



**PUBLIC OPINION  
STRATEGIES**

*Turning Questions Into Answers.*

**NEVADA: ENERGY RESOURCES AND PUBLIC OPINION**

*Public Opinion Strategies conducted this survey of 600 registered voters throughout the state of Nevada on February 27-March 1, 2007. The margin of error associated with a sample of this type is  $\pm 4.0\%$ .*

**KEY FINDINGS**

**An overwhelming majority of Nevada voters prefer that the state address its energy needs by increasing energy efficiency and the use of clean energy, rather than building new coal-fired power plants.**

- A stunning 87% of the electorate prefers to address Nevada's current energy situation by "increasing energy efficiency and using more clean energy sources like geothermal and solar power" rather than by "building new coal-fired power plants in Nevada" (9%). Overwhelming majorities of voters across the state and of every demographic and partisan group side with a clean energy approach to address the state's energy needs, including 81% of Republicans, 87% of Independents and 94% of Democrats.
- This consensus among the electorate is not surprising given some of the core beliefs about clean energy that voters hold.
  1. *Voters clearly see clean energy as reliable.* For example, three-quarters (73%) agree that, "Renewable energy like geothermal and solar power is one of the fastest, cheapest, most reliable ways to increase energy supplies and hold down energy prices." By similar numbers, they also say that, "Renewable energy like geothermal and solar power is more reliable than the traditional energy source of coal, because we will not run out of it" (76% agree).
  2. *Voters perceive taking these actions to be prudent and cost effective.* There is nearly unanimous agreement that "Investing in technologies that use energy more efficiently in our homes and businesses will save consumers money" (87% agree).

**In fact, voters go so far as to say that building new coal-fired power plants ought to be a "last resort" for the state.**

- Three-quarters (74%) of the electorate agree that "building new coal-fired power plants ought to be a last resort, because of the pollution and health impacts associated with burning coal." More than six-in-ten voters in every key voter group across the state agree that more coal-fired plants should be a last resort strategy.
- Moreover, a majority of respondents also are skeptical of new "clean coal technologies." Fully 64% agree that, "New coal-fired power plants are highly polluting compared to other, cleaner energy sources, even if they use the most modern coal burning technologies."

## **Nevadans vastly overestimate how much the state relies on renewable energy.**

- Perhaps because of their very positive view of clean energy, the electorate dramatically overestimates its use in the state. Just 31% correctly observe that less than 5% of the state's energy needs are met by renewable energy sources such as solar or geothermal, while 62% think a greater proportion of needs are met in this manner.

## **There is strong support for a variety of proposals to increase the use of renewable energy in the state, and an overwhelming majority say they would be willing to pay higher energy prices to increase the use of clean energy.**

- After being told that less than 4% of the state's energy needs are met by renewable energy, voters overwhelmingly support proposals to invest in energy efficiency and increasing the use of clean energy in Nevada homes, businesses and government. In fact....

**91% favor** "Allowing Nevada's school districts, hospitals and homeowners to generate solar or wind power at their homes or businesses and sell the excess energy they generate back to the power company, thereby reducing their overall energy bill."

**88% favor** "Providing homeowners with low-interest loans and/or rebates to cover part of the cost to upgrade to new, more efficient home appliances and other improvements to increase their homes' energy efficiency."

**86% favor** "Giving the state the ability to fund projects, such as the construction of new power lines, which would provide more Nevadans with power generated from clean energy, such as geothermal or solar."

- Support on all of these proposals is so strong that majorities of every key voter group and voters in every region of the state favor each proposal.
- Moreover, Nevadans are personally interested in taking advantage of these programs. Fully 82% say they would be willing to purchase newer, more efficient home appliances or invest in other improvements if the state offered loans or rebates. Three-quarters (75%) say they would be willing to have a free energy audit of their home to help them identify ways to improve their home's energy efficiency and save money on energy bills.
- Perhaps the most compelling fact is that 89% of Nevadans say they would be willing to pay higher energy prices in order to increase the amount of the state's energy needs which are met by renewable energy. Given a range of amounts, more voters choose the highest possible increase in their own bills – 34% say they would be willing to pay \$15 or more. Another 21% would be willing to pay \$10, 17% would pay \$5 and 17% would pay \$1 or less. Willingness to pay higher energy bills is ubiquitous across the state, as fully 81% of the lowest income households and 79% of typically cost-sensitive seniors say they would be willing to pay more in order to increase the amount of Nevada's energy needs met by renewable energy sources.

*In summary, there is overwhelming support across the political spectrum for increasing the use of clean energy and investing in energy efficiency in the state. By nearly a ten-to-one margin, they reject an approach to meeting Nevada's energy needs that relies on building more new coal-fired power plants, suggesting this instead should be a last resort in the state's strategy. Moreover, voters are willing to "put their money where their mouth is" by paying higher energy prices or personally purchasing energy efficient products.*

The survey was conducted by Lori Weigel, a partner with Public Opinion Strategies, the largest Republican polling firm in the nation with offices in Washington, Denver and Los Angeles. Public Opinion Strategies' clients include 55 Republican Members of Congress, 8 Governors, 18 U.S. Senators and numerous Fortune 500 companies. Weigel serves as the political pollster for *Rocky Mountain News* and *News4* in Denver. The firm is the GOP partner on both the *NBC/Wall Street Journal* and National Public Radio media polls.