



## PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

TO: The Nature Conservancy of Ohio

FROM: Lori Weigel, Partner

RE: Ohio Voters Overwhelmingly Support Increased use of Clean Energy and Policies to Support Its Development; Southeast Ohioans Similarly Express Strong Support

DATE: August 29, 2017

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Public Opinion Strategies, the nation's largest Republican polling firm, recently completed a representative and statistically significant survey of Ohio voters regarding energy policies in the state on behalf of The Nature Conservancy of Ohio.<sup>1</sup> Additional interviews were also separately conducted in Southeastern Ohio to provide greater confidence in the responses in this region for comparison purposes.

The survey results show that **voters throughout the state overwhelmingly support policies that encourage greater production of renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency**, including a renewable energy standard and revising wind set-back rules to better accommodate turbine siting. There is an overwhelming sense that the state should place greater emphasis on energy efficiency (82 percent more emphasis), solar power (77 percent), and wind (69 percent) than on traditional energy sources. Nearly nine-in-ten Ohio voters would advise an elected official in the state to support policies that encourage energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energies – advice that is widely echoed across the state and across the political spectrum. In fact, if it were up to the voters, a majority of the state's electricity would come from renewable energy (61% average amount chosen statewide; 55% chosen in Southeast Ohio).

Support may in part be due to the electorate's sense that increasing use of renewable energy will benefit the state's economy, a view that is strongly held statewide (69 percent help, 11 percent hurt) and even in Southeastern Ohio (52 percent help, 27 percent hurt).

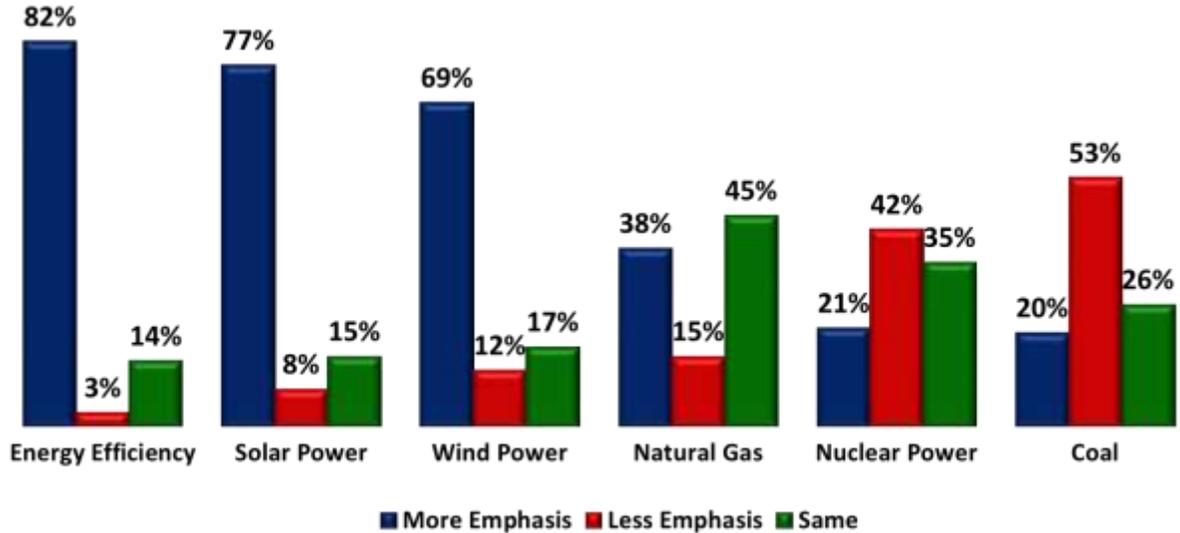
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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From July 17-20, 2017, Public Opinion Strategies completed 600 telephone interviews with registered voters throughout the state of Ohio. An oversample was conducted in order to reach a total of 230 interviews completed in Southeastern Ohio, which was defined as Belmont, Galia, Monroe, Athens, Guernsey, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Noble, Scioto, Vinton and Washington counties. Interviews were conducted on both landline and cell phones. The margin of sampling error for this statewide sample is +/-4.0% at the 95 percent confidence interval, and for the Southeastern Ohio sample is +/- 6.5%. Margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **Vast majorities of Ohio voters say the state should place more emphasis on energy efficiency, solar and wind power, with a majority advocating for less emphasis on coal.** There is a stark divide in how state voters view renewable energy and efficiency versus traditional energy sources, as the following graph depicts:

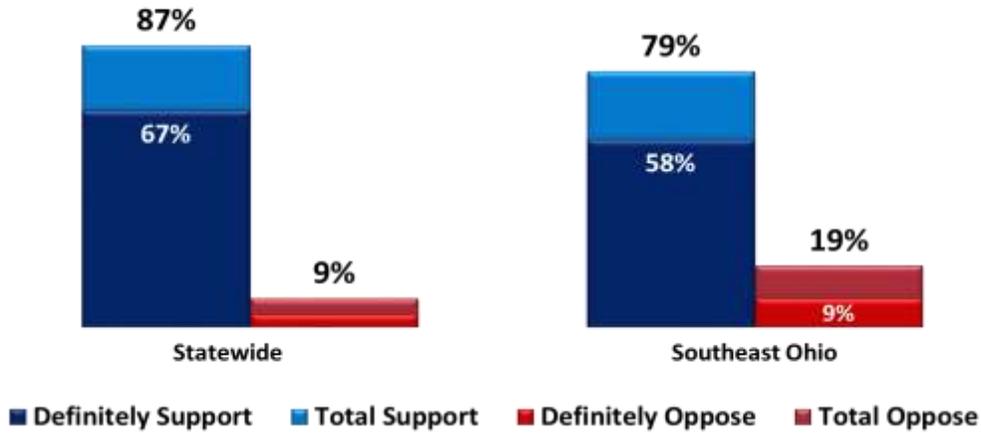
*Do you think that, as a state, Ohio should put more emphasis, less emphasis, or about the same emphasis as it does now on producing domestic energy from each of the following sources...*



This dynamic is even evident in Southeastern Ohio. Fully 77 percent of this region’s voters say the state should place more emphasis on energy efficiency, 68 percent more emphasis on solar power, and 55 percent more emphasis on wind power. However, only 47 percent say the same for natural gas and 45 percent for coal, making even fuels produced in the region less desirable than renewable energy sources.

- **Nearly nine-in-ten voters in Ohio (87 percent) say they would tell an elected official to support policies that encourage energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy in the state.** Two-thirds statewide (67 percent) say they should “definitely” support those policies. Fewer than one-in-ten would advise an elected official to oppose such policies (9 percent). Voters across the partisan spectrum would advise an elected official to pursue policies that encourage energy efficiency and renewable sources, with over three-quarters (77 percent) of Republicans, 87 percent of independent voters and virtually all (97 percent) Democrats recommending an elected official pursue such policies. The sentiment is held across the state and with all major sub-groups. As one can see in the following graph, four-in-five residents of Southeastern Ohio also would advise an elected official to pursue clean energy policies.

*If you were going to give some advice to an elected official here in Ohio, would you tell him or her to support or oppose policies that encourage energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy in our state?*



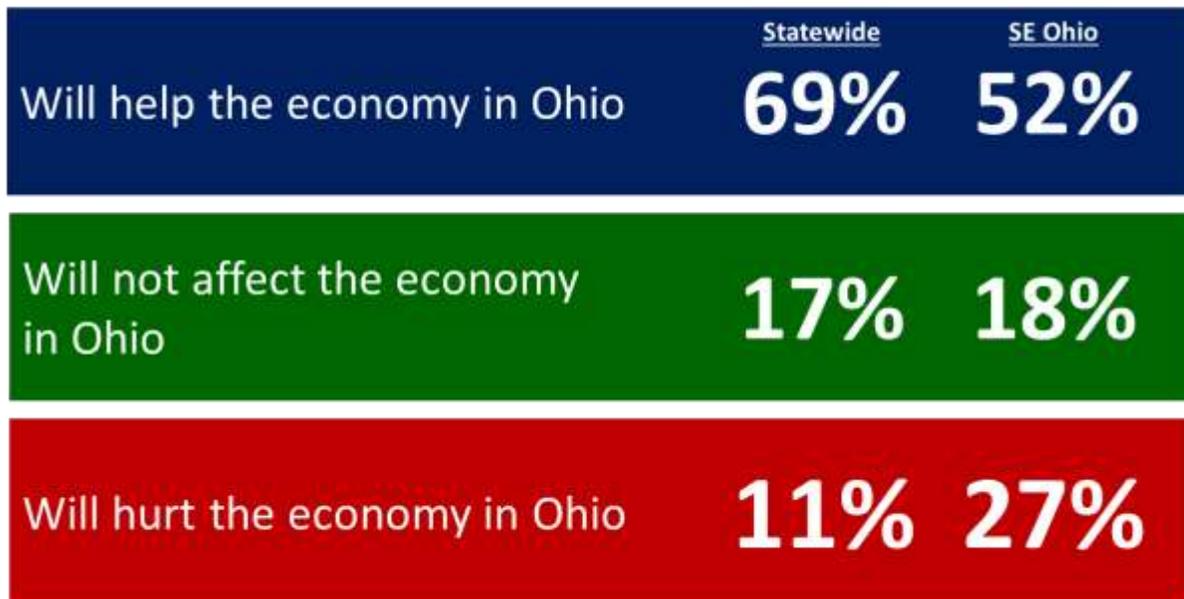
- **More specifically, voters in Ohio express support for a number of policies that promote energy efficiency and greater production of renewable energy.** We tested a randomized list of policies requesting that respondents indicate support or opposition to each one. As the next graph indicates, an overwhelming majority of these voters indicate support for programs to support net metering (93 percent), encourage energy efficiency (89 percent support), to re-work set-back limits for wind turbines to ensure greater production of wind energy in rural areas (86 percent support), and to require an increase in utilities sourcing wind and solar energy (79 percent support).

What is perhaps most striking is the degree to which voters of every political persuasion register support for these policies as seen in the following graph:

Policies and Proposals Ranked by Total Support – by Party	Total	GOP	IND	DEM
Some utility customers generate their own power through wind, solar and other renewable sources. At times, they generate more than they can use and they receive a credit on their bill for the surplus power that is fed back into the electric system. Do you support or oppose continuing to credit these customers at fair market rates for the power they feed into the electricity system?	93%	93%	94%	93%
Requiring Ohio’s electric utilities to provide cost-effective programs through which customers can make energy efficiency upgrades to their homes and businesses.	89%	84%	88%	96%
Creating more reasonable set-back limits for wind turbines that both acknowledge the property rights of land owners like farmers to locate wind turbines on their land and allow more wind energy to be produced in rural areas of the state, while ensuring neighbors are not disturbed.	86%	80%	83%	93%
Providing rebates and grants to assist lower income Ohio residents with weather proofing their homes to make them more energy efficient.	84%	76%	80%	96%
Requiring major electric utilities to gradually increase their use of renewable energy like wind and solar to twelve and a half percent over the next eight years.	79%	68%	79%	89%

- **Voters want to increase the use of renewable energy in the state – the average portion of electricity they say should come from renewable sources is 61 percent.** When asked if it were up to them, “what percent of Ohio’s electricity would come from renewable sources like wind and solar power” the average percentage is well over half (61 percent). Nine-in-ten state voters provided a number that exceeds the current two and a half percent that comes from renewables in the state. Even in Southeastern Ohio, the average percentage of electricity that should come from renewables is 55 percent according to those residents.
- **Ohioans are even willing to pay more in higher electricity prices if it means greater renewable energy use.** While respondents were informed that “the cost of renewable energy is coming down dramatically,” they were asked hypothetically if it did cost more how much they would be willing to pay per month in higher electricity prices. Fully 92 percent say they would be willing to pay something more in order to increase the use of renewable energy. In fact, almost half – 49 percent – would be willing to pay ten dollars or more a month. Even in Southeastern Ohio, fully 91 percent indicate a willingness to pay more to use more renewable energy sources.
- **This solid and consistent support for renewables may in part be due to the fact that voters are more likely to view greater use of renewable energy as beneficial to the economy.** When asked what impact on the state economy increasing the use of renewable energy sources like wind and solar power will have in Ohio, majorities say it will be a positive impact as seen here:

*Which of the following comes closer to your point of view: Increasing the use of renewable energy sources like wind and solar power...*



- **In conclusion**, the survey clearly demonstrates that Ohio voters see energy efficiency and renewable energy sources as something the state should place greater emphasis on. If up to them, they would greatly increase the proportion of the state’s electricity coming from wind and solar power, and are even willing to pay more to see that happen. Voters statewide and in Southeastern Ohio express support for a number of policies to increase the use and development of renewable energy sources, which they see as beneficial for the state economy.