

For Immediate Release

**Contact: Paul G. Afonso
Executive Director
617-856-8430**

**Survey Finds Concern for Climate Change Driving Regional Support for
Greater Energy Efficiency, Energy Infrastructure Development**

***Surprising willingness to pay higher energy prices (gasoline, electricity) if
directly linked to mitigating climate change***

Boston, MA – 2/23/09 – Despite the current economic downturn, concerns about the environment continue to influence the region’s consumer preferences and decisions on energy issues, according to an annual region-wide Opinion Dynamics survey on energy issues released today by the New England Energy Alliance. The survey found strong concerns about the environment and a willingness to pay more for energy to address the threat of climate change.

“Despite the severe economic recession, a surprising majority of consumers expressed a willingness to pay more for energy, including higher gasoline taxes if the funds are directed at concrete measures to reduce climate change,” said NEEA Executive Director Paul G. Afonso. “Likewise, consumers are willing to take actions, including some specific lifestyle adjustments to become more energy efficient, but want such opportunities to be driven by the marketplace and not by government mandates.”

The survey found economic issues dominate consumer concerns – with 85% concerned about the economy compared to 50% just 9 months ago. In terms of energy, 84% of New Englanders are concerned about the impacts of energy prices on family budgets and 66% believe the region’s businesses are at a significant economic disadvantage because they pay substantially more for electricity than the national average.

Concerns about the economy and environment form the basis for the following four major conclusions:

- *Concerns about climate change remain significant*– 87% are at least somewhat concerned about climate change—much higher than the national average. 75% of consumers are willing to pay at least \$1 per month more on their electricity bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – a 7 percentage point increase from last year. A majority support increased gasoline taxes if the funds are spent on concrete environmental solutions – with 46% willing to spend at least 50 cents per gallon more.
- *Significant opportunities for energy efficiency remain* – 71% of New Englanders report not having had an energy audit conducted in their home. Moreover, the vast majority are willing to undertake measures to reduce energy consumption such as: car pool or take public transportation; unplug appliances when not in use; contact their energy delivery company for an energy audit; and replace light bulbs with compact fluorescents.

- *Market-based approaches over government regulation/mandates are solidly favored for environmental and efficiency initiatives* – Market-based approaches to limit greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency are preferred. There seems to be no inclination to roll back electricity industry restructuring as 78% of survey respondents at least somewhat favor customer choice and competition for electricity.
- *Solid support is evident for energy infrastructure development* – Wind farms are favored by an overwhelming majority, while construction of LNG terminals shows substantial support. A narrow majority favor transmission line construction and nuclear plant license renewal. Support for constructing new nuclear plants and clean coal generating facilities shows a steady but slight plurality.

“These results offer important guideposts for policymakers at all levels of government as new initiatives are proposed,” NEEA’s Afonso said. “The survey was designed to probe key energy issues from several different perspectives so that the results wouldn’t be just interesting, but objective and actionable. Moreover, as this is our fourth annual survey, we’re able to discern subtle trends and underlying convictions in consumer opinions,” NEEA’s Afonso noted.

The telephone survey was performed for NEEA by Opinion Dynamics Corporation of Waltham, MA under the direction of ODC Principal Ernest Paicopolos. Interviewing was conducted between January 15 – 19 of 600 registered voters (consumers) proportionately distributed throughout New England. The margin of error is +/- 4%.

The question-by-question results are graphically available on NEEA’s website in PowerPoint format along with a more detailed integrated assessment of results (www.newenglandenergyalliance.org/about/public_opinion.php).
