

Energy cost is top concern in poll

New Haven Register

June 18, 2011

By Luther Turmelle North Bureau Chief lturmelle@nhregister.com

An annual survey of New England energy consumers released Friday found that 65 percent of respondents opposed state lawmakers adding new taxes for power generators to raise revenue, as was done in Connecticut during the recent legislative session.

The survey also found continued support for the region's nuclear energy plants despite the disaster in Japan involving the power source.

"Six out of 10 New Englanders felt that what happened in Japan couldn't happen here and that the safety review of U.S. nuclear plants ordered by President (Barack) Obama will appropriately address the issue," said Ernest Paicopolos, principal of Opinion Dynamics, the Massachusetts polling firm that did the survey.

The survey of 601 people was done for the New England Energy Alliance in Boston, a trade group representing competitive energy suppliers. Of those surveyed, 141 were Connecticut residents, Paicopolos said.

"Overall, the main concern of New Englanders continues to be the economy and pocketbook issues," said Paul Afonso, executive director of the New England Energy Alliance and a former Massachusetts utility regulator. "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."

But that wasn't the case when it came to respondents' views on new high-voltage transmission lines similar to the ones being proposed in New Hampshire to bring cheap hydropower into the region. There was a 14 percent decline in respondents favoring new high-voltage transmission lines compared to last year's poll.

The survey also saw a 10 percent decline in support for wind farms in the region. The poll, which was conducted in mid-May, came as the Connecticut Siting Council was rejecting plans for a wind farm in Prospect, but still had not yet decided to approve plans for a similar project in Colebrook.