

W.V. ENERGY/CLIMATE SURVEY: MOST IN STATE DO NOT FAVOR MORE “SUBPRIME” INVESTMENTS IN CARBON-BASED FUELS, NUCLEAR POWER

Wind Farm Backlash: Manchin Opposed on MTR Destruction of Coal River Mountain Site for Clean Energy; Strong Majority Want Officials in Charleston and Washington, D.C. to Focus on Clean Renewable Energy and Increased Efficiency.

CHARLESTON, W.V. & WASHINGTON, D.C.//September 25, 2008//If elected officials in Charleston and Washington, D.C. are going to continue to invest in energy through subsidies, tax breaks and other incentives, the focus should shift from coal and nuclear power to promoting wind and solar energy, enhanced energy efficiency, hybrids and other highly fuel-efficient cars, according to a new survey of 605 West Virginia adults conducted for CLEAN and the Civil Society Institute (CSI) by the leading U.S. survey firm Opinion Research Corporation (ORC). The CLEAN/CSI survey was released today with the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OHVEC), Huntington, W.V.

Key CLEAN/Civil Society Institute (CSI) survey findings include the following:

- ***West Virginia residents oppose blasting the wind farm site at Coal River Mountain.*** More than three out of five West Virginia residents (62 percent) – including 50 percent of Republicans, 69 percent of Democrats and 68 percent of Independents -- oppose Governor Manchin’s decision against stopping “Massey Energy from using mountaintop removal coal mining to level a section of Coal River Mountain that could have been used for a wind farm ...” Only 35 percent of state residents support the Governor’s decision. While 15 percent of state residents strongly support the inaction on Manchin’s part, a much larger 39 percent are strongly opposed to it.
- ***West Virginia residents want clean power to get state assistance on a footing that is the same as – or better than -- that for coal-to-liquid plants.*** More than three out of five West Virginia residents would prefer to see West Virginia tax breaks and other incentives for energy companies either (1) divided “between renewable energy, such as wind and solar, and coal-to-liquid plants” (49 percent) or (2) focused solely on “support (for) renewable energy such as wind and solar” (27 percent). Only about a quarter (23 percent) support state tax breaks and incentives solely for coal-to-liquid plants. This puts the public at odds with the administration of West Virginia Governor Manchin, who has agreed to give nearly \$200 million in state tax breaks and other incentives to developers of a coal-to-liquids plant proposed for Marshall County.

Commenting on the findings, Janet Keating, executive director, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Huntington, WV, said: **“It’s great to know that the majority of West Virginians are in step with the rest of the nation when it comes to energy and climate issues. Now is the time for our state-level and national political leaders to begin the transition to a new energy future based on clean, renewable sources like wind and solar.”**

Civil Society Institute President and Founder Pam Solo said: **“West Virginia residents and other Americans deserve credit for understanding that more investment by the state and federal governments in coal and nuclear power is essentially the same thing as investing in subprime mortgages. If U.S. taxpayers are going to directly or indirectly underwrite energy development and energy-intensive industries – such as the auto industry – we need to insist that state officials in Charleston and the next Congress and President make good, solid investments that make sense for the long-term of our country. The only energy investments that rise above the ‘subprime’ level today are wind, solar and other clean renewable energy in concert with enhanced energy efficiency.”**

Grant Smith, national project coordinator, CLEAN, said: **“Investments in coal and nuclear power are the Countrywide Financial subprime mortgages of the energy world. What the public is saying in this survey is that we support government making investments in the energy sources of tomorrow, but we have to stop flushing money down the drain by propping up the failing energy**

sources of yesterday, including oil, coal and nuclear. It makes no sense to be making 50-year investments in new coal-fired power plants. Energy efficiency and renewable technologies already have overtaken, in many instances, or will soon overtake, in other instances, coal-fired power in terms of direct cost and are far superior in terms of financial risk, economic benefit, and the ability address global warming. There is no viable model under which new nuclear power plants can be constructed as anything other than multi-billion-dollar public works boondoggles. After the current financial debacle on Wall Street, it is hard to imagine that Americans are going to allow more dumb investments by Charleston and Washington on the wrong energy sources.”

Opinion Research Corporation Senior Researcher Graham Hueber said: **“What we see in our survey work is that national and state-level attitudes about energy and climate action vary relatively little, even when you drill down into views of the coal state of West Virginia. In fact, in some respects, the residents of West Virginia are even more inclined than other Americans to look beyond coal and other carbon-based fuels to renewable energy sources.”**

OTHER KEY FINDINGS

The CLEAN/Civil Society Institute survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation also found the following about the views of West Virginia residents:

- ***Most adults in West Virginia want the next President and Congress to achieve energy independence by relying on clean energy sources, rather than coal, oil and nuclear power plants.*** When asked what elected officials should make “their number one energy-related priority for the nation” in 2009, about three out of five (52 percent) favor “promoting energy sources such as wind or solar, more conservation of energy, and hybrid or other highly fuel-efficient cars,” compared to only about two in four (38 percent) who want a focus on “promoting energy sources such as more coal-fired power plants, oil from offshore drilling and nuclear power.” One in 10 (8%) think that “no change in use of foreign energy is necessary.” In a national survey the corresponding results were 59 percent, 26 percent and 10 percent.
- ***Well over half (58 percent) of those in West Virginia want to see government aid for wind and solar power put on the same or better footing than coal-fired and nuclear power plants.*** In the US as a whole this percentage is only 52 percent. These majorities want the government to “evenly divide” any subsidies, tax breaks or other incentives for new construction “between nuclear power and coal-fired power plants and energy sources such as wind and solar.” In West Virginia 22 percent and in the US, 30 percent would go further, having the government “shift all or most of them from nuclear power and coal-fired power plants to energy sources such as wind and solar.” Only about 16 percent of those in West Virginia and one in 10 Americans would “keep the incentives for nuclear power and coal-fired power the way they are today.”
- ***A halt to construction of new coal-fired power plants is supported by West Virginia residents.*** Nearly three out four respondents in West Virginia (71 percent) and 73 percent of Americans would support “a five-year moratorium on new coal-fired power plants in the United States if there was stepped-up investment in clean, safe renewable energy --such as wind and solar --and improved home energy-efficiency standards.”
- ***Wind and solar are seen as the future of energy for America.*** In West Virginia, 64 percent of respondents see oil as a power source of yesterday. Only 44 percent think coal is an energy source of yesterday. This compares to more than two out of three Americans who now see coal (70 percent) and oil (67 percent) as the “power sources of yesterday.” By contrast, solar and wind are seen as “power sources of tomorrow” by 90 and 86 percent of those in West Virginia and 92 percent and 88 percent of Americans, respectively.
- ***Most Americans and most in West Virginia know that time is running out to deal with global warming.*** More than three out of five in West Virginia (62 percent) and a similar proportion of

Americans (63 percent) believe that “global warming is a problem and we have limited time to figure out the solutions to it.”

- ***The vast majority of those in West Virginia mirror the nation as a whole when they see a positive or neutral economic impact from dealing with global warming.*** Fewer than one in five in West Virginia and the nation as a whole (18 percent) believe that “action on global warming will hurt the U.S. economy,” while over half (53 in West Virginia and 51 percent in the US) believe “action on global warming will create new jobs and investment.” Just over a quarter (26 percent in the state and 28 percent in the nation) says that such action “will neither help nor hurt the economy.”
- ***West Virginia residents pick clean energy over coal and nuclear power.*** Two out of three Americans and 56 percent of those in West Virginia would ask for wind, solar and other renewable energy technologies if they could “tell your power or utility company where to get the power to run your house.” By contrast, only 8 percent nationally would pick nuclear power (4 percent in West Virginia) and just three percent would pick “coal-generated power” nationally versus 18 percent in West Virginia.
- ***Today’s politicians are not seen as likely to act on climate issues.*** Two out of three in West Virginia and in the nation as a whole, have “only a small degree of confidence” (45 percent in West Virginia and 40 percent in the US) or “no confidence” (26 percent in West Virginia and 27 percent in the US) that “our current elected officials in the United States will act decisively on global warming issues.”
- ***Energy issues will figure prominently at the ballot box in November in West Virginia.*** More than nine out of 10 respondents in West Virginia and a similar proportion in the nation as a whole, (93 percent and 91 percent) say that “the views of candidates on energy-related issues --such as gasoline prices, home heating oil prices, global warming and energy independence” will be important as they vote in 2008. Of this amount nearly three in five (65 percent in West Virginia and 58 percent in the US) say that energy issues will be “very important” to how they vote.

Other key findings include the following:

- More than three out of four Americans (78 percent) and even more in West Virginia (84 percent) agree with the following statement: “The effects of global warming require that we take timely and decisive steps for renewable, safe and clean energy sources. We need transitional technologies on our path to energy independence. There are tough choices to be made and tradeoffs. We cannot afford to postpone decisions since there are no perfect options.”
- More than nine out of 10 Americans (91 percent) and 87 percent of those in West Virginia, are in agreement with the following statement: “The reliance on fossil fuels is the product of the industrial revolution of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Do you think it is time for our nation to start thinking in terms of the concept of a ‘new industrial revolution,’ one that is characterized by the orderly phasing out of fossil fuels and the phasing in of clean, renewable energy sources --many of which are available now, such as wind and solar for electricity, hybrid and clean diesel technologies for cars?”
- More than four out of five Americans (85 percent) do not think “the federal government is doing enough about high energy prices and the U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern energy sources.” In West Virginia the percentage is 90.
- Over half (52 percent) of Americans --and the same percentage of those in West Virginia --are more likely to “buy a hybrid, clean-diesel or other more fuel-efficient vehicle now” than they were six months ago.

For complete survey findings, go to <http://www.theclean.org>.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The CLEAN/Civil Society Institute poll conducted by Opinion Research Corporation's CARAVAN Services was a telephone survey conducted among a sample of 605 adults (302 men and 303 women) aged 18 and older living in private households in the state of West Virginia. Interviewing was completed September 12-17, 2008. The survey was weighted by age and gender to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total population. The margin of error for surveys with samples of around 600 respondents, at the 95 percent confidence level, is plus or minus 4 percentage points. Smaller sub-groups in any survey will have larger error margins.

ABOUT CLEAN/CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE

CLEAN (<http://www.theclean.org>) is a collaborative movement of state and local organizations and individuals who will encourage and support policy makers at all levels of government to implement new energy policies. The Civil Society Institute worked with grassroots organizations across the United States to help organize the CLEAN campaign.

The nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute (<http://www.CivilSocietyInstitute.org>) is a think tank that serves as a catalyst for change by creating problem-solving interactions among people, and between communities, government and business that can help to improve society. Since 2003, CSI has conducted more than 20 major surveys and reports on energy and auto issues, including vehicle fuel-efficiency standards, consumer demand for hybrids/other highly-fuel efficient vehicles, global warming and renewable energy. In addition to being a co-convenor of CLEAN, the Civil Society Institute also is the parent organization of 40MPG.org (<http://www.40MPG.org>) and the Hybrid Owners of America (<http://www.HybridOwnersofAmerica.org>).

ABOUT OHVEC

The mission of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (<http://www.ohvec.org>) is to organize and maintain a diverse grassroots organization dedicated to the improvement and preservation of the environment through education, grassroots organizing and coalition building, leadership development and media outreach in West Virginia. OVEC is a non-profit group that was formed in 1987.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio recording of the related CLEAN/CSI news event will be available on the Web as of 7 p/m. EDT on September 25, 2008 at <http://www.theclean.org> and <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org>.