



**PUBLIC OPINION  
STRATEGIES**

*Turning Questions Into Answers.*

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** INTERESTED PARTIES

**FROM:** LORI WEIGEL, PARTNER

**RE.:** KEY FINDINGS FROM A STATEWIDE SURVEY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE VOTERS REGARDING GLOBAL WARMING

**DATE:** JUNE 3, 2008

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Public Opinion Strategies recently conducted a survey of 400 registered “likely” 2008 voters throughout the state of New Hampshire to assess their views on the issue of global warming.<sup>1</sup> The results show that global warming is the most frequently named environmental concern of New Hampshire voters, more than four in five say it is a serious problem, and three-quarters deem it our “moral obligation” and “duty as Americans” to reduce global warming.

More specifically, there is overwhelming support for the basic concept of Lieberman-Warner legislation, with four-in-five voters saying they would tell their Representatives in Congress to support it. This support is sustained even after hearing messages both for and against the legislation.

This support at the policy level is underscored by a real level of personal commitment to this issue. A stunning 85% of New Hampshire voters agree with a statement that “I understand that reducing global warming will take sacrifices from all of us, and I am ready to make some changes.” Complementing this is the fact that 84% say they would be willing to pay higher energy prices every month to reduce global warming pollution produced by power plants.

Specifically, the survey found that:

- **Eight-in-ten New Hampshire voters say they would tell their Representatives in Congress to support legislation to reduce global warming**, with a majority (65%) saying they feel strongly about this proposal, as can be seen in **Figure 1**. Only 13% say they would tell them not to support this legislation. Respondents were reacting to a brief,

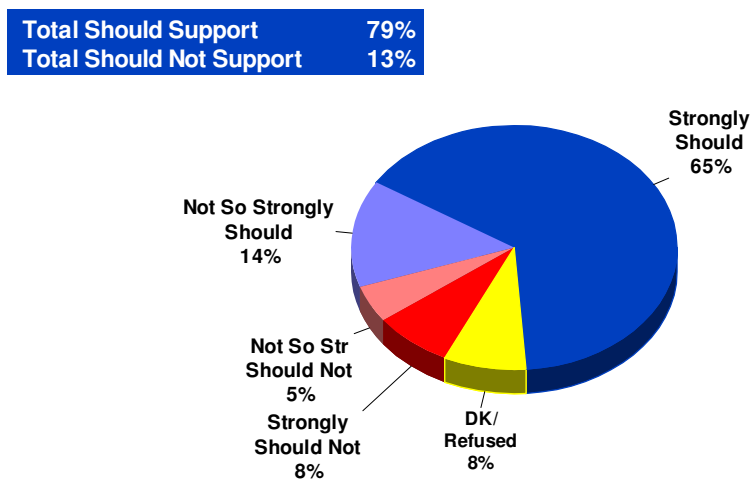
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<sup>1</sup> Interviews were collected May 28-29, 2008. The margin of error associated with a sample of this type is  $\pm 4.9\%$ . Interviews were proportionally distributed and demographically representative of the electorate. Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

neutral description of the Lieberman-Warner legislation’s basic precepts as follows:

*“There is a proposal in Congress that would reduce the global warming pollution produced by the largest sources in the United States, specifically power plants, factories and other major industries. This proposal would achieve a gradual reduction in global warming pollution of seventy percent from the pollution levels measured in 2005. This proposal provides flexibility for companies to meet their individual target, and would stimulate strategies for increasing energy efficiency, use of renewable energy, and other efforts to achieve the overall reduction in pollution.”*

**FIGURE 1**



- **Support for this proposal is broad-based and cuts across most segments of the state’s electorate.** Majorities of literally every key voter sub-group indicate they would tell their Representatives in Congress to support this legislation, including:
  - Voters across the political spectrum, as 69% of Republicans, 80% of Independents and 88% of Democrats indicate they would ask their Representatives to support the proposal;
  - Support is strong across the state, with 76% of those in the South, 80% in the North and 86% in central New Hampshire indicating they would tell their Representatives to back this proposal;
  - Over three-quarters of every income group and at every education level say to support it;
  - Support is also strong across all age groups, but is worth noting among seniors (78% say their Representatives should support it) and women age 55 and older (80%);
  - More than seven-in-ten hunters (70%) and anglers/fishermen (79%) say to support it;
  - 73% of religious conservatives say to support it; and
  - Voters in every type of community – including fully 78% of rural voters – say they would tell their Congressional representatives to support this legislation.

- Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to hear two viewpoints on each side of this issue. As one can see, they rate the arguments in favor of the legislation significantly higher:

**38% very convincing; 78% at least somewhat convincing as reason to support**

*Supporters say that this proposal to reduce global warming pollution is modeled after the program during the FIRST President Bush's administration that solved the acid rain problem. It will not only reduce the pollution that causes global warming, but also allow us to protect human health, reduce our dependence on foreign energy, and become a global leader in the new energy technology economy. The United States is the single largest contributor of carbon in the atmosphere and we should take this first step to make common sense changes rather than fighting about whether global warming exists or not.*

**22% very convincing; 61% at least somewhat convincing as reason to NOT support**

*Opponents say that this proposal to reduce global warming pollution is a hidden tax on consumers at a time when we are already paying record amounts to heat and cool our homes and drive our cars. We should not risk hurting our economy while doing nothing to ensure some of the world's biggest polluters like China and India address this problem. Besides, we can't trust big business to stop polluting, when this legislation allows the richest companies to buy their way out of reducing emissions.*

- Thus it is no surprise that **New Hampshire voters stick to their guns on this issue, and having heard both sides, continue to overwhelmingly call for their Representatives to support this legislation.** The initial favorable response is replicated even after hearing more about the issue, with 75% saying they would tell their Representatives to support the legislation and just 19% saying the opposite after hearing more details. Again, majorities of all sub-groups continue to stand with the proposal.
- **Six-in-ten voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate for U.S. Senate who supports this legislation.** In fact, one-third (33%) say they would be *much* more likely to vote for a candidate who support this. Almost no one will hold this vote against a candidate for U.S. Senate (8% less likely, a mere 4% much less likely). The intensity of the positive response is worth noting particularly among such key swing voter sub-groups as Independent women (43% much more likely to vote for), college-educated women (37%), religious conservatives (33%), and rural residents (34%).
- The support for this particular legislation is rooted in **a significant concern about global warming that is evidenced across multiple data points** in the survey:
  - Global warming is the most frequently cited environmental problem or issue named by state voters. Two-in-five (41%) volunteer “global warming” specifically, while an addition 4% refer to “climate change.”
  - Fully 89% deem “global warming” as a serious problem, and 87% say the same about “climate change.”
  - Three-quarters (74%) agree that “It is our duty as Americans to reduce global warming,” including majorities of voters across the political spectrum (58% of Republicans, 77% of Independents and 87% of Democrats).

- A slightly higher proportion of the electorate (78%) believes that “It is our moral obligation to reduce global warming,” including 76% of religious conservatives. More than seven-in-ten hunters (72%) and fishermen (78%) share this view.
- Global warming also stacks up impressively against other common issues as a political priority for voters. When asked how personally important a range of issues is to them, respondents rank global warming just behind such perennial topics as education and health care as being “very important” to them:

***Summary of Current Issues - Ranked By % “10” meaning Very Important***

<b>Current Issues</b>	<b>% 10</b>
Improving the quality of public education	<b>49%</b>
Making sure everyone has access to affordable health insurance	<b>48%</b>
Bringing new jobs and businesses to the state	<b>39%</b>
Reducing global warming pollution	<b>38%</b>
Reining in the federal budget deficit or reforming our legal system	<b>36%</b>
Protecting the Internet from taxes	<b>22%</b>
Cutting state taxes to help the economy	<b>21%</b>

- In addition, **it is clear that New Hampshire voters want action on this issue now** and do not want to put it off to the future:
  - Three-quarters (77%) agree and 50% strongly agree that “Global warming is so urgent a problem that even in these difficult economic times, we should take action now.” This includes a number of sub-groups that one would not normally associate with being passionate about this issue, including 63% of Republicans, 73% of religious conservatives, and 79% of rural residents.
  - Over three-quarters (78%) agree and 58% strongly that “Solving global warming problems now will cost less money than if we wait until later.”
  - Eight-in-ten (81%) say that the “United States should be a world leader in addressing global warming” and 62% feel strongly about that.

- **Similarly, voters are twice as likely to choose a candidate who espouses a “take action” view, rather than “wait and see.”** When provided with the descriptions of two candidates’ stances on this issue, voters overwhelmingly choose a candidate who will take action (in fact 56% *strongly* prefer the “take action” candidate):
  - 66% Candidate A believes we must take action now to reduce pollution contributing to global warming and supports strong laws.
  - 32% Candidate B believes more study is needed on global warming and believes there should only be voluntary responses rather than government regulation.
- Perhaps most significant is the fact that a stunning **85% of New Hampshire voters agree with a statement that “I understand that reducing global warming will take sacrifices from all of us, and I am ready to make some changes.”** This view is held by Republicans (72%), Independents (89%) and Democrats (95%), and more than eight-in-ten people in every income category.
- Finally, **84% of voters say they personally would be willing to pay higher energy prices as an individual consumer each month to reduce global warming pollution produced by power plants.** Respondents were provided with a range of appropriate amounts that economists have estimated could be reasonable to anticipate in the short-term and asked to select the most they would personally be willing to pay each month:
  - 48% 25 dollars or more
  - 14% 15 dollars
  - 20% 5 dollars
  - 2% Less than 5 dollars

Income is only a slight factor in willingness to pay more in energy prices each month to reduce global warming, as 75% of those earning under \$40,000 in household income annually say they would be willing to pay more each month, as do 87% of those earning \$40-\$80,000 and 86% of those earning over \$80,000.

**Overall, this survey clearly indicates that New Hampshire voters are concerned about this issue and want action now.** There is a strong sense that it is a moral obligation, a patriotic duty, and a personal responsibility to confront this problem now -- even if that involves sacrifice, which Granite State residents indicate a willingness to bear.