

**For Immediate Release**

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**Survey Finds Majority Continues to Favor Competitive Markets over Government Regulation, Surprising Support for Nuclear Power**

*Also reveals continuing concern for global warming, opposition to electricity generation taxes*

**Boston, MA – 6/16/11** – An annual Opinion Dynamics energy survey of New England voters finds that, even in uncertain economic times, New Englanders would rather rely on competitive markets than the government for ensuring adequate energy infrastructure and supplies. A clear majority also oppose new taxes on electricity generating companies, such as Connecticut’s recently imposed tax to help close that state’s budget deficit.

Most agree any new taxes would be passed onto ratepayers and businesses, which would further heighten concerns about the economy as well as the impact of higher energy prices on families and businesses. Not surprisingly, the recession and job losses were cited as the most important issues facing the region today.

Despite these concerns, the vast majority of New Englanders remain willing to pay “something extra” every month on their electric bill to support efforts to limit carbon emissions from electricity generating plants to reduce the impacts of global warming.

While concern for global warming hasn’t declined, support for renewables has fallen slightly due to higher costs compared to conventional fuels and the limited progress in building projects. Nonetheless, the construction of large wind farms continues to be favored by over seventy percent of those surveyed. In addition, even in the wake of the Japanese crisis, the majority of New Englanders are confident that a review ordered by President Obama will assure that nuclear plants in the region are as safe and reliable as possible.

Voters also expressed increased support for the construction of new LNG facilities to expand natural gas supplies to the region. On the other hand, opposition to building new electric transmission lines has grown substantially – even when intended to import affordable electricity.

The annual survey on energy issues revealed five major findings:

- **Global Warming: Concerns remain significant.** While “extreme” concern for global warming is down for the second straight year, 70% of New Englanders surveyed said they are still at least somewhat concerned about the effects of climate change. The same percentage said they’d be willing to pay at least *something* extra every month on their electric bill to limit the effects of global warming by reducing carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. Surprisingly, voter support for New England’s participation in the Northeast Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), the nation’s first carbon cap and trade program, is mixed – 44% are opposed to it.

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- ***Nuclear Energy: Support remains stable despite Japanese crisis.*** The majority (67%) of New Englanders surveyed are confident that a safety review ordered by President Obama will assure that nuclear plants operating in New England are as safe and reliable as possible. Support for renewing the licenses of existing nuclear plants in New England remains unchanged at about 60%. In terms of new plants, more than half of those surveyed expressed at least some level of concern that while many nuclear plants are being constructed in other parts of the country, none are planned in New England.
- ***Industry Regulation: A competitive market-based electricity system is overwhelmingly favored over more government oversight.*** Eighty-one percent of those surveyed are in favor of a competitive electricity industry where privately-owned generating companies compete on price, and consumers have the choice from whom to purchase their electricity. Only 18% strongly believe government should be heavily involved in all aspects of electricity generation, distribution and consumption. In addition, 65% are opposed to state lawmakers, such as those in Connecticut, imposing tens of millions of dollars of new taxes on electricity generating companies to raise revenue.
- ***Types of Energy Infrastructure: A slight decline in support for wind farms, increased opposition to electric transmission lines, more support for LNG facilities.*** While support for wind farms fell by about 10 percentage points, a significant 70% of survey respondents still said they still favor them. Three out of four New Englanders surveyed support the construction of new LNG facilities in the region – a six percentage increase over last year. On the other hand, support for building new above-ground electric transmission lines fell dramatically by 14 percentage points to 47%. Support for the construction of new clean coal plants is split. Approximately 60% favor the installation of “smart meters” in homes to increase energy efficiency.
- ***Obama Energy Policies: Mixed Reaction.*** There is general agreement that the administration’s goal to reduce the nation’s oil imports by one-third in a little more than a decade can be met. On the other hand, there is general disagreement that President Obama’s call for 1 million electric cars by 2015 is practical. A majority (53%) of New Englanders surveyed are also against the federal government “severely limiting” off-shore drilling of oil in the wake of the Gulf spill.

“This annual survey is conducted to identify trends and voter concerns that can help shape regional energy policies,” said Paul G. Afonso, Executive Director of the New England Energy Alliance. “Overall, the main concern of New Englanders continues to be the economy and pocketbook issues. The bottom line seems to be that if voters think any policy – private or public – will bring down the cost of energy, they will support it.”

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The telephone survey was performed for the New England Energy Alliance by Opinion Dynamics Corporation of Waltham, MA under the direction of ODC Principal Ernest Paicopolos. Interviewing was conducted between May 5– 19 of 601 registered voters in New England. The margin of error is +/- 4%. The question-by-question results are available on NEEA’s website at [www.newenglandenergyalliance.org](http://www.newenglandenergyalliance.org).