

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Survey Reaffirms Overwhelming Consumer Support for Choice and Competition in New England's Electricity Industry**

**Boston, MA – 6/7/12** – An overwhelming majority of New Englanders continue to support the competitive electricity market system put in place over a decade ago throughout most of New England, according to an annual region-wide telephone survey sponsored by the New England Energy Alliance. Eighty four percent (84%) favor the restructured system which enables consumers to buy electricity from their electric utility or switch to one of many licensed suppliers in the region that compete on price and service.

“These results confirm New Englanders’ continued preference for an electricity marketplace that fosters choice and competition,” said Paul G. Afonso, Executive Director of the New England Energy Alliance. “It’s also becoming increasingly apparent that consumers want the marketplace involved in making energy consumption more efficient.”

The survey also found that despite federal inaction on climate change policies, over seventy percent (70%) of New Englanders remain at least somewhat concerned about the effects of global warming. This is a level far greater than the nation as a whole\*.

In addition, more New Englanders than ever – or about eight in ten – are willing to pay at least *something* extra every month on their electric bill to fund efforts to reduce carbon emissions from power plants.

Not surprisingly, voters said the high cost of energy – mainly oil and gasoline – is the single most important energy related issue facing the region.

There is also strong consensus that all domestic energy resources are needed to ensure U.S. energy independence including off-shore drilling, nuclear power, renewables, clean coal and natural gas.

Major findings of the survey include:

- ***Continued strong support for competitive electricity markets – with increasing preference for government guidance rather than mandated solutions for solving energy challenges.*** Eighty-four percent (84%) favor a restructured competitive electricity market system where companies compete on price and service. In terms of reducing electricity usage, a clear majority (56%) prefer that the government impose energy efficiency standards for appliances (even if higher prices result) rather than mandate consumer funded energy efficiency programs. Support for New England’s participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), the nation’s first cap-and-trade program, has dropped 10 percentage points from last year to just 36%, while at least half

somewhat oppose it. New Englanders are now evenly split on the effectiveness of programs designed to promote wise energy use and reduce global warming. In addition, a super majority (73%) is opposed to any new taxes on electricity generating companies to fund energy efficiency or renewable programs – or to help balance state budgets.

- ***Majority concerned about global warming and willing to pay (within reason) to limit effects.*** Forty-five percent (45%) of New Englanders are “very concerned” about the effects of global warming and almost three in four (73%) are at least somewhat concerned. About eight in ten (81%) would pay at least pay *something* extra every month on their electric bill to help mitigate the impacts of global warming (up substantially from 70% last year). However, most are not willing to spend too much extra. Fewer than half (41%) would spend an additional \$30 more per month to purchase all their electricity from renewable resources to help the environment. This percentage dropped to just one-third (33%) when the cost was presented on an annual basis (\$360).
- ***High concern for energy prices.*** Seventy-three percent (73%) of New Englanders are concerned about oil prices to heat homes. Over 60% are concerned about the price of electricity. Fifty-seven percent (57%) have the perception that building more renewable energy projects, like wind and solar, will reduce the region’s oil consumption and lead to lower gasoline prices. (NOTE: according to ISO New England, oil currently accounts for a small percent of electricity production in the region. While eliminating its use for electricity generation may be desirable, it would have little, if any, effect on gasoline prices in the region.)
- ***Consensus that all domestic energy resources are needed to ensure energy independence.*** Sixty-seven percent (67%) believe all domestic energy resources are needed to ensure U.S. energy independence. New Englanders continue to strongly favor LNG facilities and wind power. Support for nuclear energy remains stable. In fact, almost three out of four expressed some level of confidence that safety reviews of U.S. nuclear power plants conducted since the Fukushima nuclear accident ensure that nuclear plants operating in New England are safe and reliable. There appears to be increasing support for above-ground transmission lines. Support for new coal plants remains mixed.

“These trends can help guide regional energy policies and associated communications programs,” said Afonso. “Again this year, the main concern of New Englanders continues to be the economy. It’s also clear that voters are increasingly looking to government for guidance and standards rather than strongly mandated solutions to solve energy challenges.”

\* For example, a recent Gallup Poll (March 2012) found only 52% of Americans say the effects of global warming have already begun to happen—down from 61% who felt that way in 2008.

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The telephone survey was conducted for the New England Energy Alliance by Opinion Dynamics Corporation of Waltham, MA under the direction of ODC Principal Ernest Paicopolos. Interviewing was conducted April 17 – 26 of 600 registered voters in New England. The margin of error is +/- 4%. The complete question-by-question results are available on NEEA’s website at [www.newenglandenergyalliance.org](http://www.newenglandenergyalliance.org)