

Political Leadership Perceived to be Lacking on Energy Issues

A recent survey on energy issues sponsored by the New England Energy Alliance shows that the economy is the single most important issue facing New Englanders – more than double a year ago – followed by the high price of gasoline and home heating oil (of much more concern than healthcare and education). Two-thirds of those surveyed are also concerned that businesses in the region pay significantly more for electricity than the national average – and are worried about the impact on jobs.

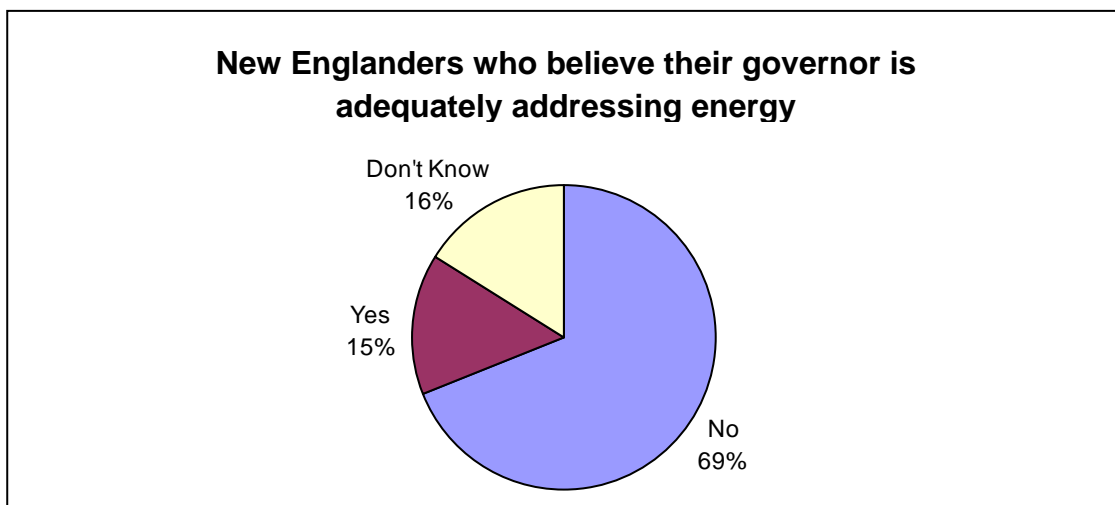
In addition, New Englanders are concerned that large energy projects – such as the Cape Wind Project off the southeastern Massachusetts coast – have been repeatedly blocked for several years by special interest groups and some politicians. There is also definite uneasiness about proposals to freeze or even reduce the level of electricity use over the next decade through expanded efficiency programs as a means of reducing global warming emissions.

Political leadership is needed to help solve the region’s and nation’s energy predicament. For New England, the solutions will be especially difficult, because they will be constrained by environmental concerns, economic issues and the fact that the region is at the end of the energy pipeline.

An overwhelming majority of those surveyed believe local and national political leaders are not adequately addressing energy-related issues to alleviate their concerns. Most have little awareness of how governors and presidential candidates are proposing to deal with energy issues.

It’s not clear whether the public’s belief is driven by poor communications on the part of political leaders or a definitive lack of initiative. Since the survey was completed, there have been energy-related announcements by at least one New England governor and both presidential candidates. In any event, New Englanders are looking for leadership – in words and action.

New England Governors



New England Energy Alliance

Almost 70% of those surveyed said their governor is not adequately dealing with energy issues. Only 15% believe their governor is. The rest didn't know one way or the other.

When asked to name one energy related proposal made by their governor, 83% could not. Six percent mentioned wind farms. Others mentioned carbon emissions, smart meters, solar panels, the Broadwater LNG project, and tidal power (each cited by only 1% of respondents).

Presidential Candidates

An even larger percentage of New Englanders – 82% – do not think the presidential candidates are discussing energy related issues enough. Over 80% could not name at least one energy proposal by a specific candidate. The few that could cited renewable energy, global warming, carbon emission capping, gasoline tax cuts, building more gas plants and energy conservation.

Further Insight

Results indicate that New Englanders expect governors and presidential candidates to exert more leadership on energy issues and to better communicate their positions and proposals. The findings suggest that voters would benefit if leaders involved in all aspects of energy policy, planning and implementation would discuss a more comprehensive approach to addressing cost and reliability issues. Each governor and candidate in upcoming elections should be asked about positions on energy issues. In addition to support for programs to use energy more efficiently and to develop alternative fuels and resources, candidates should not ignore the need to support new energy facilities to meet new demand and to replace aging infrastructure.

The annual telephone survey was performed by Opinion Dynamics for the New England Energy Alliance in April 2008 and included 600 registered voters proportionately distributed throughout New England. The margin of error is +/-4%. The complete results are available at www.newenglandenergyalliance.org. For more information contact:

Paul G. Afonso, Executive Director
New England Energy Alliance, Inc.
77 Franklin Street, Suite 507
Boston, MA 02110
617-574-9286

The New England Energy Alliance is a coalition of energy providers and business and trade organizations concerned about future energy supplies.