



To: Interested Parties
From: Dr. John Whaley, American Environics
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Date: September 25, 2007
Re: Global Warming Poll Results

Methodology

American Environics and EMC Research conducted a telephone survey with a representative sample of 1,517 likely voters in the United States. The survey was fielded from August 26 to September 6, 2007.

The survey sought to:

- Assess overall attitudes toward global warming and general approaches to address it.
- Gauge support for three specific policy proposals: 1) cap and trade; 2) clean energy investment (Apollo); and a carbon auction plan (Sky Trust). Support was tested both before and after opposition arguments to understand the liabilities of each policy.
- Detect potential priming effects on global warming attitudes by giving sub-samples an additional question battery on severe/catastrophic impacts of global warming.

Results for each of the 300 respondent sub-samples were compared to a “control” sample of 600 respondents. Margins of error are $\pm 5.7\%$ and $\pm 4.0\%$ respectively. Except where noted, the results described in this memo pertain to the control sample.

Overall Findings on Global Warming

The survey tested general feelings about global warming both as a stand alone issue, and in relation to other issues important to Americans. We found that global warming continues to rank relatively low, far behind issues of national security, terrorism and issues such as the cost of energy.

1. Global warming remains a second tier concern, ranking dead last among the 16 issues tested in the survey. While two-thirds (68%) of voters say global warming is an important issue facing the country, with 28% saying it is one of the *most* important issues, every other issue in our battery scored higher. For example, 93% say the war in Iraq is a top issue (57% say “one of the most important”). Concern for global warming lags behind even the vaguely defined “quality of the environment” as an important concern (84%), as well as dependence on foreign oil (85%) and the cost of gas and electricity (84%) even though the gasoline prices have dropped substantially over the past few months (as well as the initial shock at paying significantly more at the pump).

2. This lower profile exists despite the fact that American voters acknowledge global warming. Seven in ten voters believe that there is solid evidence for global warming, with the vast majority (69%) saying it is a very big or fairly big problem (not as big as many other issues, however, as noted above). Nearly equal proportions (68%) believe the U.S. government should take immediate action to address the problem.

Catastrophic Impact Narrative on Global Warming Opinion

1. Frightening global warming narratives do not increase support for action. Telling voters of the potentially severe consequences of global warming (e.g., wars over water, deaths from starvation, increased likelihood of droughts and hurricanes) in a sub-sample did nothing to increase public support for government action to address the problem. Levels of support of the sub-sample mirrored support for action from the general sample.

General Prescriptions for Global Warming

1. Making clean energy cheaper is a vastly more popular approach than making dirty energy cost more. Over two thirds (68%) of Americans strongly support making clean energy sources such as solar and wind energy cost less, versus only 18% who support increasing costs for energy sources that pollute the atmosphere, such as gasoline, home heating oil, and coal burning power.
2. American voters appear, at present, to have little stomach for a carbon tax. Nearly six in ten (58%) oppose establishing a carbon tax on electricity, gasoline, and other products. By more than a three-to-one margin, strong opponents (39%) outnumber strong supporters (12%).
3. Clean energy investment draws widespread support. Nearly three quarters (74%) of American voters support providing federal subsidies to clean energy producers, with even more (84%) willing to support funding a massive federal research and development efforts to develop new clean energy technologies. Whether the emphasis is placed on meeting our energy needs without polluting or ending our dependence on foreign oil once and for all makes little difference—both do equally well.
4. Revising the tax system to address global warming garners little interest. Six in ten of American voters oppose abolishing the payroll tax for all Americans and replacing it with a carbon tax, with similar levels of opposition even among Democratic voters (as proposed by Al Gore).
5. American voters want industry to pay for the right to pollute, but equal numbers oppose doing so through an auction. When asked whether America should address global warming by making carbon-emitting businesses and industries pay for the right to pollute, 63% agree. However, 62% oppose auctioning off the right to emit carbon into the atmosphere like the government auctions off the right to use the airwaves for radio and television broadcasting.

Specific Policy Prescriptions for Global Warming

1. Cap and trade legislation receives solid support until cost argument is made. The poll tested cap and trade legislation, described in the survey as the “Global Warming Act of 2007.” It received support of 62% of voters (22% strongly) when described to respondents. However, when told, the proposal would likely result in higher energy costs and would result in economic restrictions, support dropped to 46%.

2. Sky Trust receives tepid initial support, drops to near 30% when counter arguments made. The poll tested the Sky Trust proposal to auction off carbon credits, returning the money to taxpayers. Only 51% supported the proposal initially, when told it would increase energy costs and create a new federal entitlement program, support slipped to 31%.
3. Apollo-type clean energy investment legislation receives broad support, retains majority support after attacks. Investing in a new energy economy received support of 85% of voters, the overwhelming favorite of the potential prescriptions tested in the survey. When told that such an investment would require either an increase in taxes or deficit spending, support dropped to 58%, but still retained a majority of support.
4. Energy concerns top those abandoning Sky Trust and cap and trade. Among respondents who initially supported Sky Trust and cap and trade, but who abandoned the policies once negative impacts were mentioned, energy costs ranked high as an initial concern. Once told of the impact on the cost of energy, voters with concerns about energy costs abandoned the policy prescriptions.
5. Movers on Apollo-type investment strongly concerned about economy and jobs. While the concern over the economy and jobs likely creates the high levels of support for the creation of “new energy economy” through investment, those concerned about the economy and jobs are the most likely to abandon the idea when the fiscal and budget impacts are mentioned. Advocates will need to convince voters that the economic benefits of the proposal outweigh the costs.