



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

Turning Questions Into Answers.

MEMORANDUM

TO: NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

FROM: LORI WEIGEL, PARTNER

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES
TOWARD CLIMATE AND ENERGY LEGISLATION

DATE: MAY 14, 2009

The vast majority of American voters support a multi-pronged approach to reshaping America's energy policy, including overwhelming support for a renewable requirement, higher energy efficiency standards, and capping carbon pollution. The majority see the plan as the right amount of change for the country, with the remainder evenly divided between the plan being too much or not enough change. After hearing two arguments on each side of the issue, two-thirds of the electorate say they would tell Congress to take action now on such an energy proposal. Despite the difficult economy, nine-in-ten voters (90%) say they would be willing to pay higher energy prices in order to increase the amount of our energy needs met by renewable energy. Finally, voters place emphasis on developing clean energy technologies and conserving natural resources as a potential use of funds derived from a global warming plan, followed by tax credits for consumers.

More specifically, the survey found that...

- ***There is strong support for a multi-pronged approach to increase the generation, transmission and use of renewable energy, including a proposal to cap carbon pollution.*** Three-quarters or greater indicate support for each element tested. Notably, a plan to tackle global warming was stated in two different ways, with half of the respondents hearing one explanation and the other half hearing another. The results are within margin of error of each other, indicating that no matter how such a proposal is phrased, voters are still supportive of efforts to reduce global warming pollution.

Energy Policy Components	% Strongly Support	% Total Support
An energy efficiency plan that includes new standards and incentives to use smarter energy technologies and save energy where we live, where we work, and on the road.	62%	88%
A clean energy plan that requires electric power companies to generate one-quarter of their electricity from clean, renewable sources such as wind, geothermal and solar by the year 2025.	62%	84%
A global warming plan that holds energy companies accountable for their pollution and requires these companies to steadily reduce the carbon pollution from coal and oil (<i>half sample</i>).	55%	75%
A global warming plan that caps carbon pollution and requires energy companies to reduce this pollution by twenty percent over the next decade (<i>half sample</i>).	51%	76%
A smart grid plan to modernize electric power transmission and provide new transmission lines to carry electricity generated from renewable energy sources.	51%	84%

- In fact, nearly two-thirds of the electorate supports all of these proposals, including a number of key swing voter sub-groups.*** When the data from these questions is combined we can see that 64% of the nation’s voters indicate support for all four energy related proposals. In contrast, a mere 4% oppose all of these proposals while the remaining 32% are mixed in their responses to the four proposals. Moreover, support for all the energy-related proposals is stronger among certain key swing voter groups, including moderates (78% support all proposals), Independent women (78%), Hispanics (77%), suburban women (77%), White women (71%), moderate Republicans (70%), and conservative Democrats (66%). Two-thirds (67%) of self-described born-again Evangelical women and a majority of Evangelical men (50%) support all proposals, as well.

- **Three-quarters (76%) say a plan that includes these elements is the right amount of change to America's energy policy or doesn't go far enough, with fewer than one-in-five saying it goes too far.** Respondents were asked the following question: "Thinking about all four elements of this proposal together - establishing a renewable energy standard, limiting global warming pollution, and using energy smarter and more efficiently, do you think this would represent:

19% Too much change to America's energy policy
 58% The right amount of change
 18% Not enough change to American's energy policy

A plurality of all partisan groups also believes this would be the right amount of change to America's energy policy, with 92% of Democrats, 75% of Independents and 59% of Republicans saying this represents the right amount of change or not enough change. Majorities in every region of the country also believe this plan is the right amount of change or does not go far enough: Northeast (83%), Midwest (78%), West (78%), and South (70%).

- **After hearing viewpoints on both sides of this issue, two-thirds of the electorate say that Congress should take action now.** Respondents heard the following statements in support of and in opposition to the energy plan:

People who SUPPORT taking action now on this proposal say that America needs a new energy plan right now to build a clean energy future that revives our economy, reduces our dependency on foreign oil, and protects our planet from global warming. This proposal will increase investments in dependable, "made in America" energy sources like wind and solar and create millions of clean energy jobs. (Half sample heard) Delaying action on energy plays into the hands of the foreign oil countries and energy companies that have too much control over our energy choices.

People who OPPOSE taking action now on this proposal say that this is really a massive energy tax increase that will affect every single American whenever they buy gasoline, use electricity in their home or buy anything that required energy to make or transport it. They also say that America will lose jobs because taxing energy will weaken our economy further. In these tough economic times, working families simply cannot afford these massive increases in energy costs.

After hearing both statements, voters were then asked what they would tell Congress to do on this issue, and a significant 67% say that Congress should take action now. Fewer than one-third (30%) say that Congress should wait. Majorities of most key voter sub-groups indicate support for Congress acting now:

- A majority of every single age group, every education level and every income group say that Congress should act now. Despite having heard the argument about increasing energy costs, lower income voters are actually more likely to support Congress acting now on this proposal (78% of those with household incomes under \$40,000, 67% of those earning \$40-80,000, and 61% of those earning \$80,000 or more).
- More than six-in-ten in every region of the country say Congress should act now: 74% in

the Northeast, 68% in the Midwest, 65% in the South and 63% in the West.

- Support is most likely to be impacted by partisan affiliation, with Republicans divided on what Congress should do (46% act now, 50% wait), but the vast majority of Independents (67% act now) and Democrats (85% act now) all supporting the policy moving forward.
- ***Voters are expressing a willingness to pay higher energy prices in order to increase the amount of our energy needs met by renewable energy sources.*** Respondents were asked “what is the most you would be willing to pay in higher energy prices per **month** to increase the amount of our energy needs which are met by renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.” As one can see – despite difficult economic times – 91% chose some amount and nearly half (46%) say they would pay at least \$25 per month more than they do today in order to increase the nation’s use of renewable energy.

46%	\$25 or more
14%	\$15
31%	\$10 or less
7%	Nothing
3%	Unsure/Refused

- ***Investing revenues into clean energy and natural resources are deemed personally important uses of any funds derived from a new global warming plan.*** A number of different “plain English” policy descriptions for how funds from such a policy initiative might be used were tested. Developing clean energy technologies rated as most personally important to voters (65% rate it an 8-10 where “10” is the single most important). Conserving natural resources impacted by global warming (54%) is followed by returning funds to consumers as a tax credit (52%) in terms of personal importance to voters nationally.

SUMMARY

The American electorate is overwhelmingly supportive of a number of different reforms to America’s energy policy, including a proposal to cap carbon pollution through a new global warming plan. A solid majority is supportive of every element of such a proposal, say it is the right amount of change to America’s energy policies, and perhaps most significantly are willing to pay higher energy prices in order to increase the amount of the nation’s energy needs being met by renewable energy. After hearing viewpoints from both sides, two-thirds think Congress should act now rather than wait. Majorities of most key voter sub-groups are more likely to side with taking action now rather than waiting, even after hearing the concerns raised about cost. Even Republicans are evenly divided when the issue is placed in this context (46% take action; 50% wait). Finally, voters place emphasis on developing clean energy technologies and conserving natural resources as a potential use of funds derived from a global warming plan, followed by tax credits for consumers.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted of N=800 voters throughout the country. The margin of error associated with the sample of this type is $\pm 3.46\%$. Interviews were collected April 7-9-2009. They were distributed proportionally throughout the country and are demographically representative of the electorate.