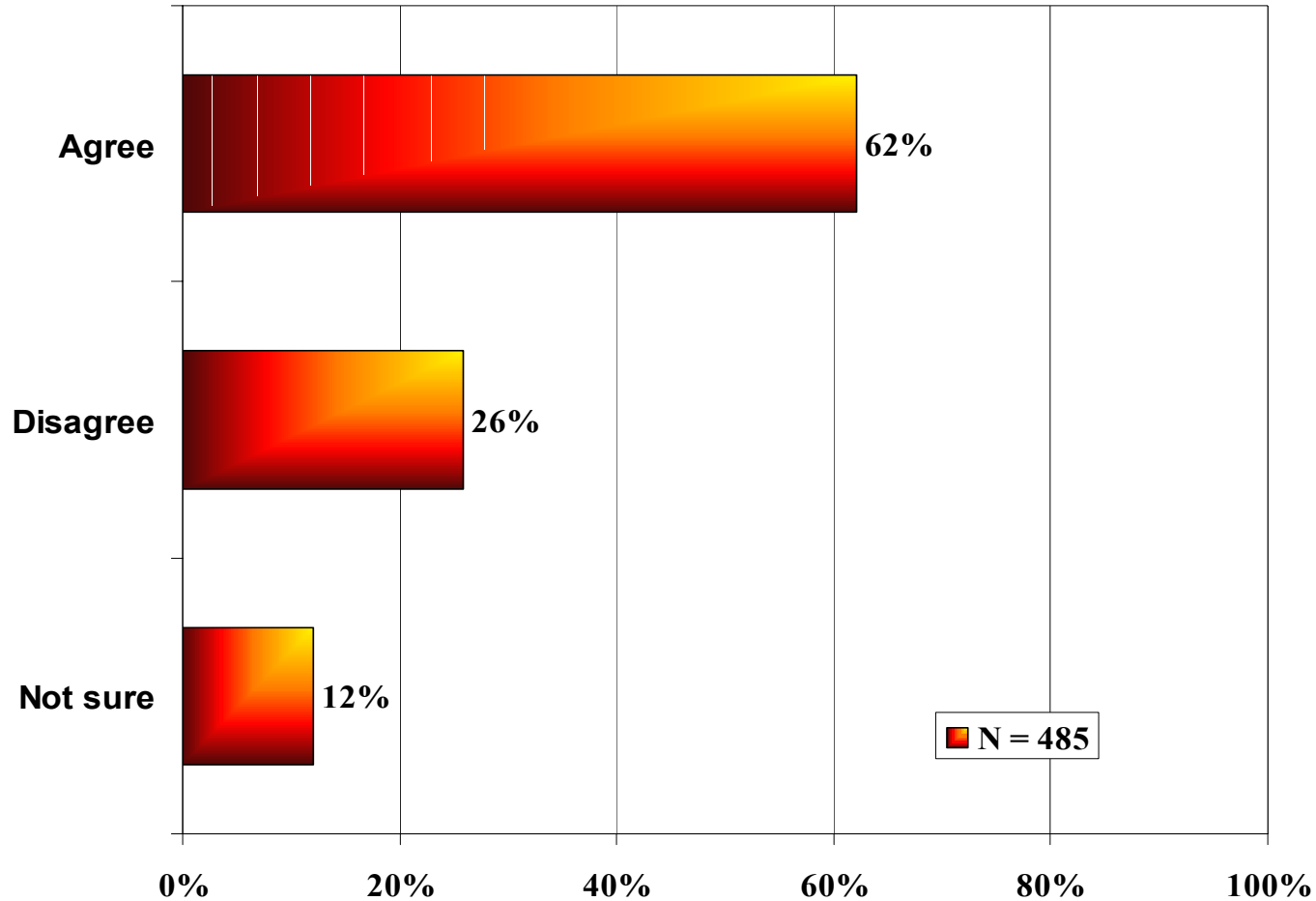
Will be Effective in Making Campaigns Less Expensive



* Do you agree or disagree that new campaign finance laws **will make** political campaigns in Leon County *less expensive*?

New Campaign Finance Laws*

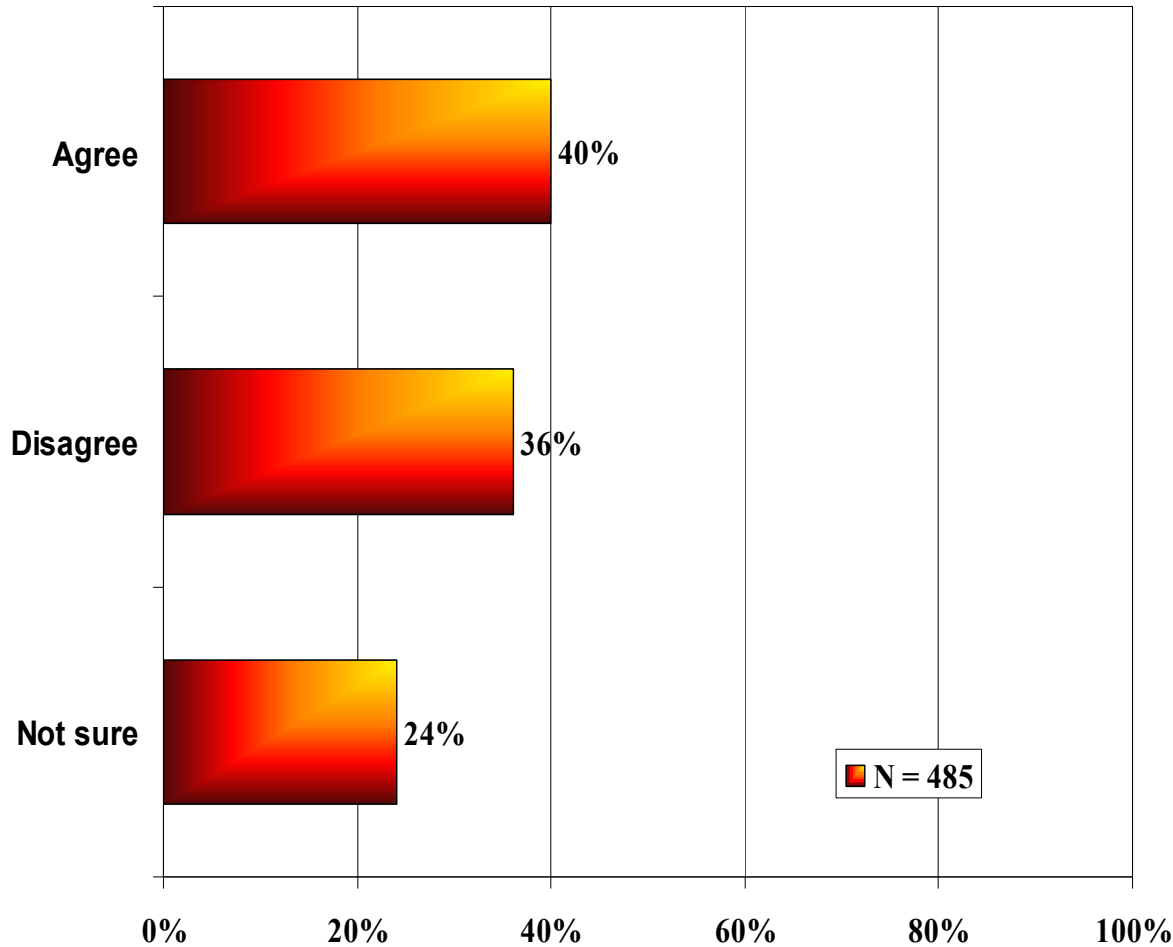
Needed for Reducing Special Interest Influence



*Do you agree or disagree that new campaign finance laws **are needed** in Leon County to *reduce the influence of special interests* on campaigns for Leon County Commissioner and constitutional offices?

New Campaign Finance Laws*

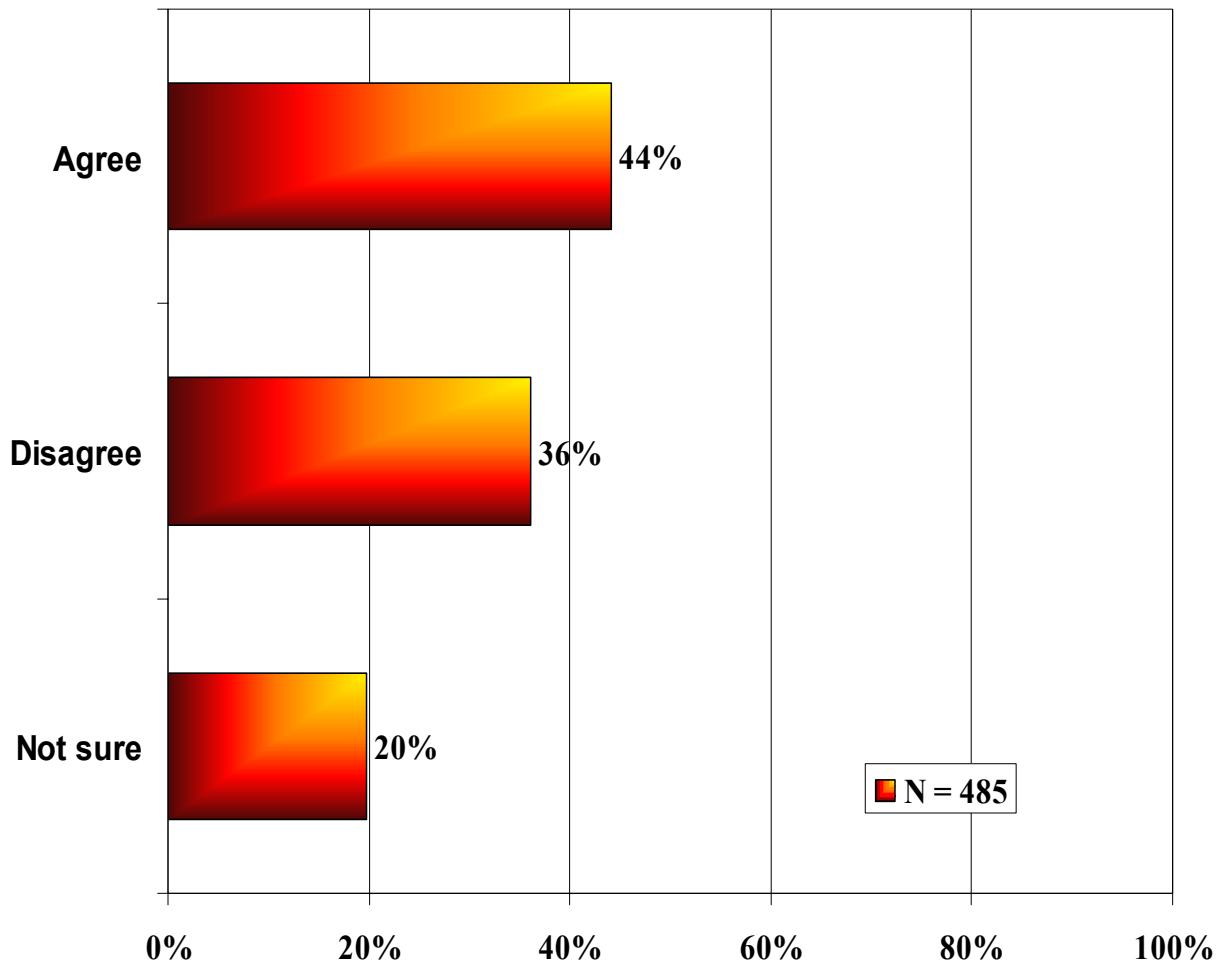
Will be Effective in Reducing Special Interest Influence



*Do you agree or disagree that new campaign finance laws **will reduce** the *influence of special interests* on political campaigns in Leon County?

New Campaign Finance Laws*

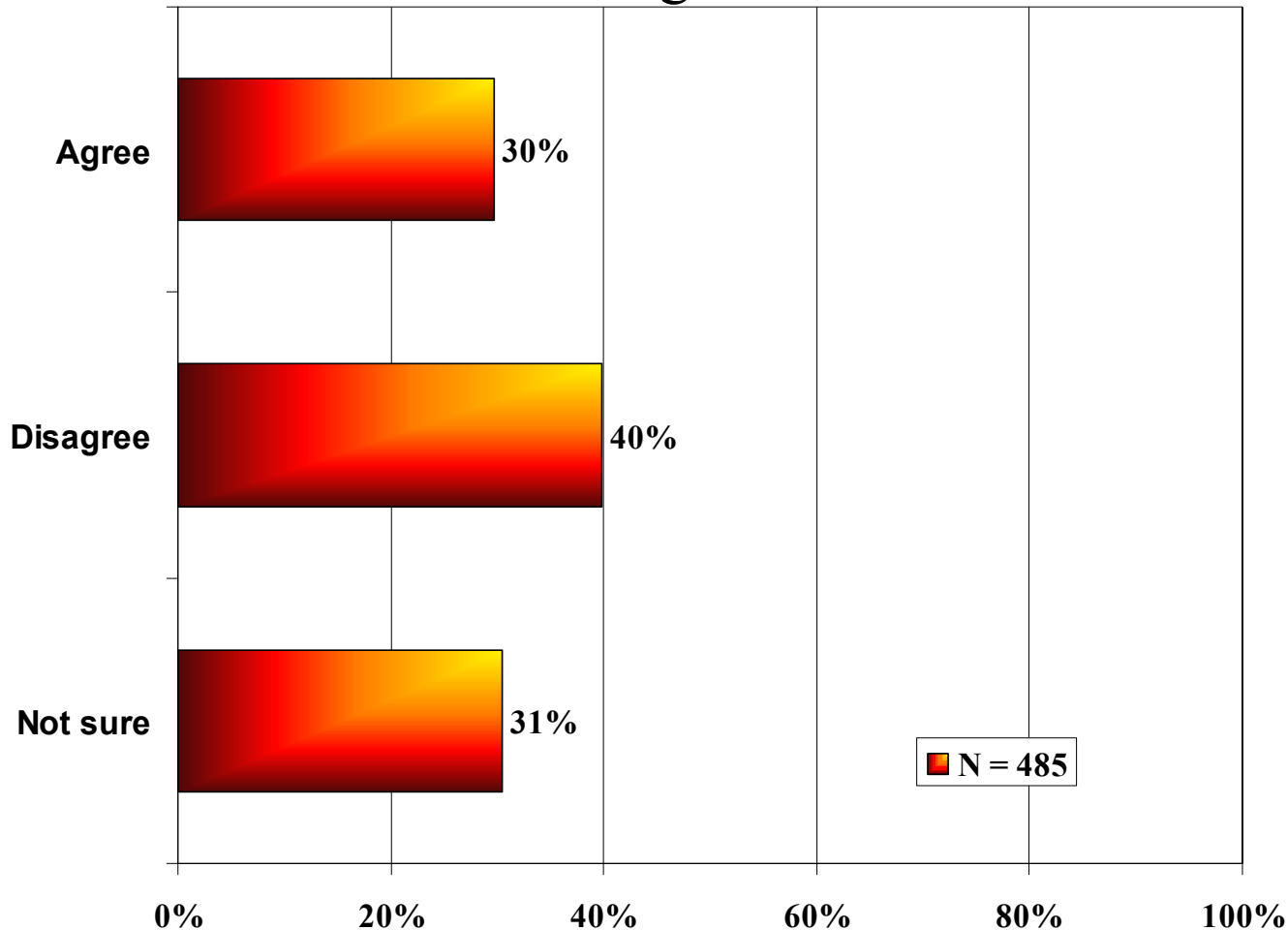
Needed to Reduce Time Candidates Spend Running for Office



*Do you agree or disagree that new campaign finance laws **are needed** in Leon County to reduce the *time elected officials spend* running for Leon County Commissioner and constitutional offices?

New Campaign Finance Laws*

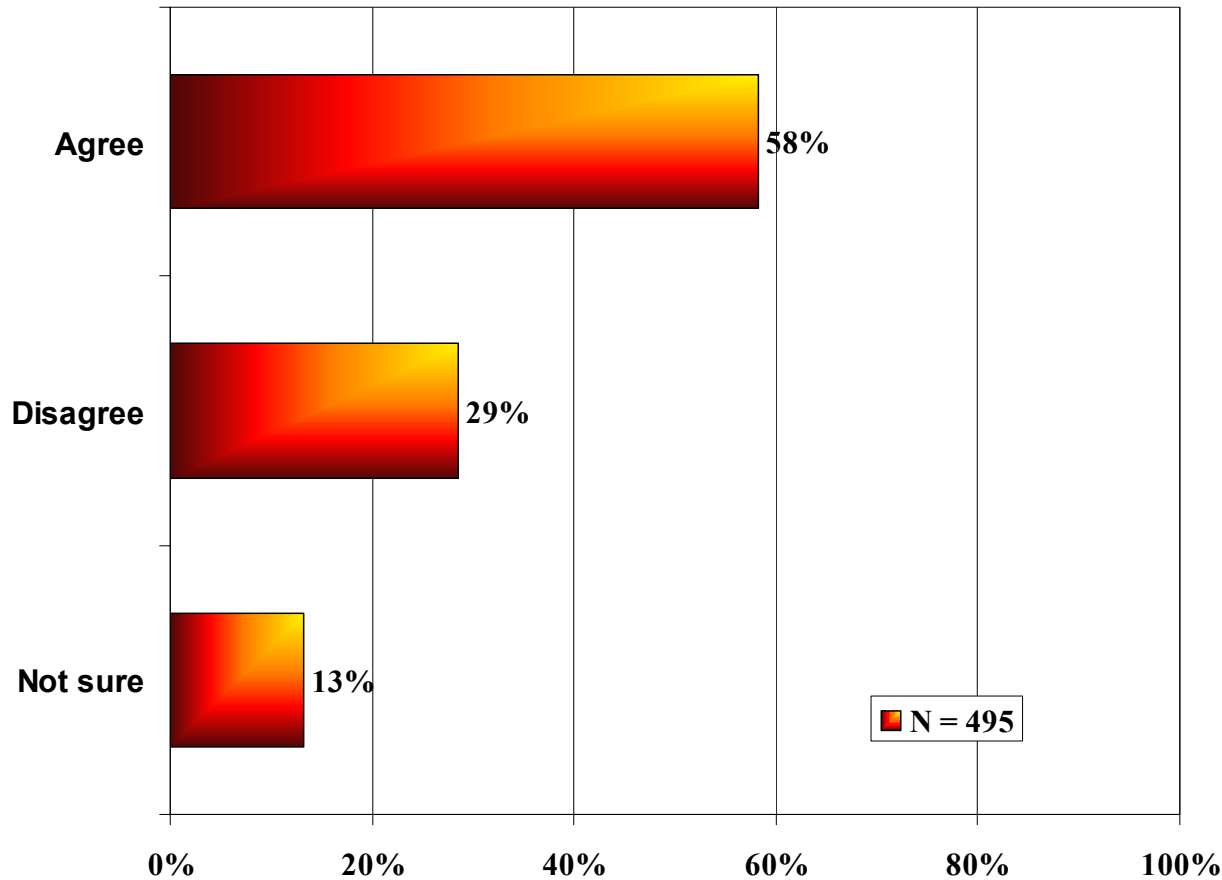
Will Be Effective in Reducing Time Candidates Spend Running for Office



*Do you agree or disagree that new campaign finance laws **will reduce** the *time elected officials spend* running for political office in Leon County?

New Campaign Finance Laws*

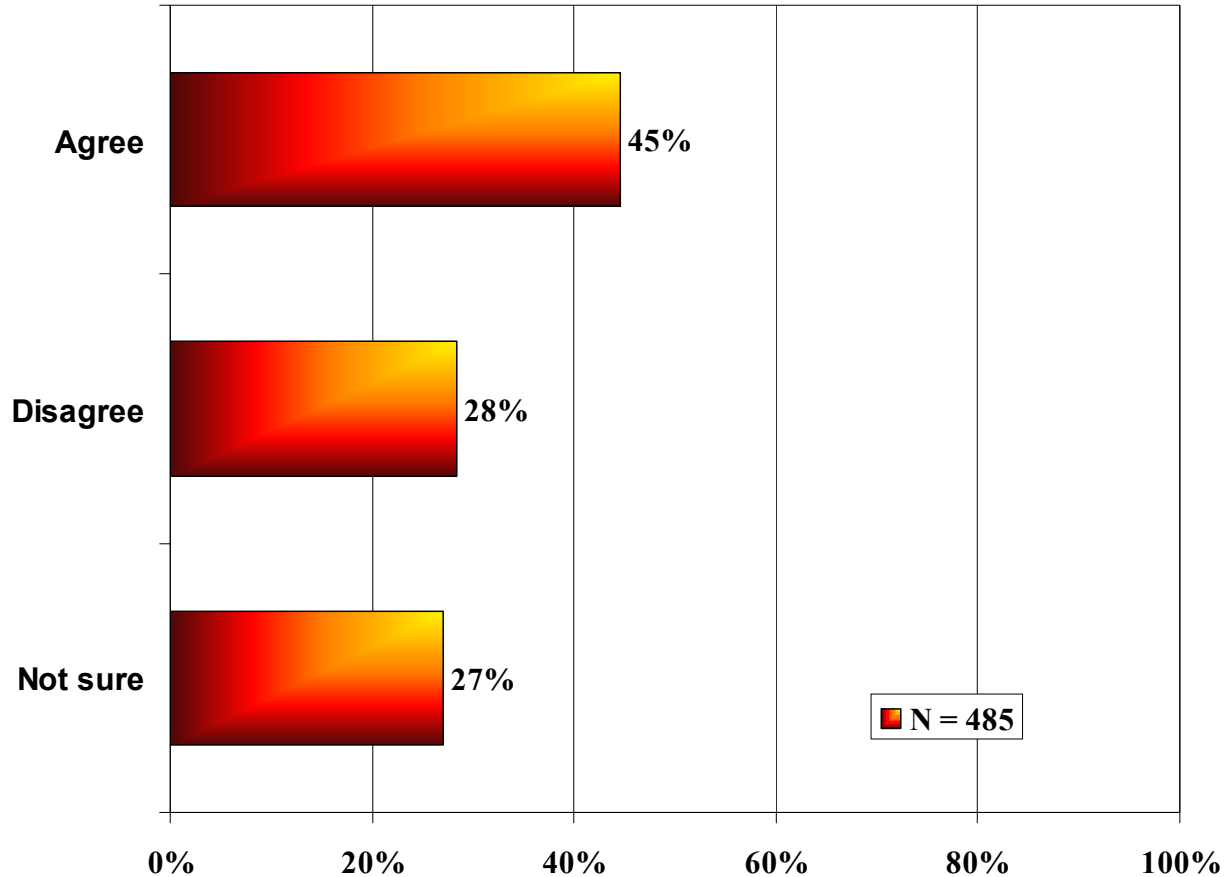
Needed to Encourage More/Better Candidates to Run for Office



*Do you agree or disagree that new campaign finance laws are needed in Leon County to encourage more and better candidates to run for Leon County Commissioner and constitutional offices?

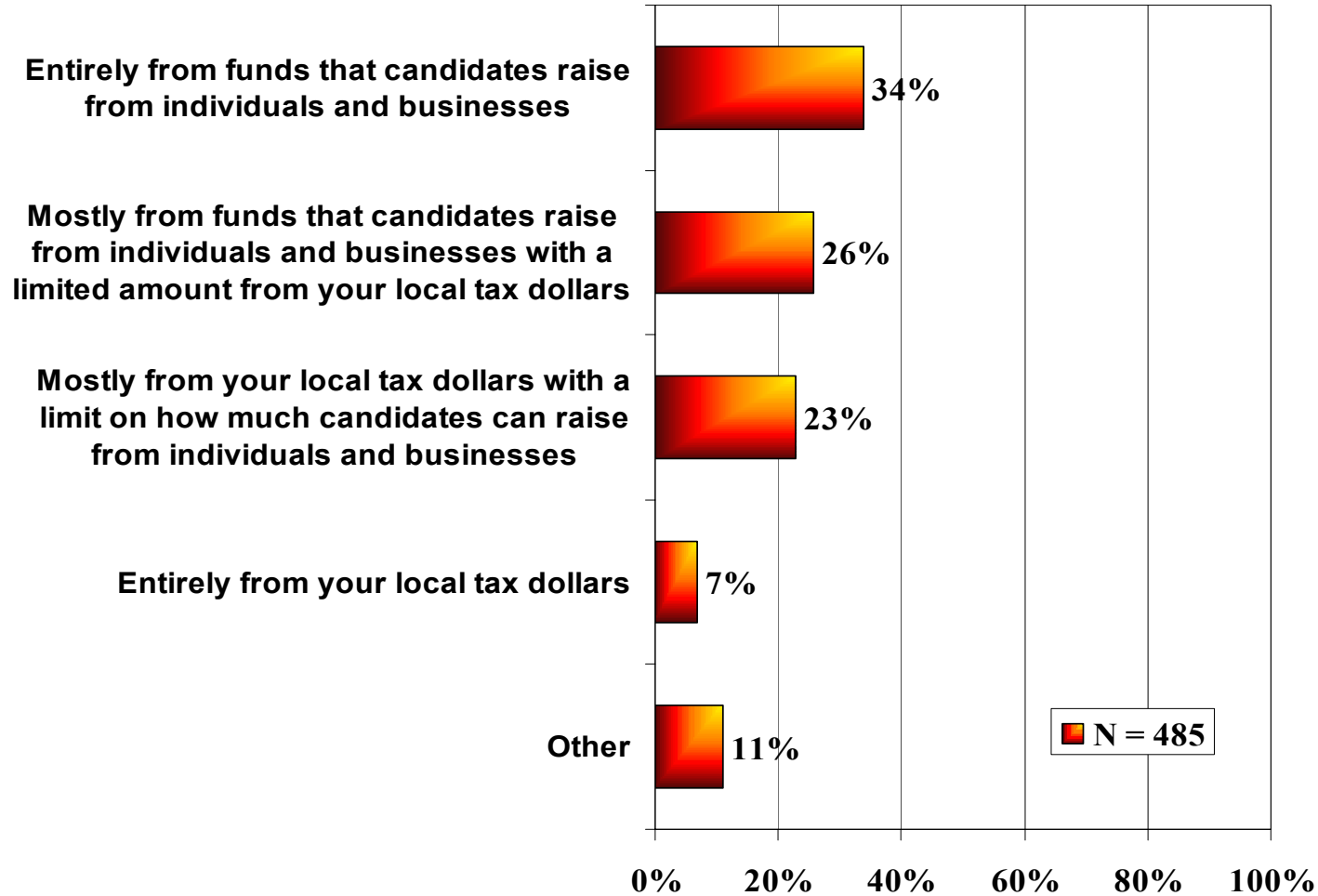
New Campaign Finance Laws*

Will be Effective in Encouraging More/Better Candidates to Run for Office



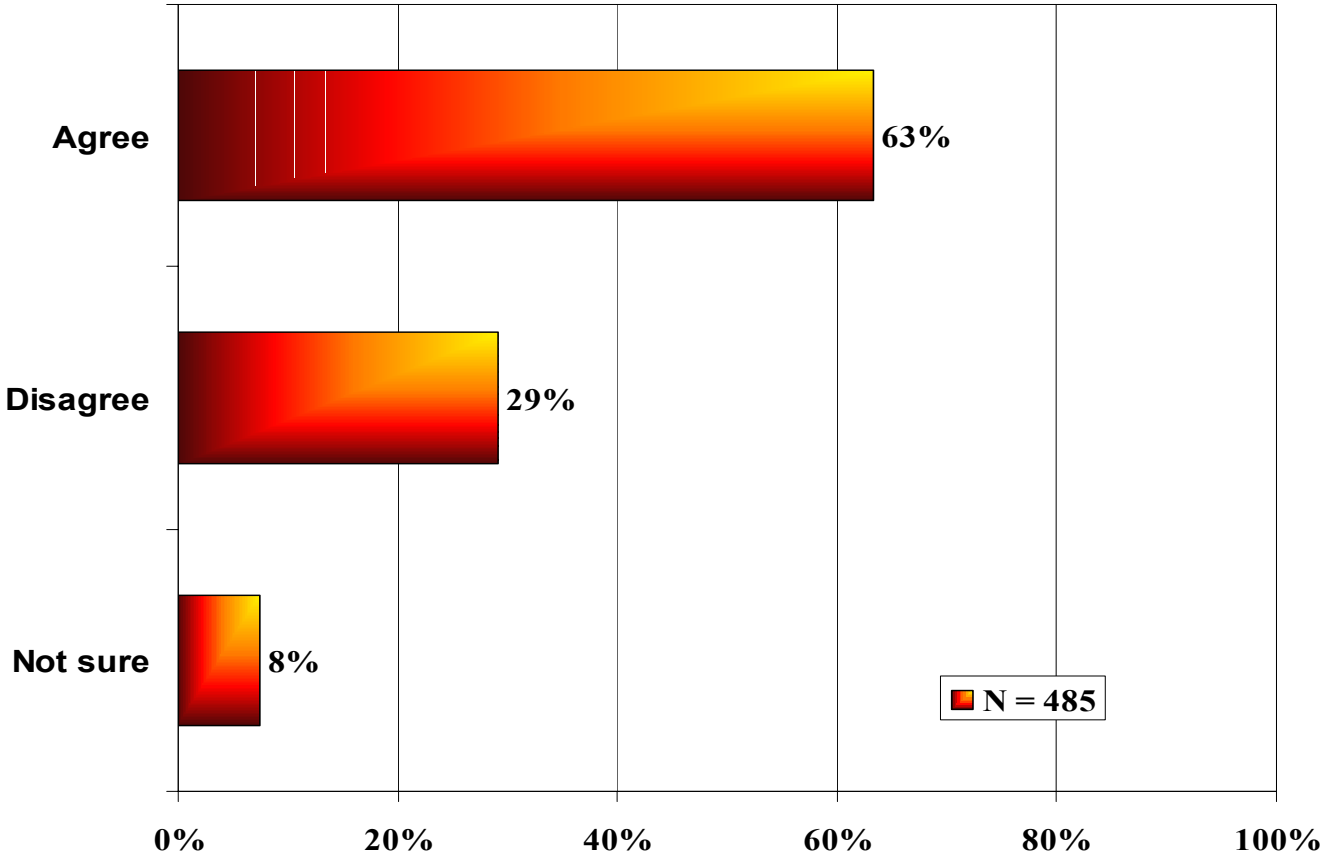
*Do you agree or disagree that new campaign finance laws **will encourage** *more and better candidates* to run for political office in Leon County?

Sources of Campaign Funding*



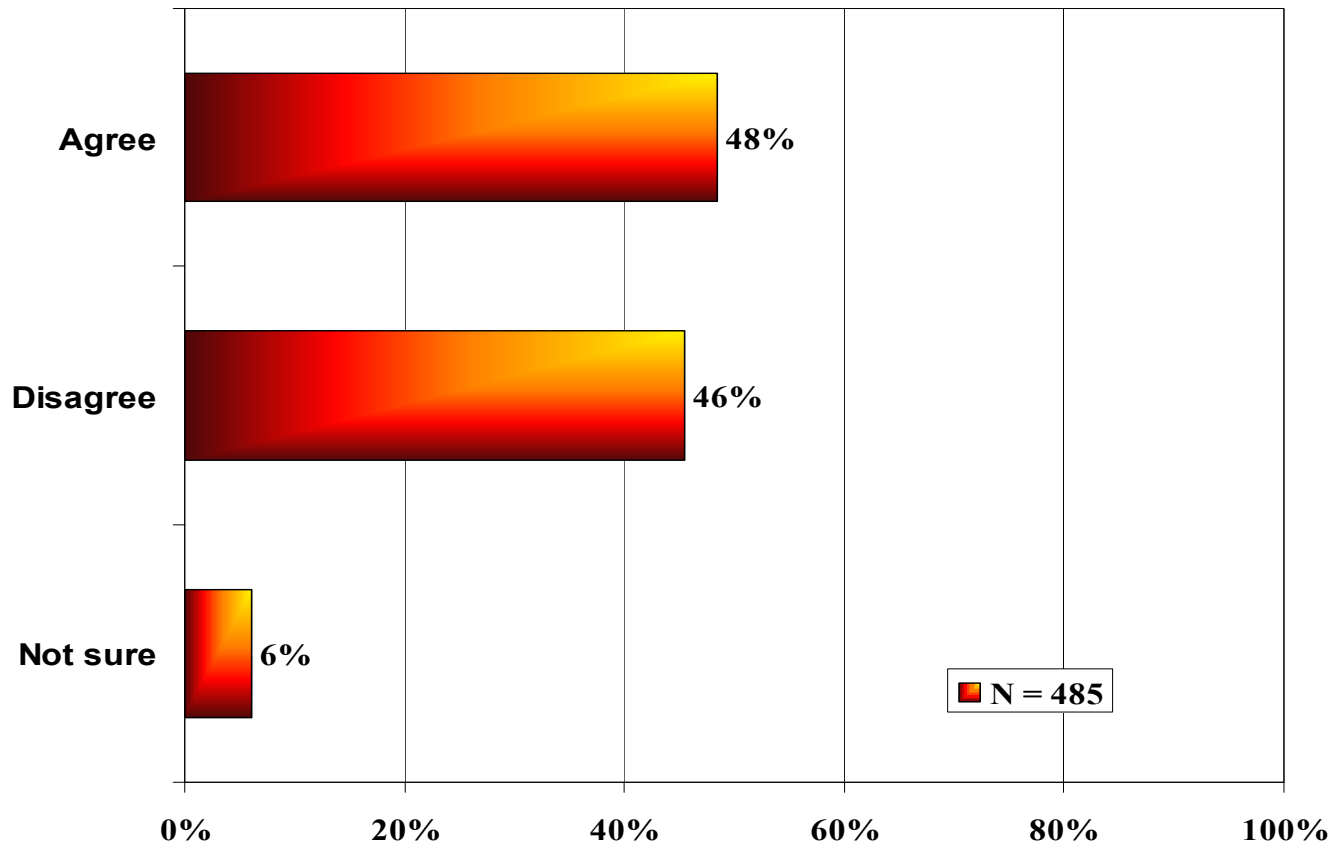
*Where do you think the money should come from to pay for candidates' campaigns for Leon County Commissioner and constitutional offices?

Campaign Contributions Should be Less Than \$200*



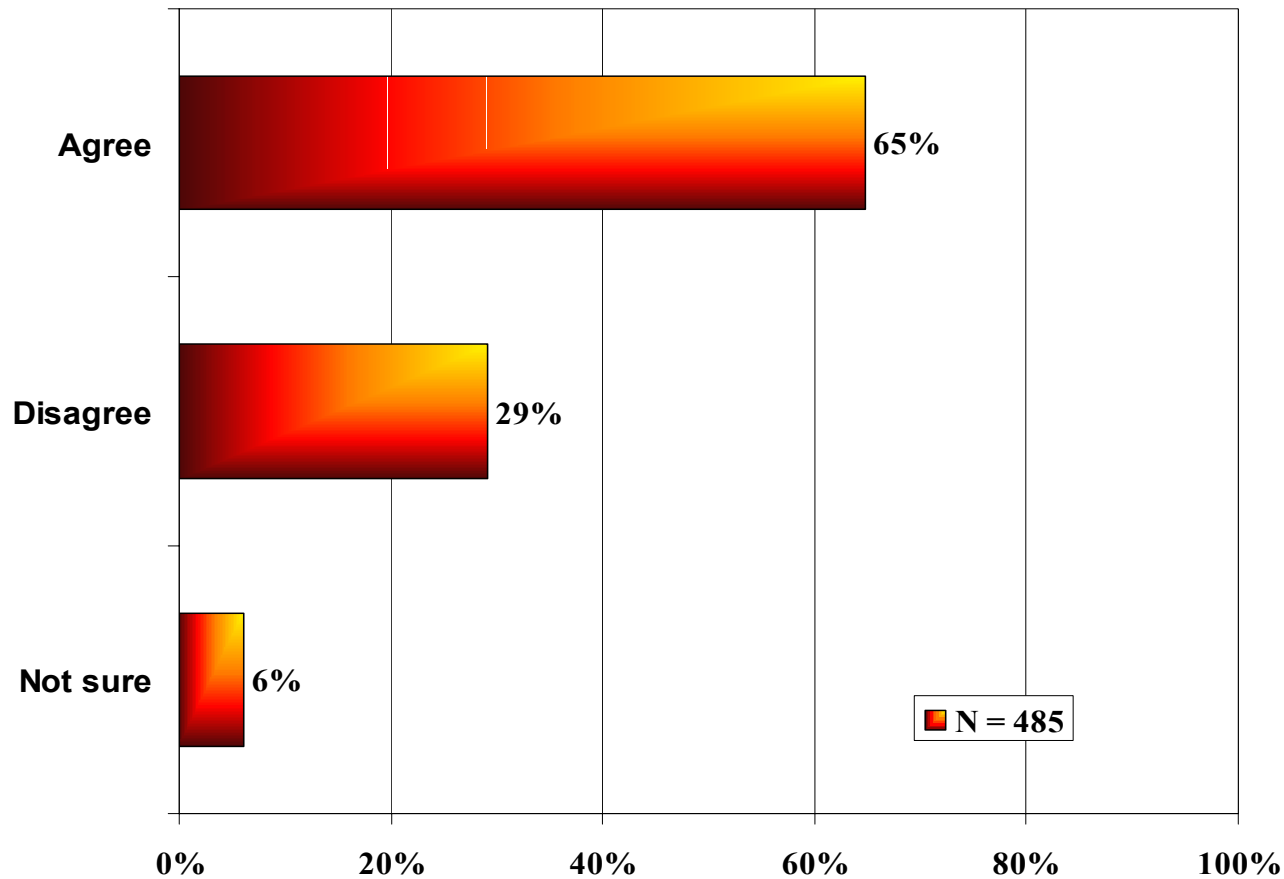
* Do you agree or disagree that the Leon County Charter should be amended to prohibit candidates for Leon County Commissioner and constitutional offices from accepting campaign contributions greater than \$200?

Campaign Contributions Should Not Come From Corporations*



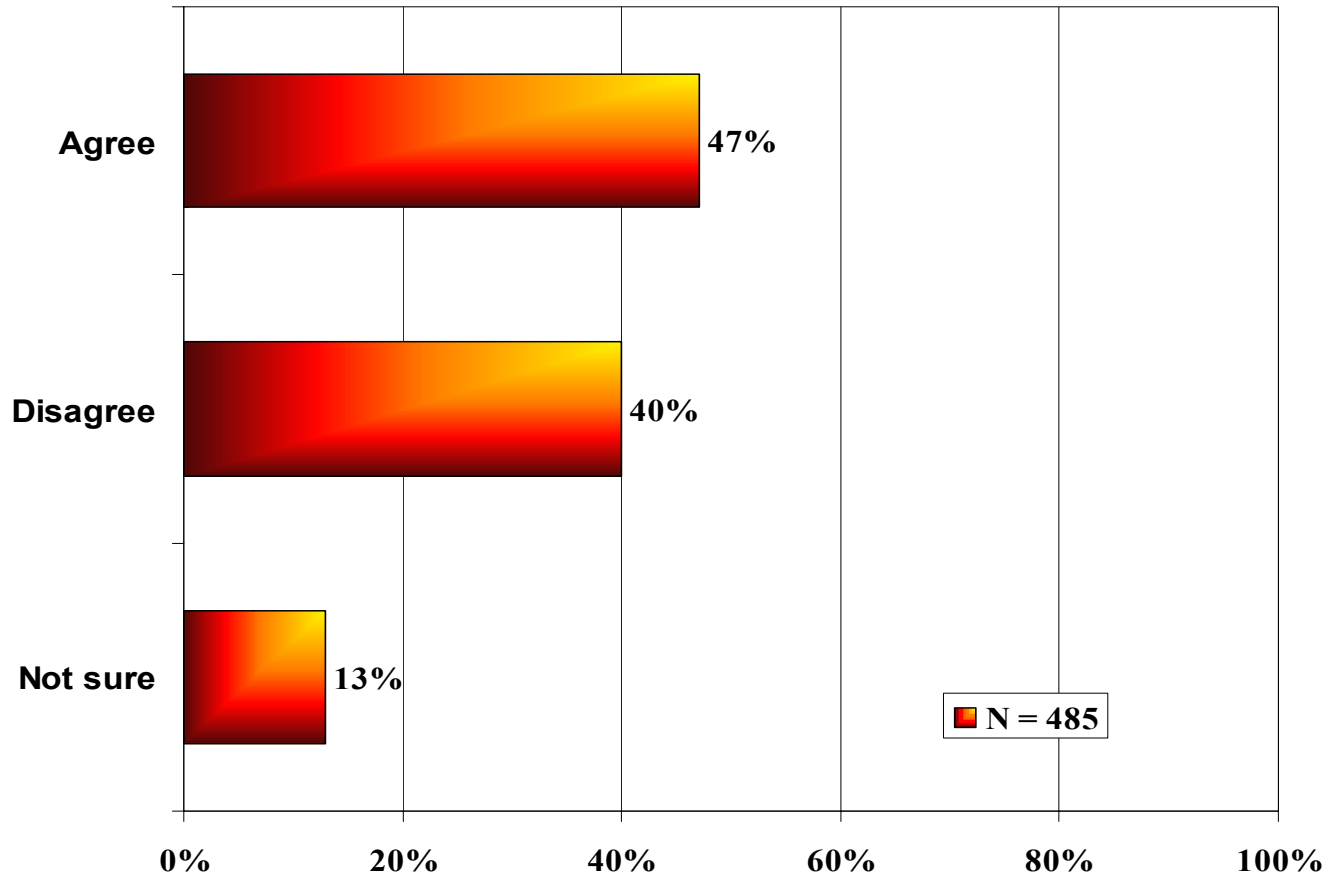
* Do you agree or disagree that the Leon County Charter should be amended to prohibit candidates for Leon County Commissioner from accepting any campaign contributions from corporations?

Campaign Contributions Should Come Only from Residents Eligible to Vote in Leon County*



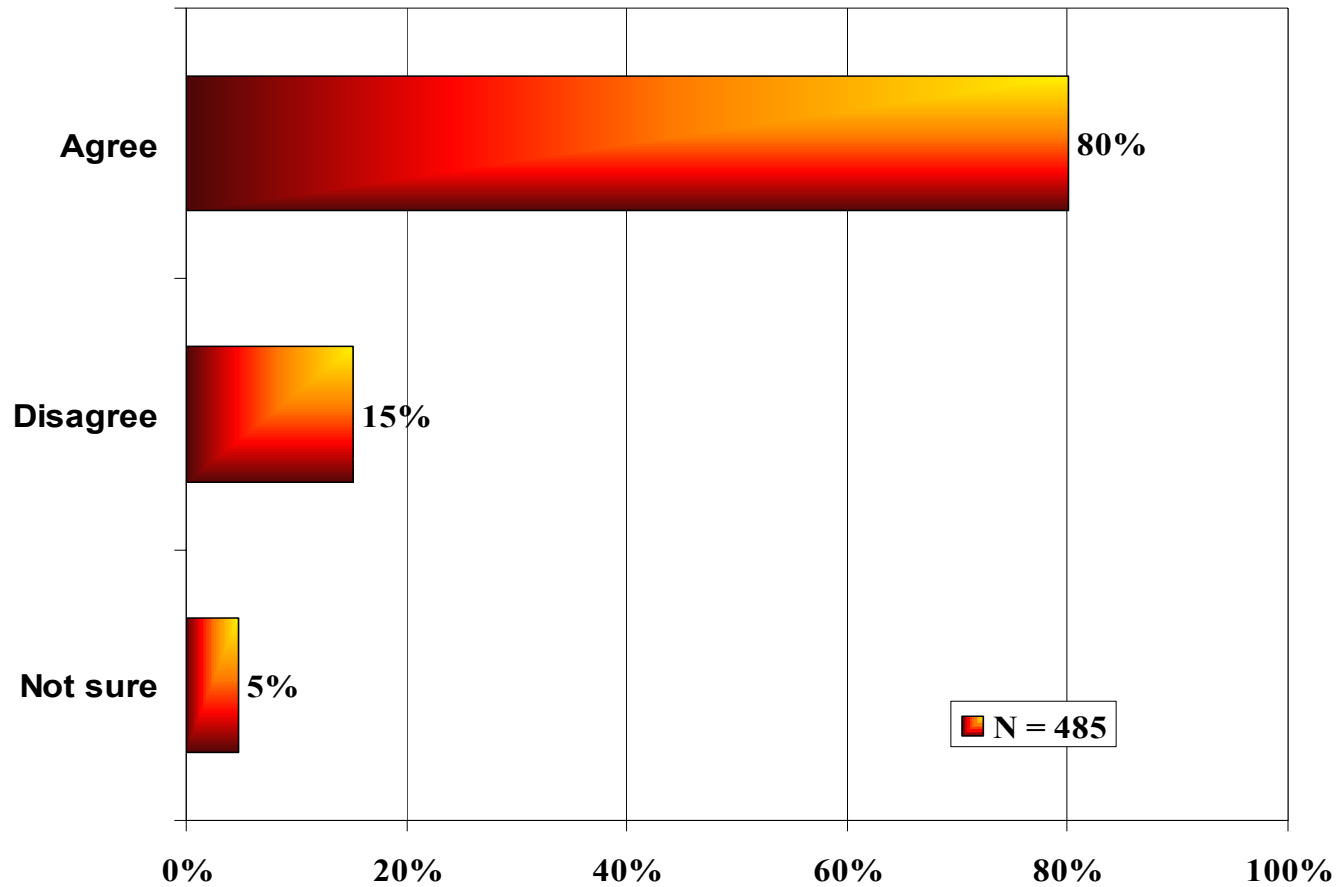
* Do you agree or disagree that the Leon County Charter should be amended to prohibit candidates for Leon County Commissioner from accepting any campaign contributions from people who are not eligible to vote in Leon County with the exception of candidates' immediate family?

Candidates Who Comply With “Clean Money” Restrictions on Fundraising Should Receive Matching Funds from Public Coffers*



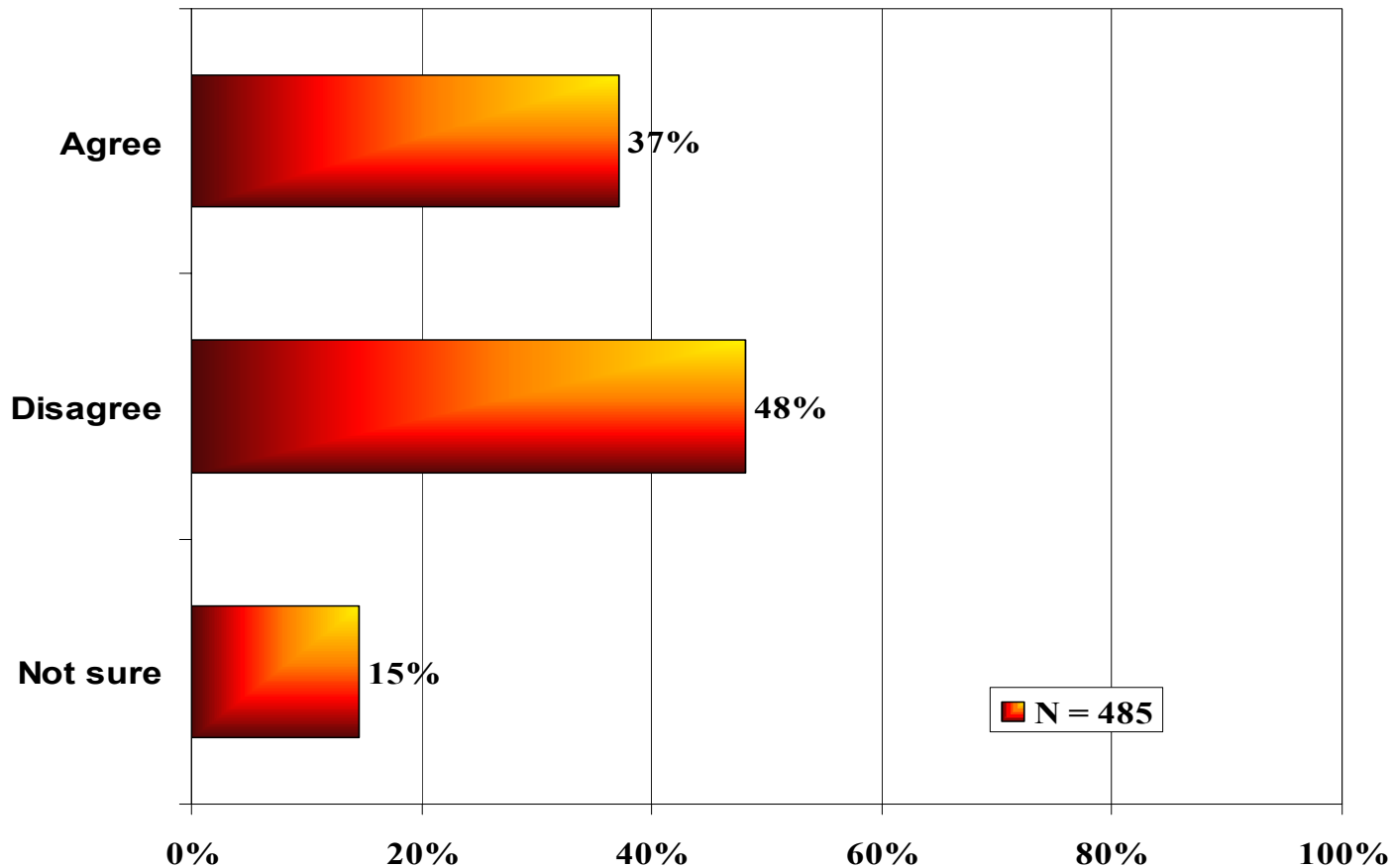
* Do you agree or disagree that the Leon County Charter should be amended to provide voluntary campaign spending limits and matching funds to any candidate for Leon County Commissioner or constitutional officer who complies with voluntary “Clean money” restrictions on campaign contributions?

Leon County Races Should be Non-Partisan*



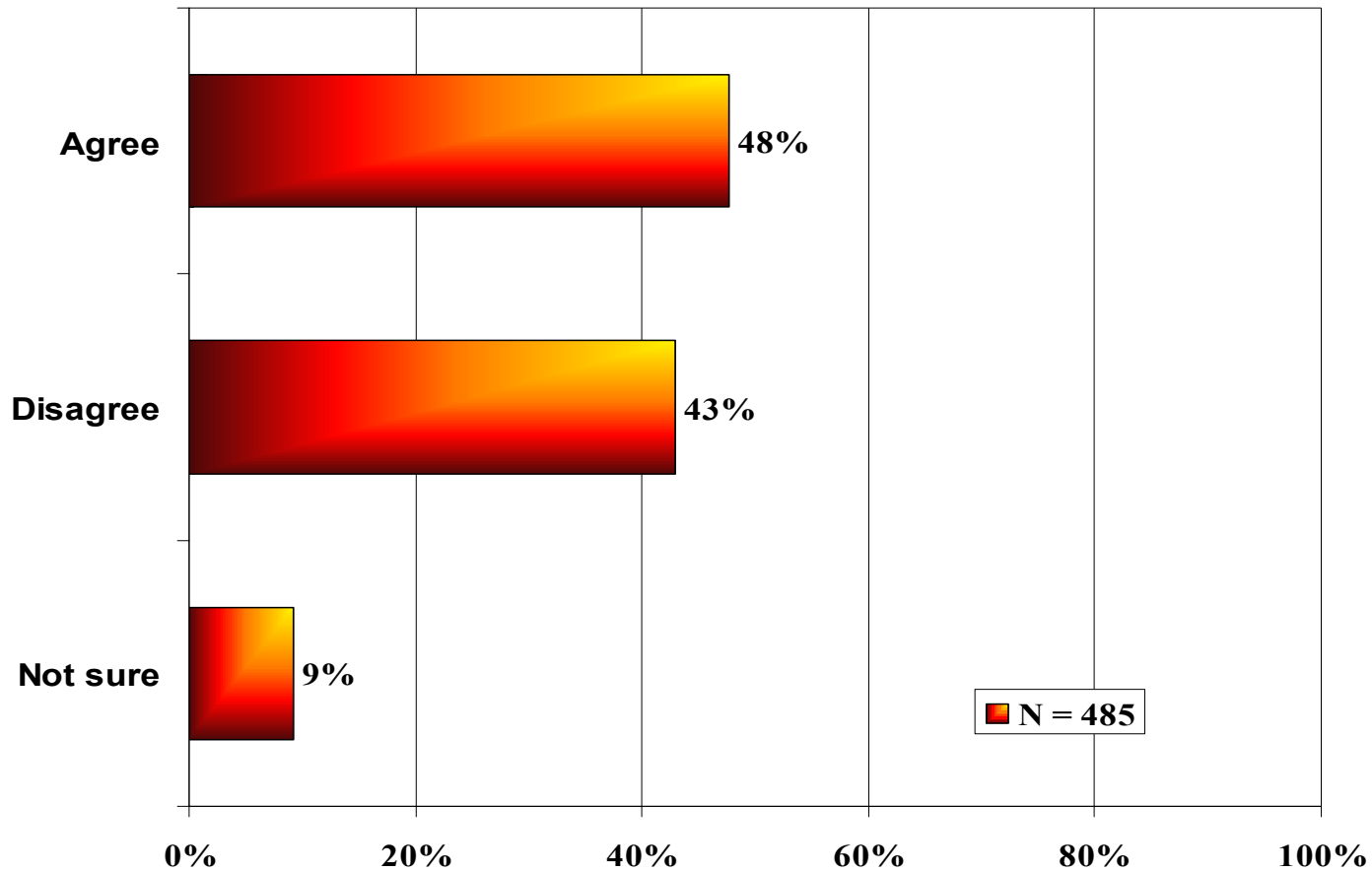
* Do you agree or disagree that elections for Clerk of Courts, Property Appraiser, Sheriff, and Tax Collector should be non-partisan?

Candidates Who Show Grassroots Support Should Receive Money from Public Coffers*



* Do you agree or disagree that candidates for Leon County Commissioner and constitutional offices who raise \$5 from a certain number of voters be allowed to receive some of your local tax dollars to help fund their campaigns?

Candidates Who Agree to Spending Limits Should Receive Money from Public Coffers*



* Do you agree or disagree that candidates for Leon County Commissioner and constitutional offices who agree to spending limits for their campaigns be allowed to receive some of your local tax dollars to help fund their campaigns?