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Regional Survey Reaffirms Consumer Support for Electricity Competition in New England

An annual survey of New England attitudes surrounding energy issues has again found a high level of support for the region's competitive electricity markets, despite the survey results being tempered by continuing economic concerns and the polling being conducted in the immediate aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombings.

The [New England Energy Alliance survey](#) underscored continued strong support for competitive electricity markets, with 76% favoring the region's restructured competitive electricity market system where companies compete on price and service. The level of support was down slightly from 84% in 2012. Next year's survey will help determine if the downtick in this year's results are an anomaly, the Alliance said.

"The survey is conducted annually to identify broad trends in public attitudes that can help shape regional energy policies," said Paul Afonso, the Alliance's executive director. "These topics will be revisited next year to see whether they are an anomaly or a clear inflection point in public attitudes toward key environmental and energy policy issues."

The Alliance's survey found New Englanders remain concerned about the effects of global warming (70%, down from a high of 77% in 2009), but fewer respondents said they would be willing to pay at least something extra every month on their electric bill to support utility and government efforts to limit the effects of global warming.

"Consumers seem to prefer government guidance on energy issues rather than active involvement," the Alliance said. "In terms of reducing electricity use, 44% would prefer that government impose energy efficiency standards for appliances (even if higher prices result) rather than mandate consumer-funded energy efficiency programs (36%). Last year, New Englanders were evenly split on the perceived cost-effectiveness of programs designed to promote wise energy use and reduce global warming. This year, support dropped to 35%. A majority (68%) oppose any new taxes on electricity generating companies to fund energy efficiency or renewable programs or to help balance state budgets."

Given the continuing economic concerns among New Englanders, as identified in the survey, the region would do well to stay the course with electricity restructuring and competition. Competitive forces are better at driving efficiencies than government mandates, and the survey shows continued strong support for markets and competition-driven outcomes.