



PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Lori Weigel, Public Opinion Strategies

RE: Conservative Voters in Ohio Overwhelmingly Support Clean Energy Policies and Say GOP Candidates Should Do So

DATE: December 20, 2017

The Republican polling firm, Public Opinion Strategies, recently completed a survey of Ohio voters who identify as Republican or as conservative independents regarding energy policies in the state.¹ The survey results show that **conservative voters throughout the state overwhelmingly support policies that encourage greater production of renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency**, including a renewable energy standard and revising wind set-back rules to better accommodate turbine siting. Moreover, they reject surcharges to shore up existing coal and nuclear power, and attempts to erode consumer options among electricity providers. Overall, seven-in-ten conservative voters would advise GOP candidates in the state to support those policies, and say that if it were up to them fully half of the state's electricity would come from renewable energy.

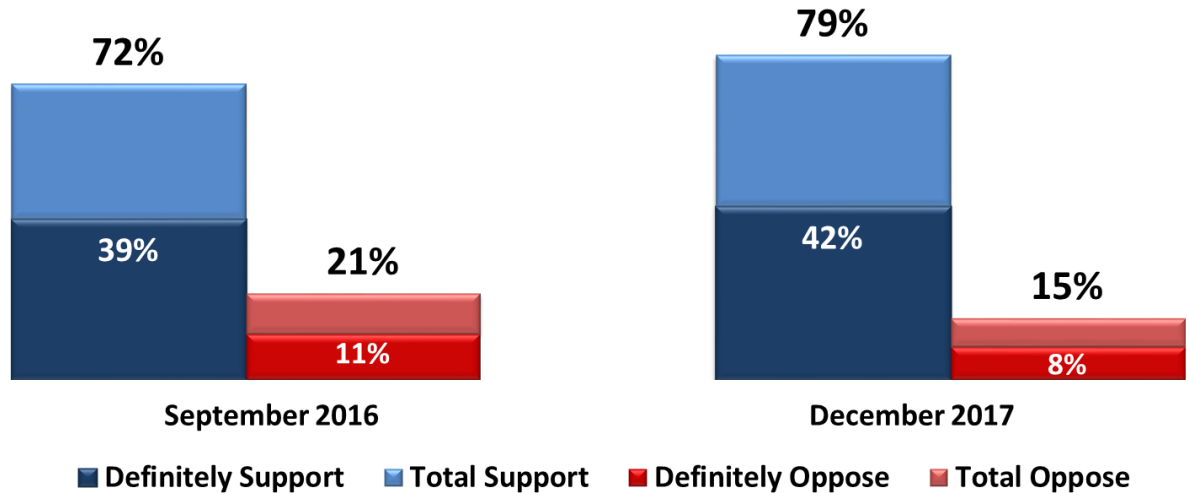
Support may in part be due to the electorate's sense that increasing use of renewable energy will benefit jobs in Ohio. These conservative voters register positive feelings toward a range of energy sources, particularly natural gas and energy efficiency.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **Nearly four-in-five conservative voters in Ohio (79 percent) say they would tell a Republican candidate to support policies that encourage energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy in the state.** More than two-in-five (42 percent) say they should "definitely" support those policies. Just 15 percent would tell that elected official to oppose these policies. As one can see illustrated in the next graph, more conservative voters would advise a GOP candidate to support pro-renewables policies today than did one year ago.

¹ **Methodology:** From December 7-11, 2017, Public Opinion Strategies completed 400 telephone interviews with registered voters who identify as Republican or independents who also say they are conservative. Interviews were conducted on both landline and cell phones. The margin of sampling error for this statewide sample of conservative voters is +/-4.9%. Margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100% due to rounding. Certain questions were tracked from a similarly conducted survey of conservative voters from September 2016.

If you were going to give some advice to a Republican candidate here in Ohio, would you tell him or her to support or oppose policies that encourage energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy in our state?



Even three-quarters (74 percent) of "very conservative" voters say a GOP candidate should support pro-renewables policies.

- **More specifically, conservative voters in Ohio express support for a number of policies that promote energy efficiency and greater production of renewable energy.** We tested a randomized list of policies requesting that respondents indicate support or opposition to each one. As the next graph indicates, an overwhelming majority of these conservative voters indicate support for programs to encourage energy efficiency (82 percent support), for net metering (87 percent support), for requiring an increase in the use of renewable energy to 12.5% by 2027 (60 percent support) and for increasing R&D in battery storage technologies (76 percent).

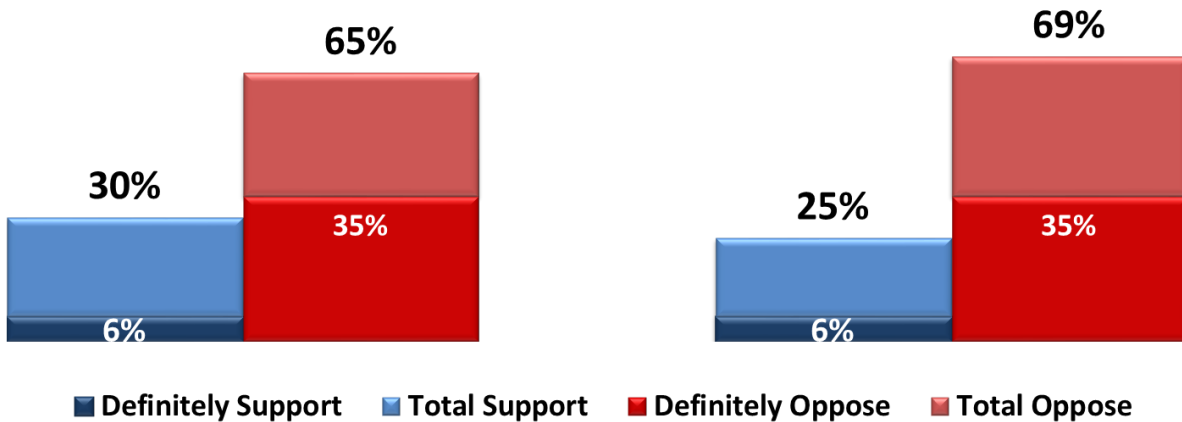
	Strongly Support	Total Support
<p><i>Policies and Proposals Ranked by Strongly Support</i></p> <p>Some utility customers generate their own power through solar panels. At times, they generate more than they can use and these customers get a credit on their bill for the power they generate on their homes and business that is fed back into the electric system. Some utilities say this is not fair as these customers do not pay enough for the energy infrastructure they use. Do you support or oppose continuing to credit customers for the power they generate at fair market prices?</p>	59%	87%
<p>Requiring Ohio's electric utilities to provide cost-effective programs through which customers can make energy efficiency upgrades to their homes and businesses</p>	42%	82%
<p>Increasing research and development to accelerate the adoption of battery storage technologies that allow for greater use of renewable energy even when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing</p>	32%	76%
<p>Requiring major electric utilities to gradually increase their use of renewable energy like wind and solar to twelve and a half percent by 2027, up from two and a half percent today</p>	22%	60%

Conservative voters also register strong and significant support for “establishing set-back limits for wind projects that will allow wind energy investment to occur in rural Ohio, and protect individual land owner's rights to lease their land for wind projects” (76 percent support). Only 17 percent of conservative voters oppose this. It is notable that support for the latter policy regarding wind turbine set-backs is strongest among conservatives in small towns (80 percent) and rural areas (77 percent) as in more urban and suburban areas of the state.

- In contrast, there is overwhelming opposition to new fees to keep coal or nuclear power plants in use.** A majority of Ohio conservative voters oppose “allowing electric utilities to collect new monthly customer surcharges on utility bills so that utilities” can keep with coal-burning power plants or nuclear power plants in operation. As the following graph illustrates, there is very minimal support even among this audience for such a plan.

Allowing electric utilities to collect new monthly customer surcharges on utility bills so that utilities with **older coal-burning power plants** can keep them operating, now that other sources of energy like natural gas are cheaper

Allowing electric utilities to collect new monthly customer surcharges on utility bills so that the utilities with **nuclear power plants** can keep them operating, now that other sources of energy like natural gas are cheaper



- Conservative voters are even willing to pay more in higher electricity prices if it means greater renewable energy use.** While respondents were informed that “the cost of renewable energy is coming down dramatically,” they were asked hypothetically if it did cost more how much they would be willing to pay per month in higher electricity prices. Fully 85 percent say they would be willing to pay something more in order to increase the use of renewable energy – well within the margin of error of a year ago. In fact, a majority - 56 percent – would be willing to pay five dollars or more a month. Overall willingness to pay more for renewable energy does not vary based on household income either, with 91 percent of the lowest income sub-group indicating a willingness to pay something more each month.
- In conclusion,** the survey clearly demonstrates support among conservative voters for a broad range of policies to encourage energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy. In fact, the vast majority of voters in this conservative portion of the ideological spectrum say they would tell GOP candidates to back these kinds of policies. They even go so far as to be willing to pay more in higher electricity prices if renewable energy costs more. These voters want to re-work wind set-back limits to allow for greater wind energy production in the state, support a renewable energy standard, and affirm requiring utilities to provide energy efficiency programs. They also strongly oppose surcharges that would shore up existing coal and nuclear power plants.