

To: Interested Parties
From: Geoff Garin, President, Hart Research Associates
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Re: Defeating Anti-Environment Attacks in Congress
Date: January 15, 2014

Less than two weeks into the new Congress, Republican majorities in the Senate and House have already launched what is expected to be the most aggressive anti-environmental agenda in decades. Backed by more than \$721 million dollars that oil, gas, and coal companies have invested in lobbying, political contributions, and TV advertisements, the Republican leadership has pledged to roll-back gains the U.S. has made on renewable energy development, in reducing carbon pollution, and in protecting open lands, clean water, and wildlife for future generations.

Although this fossil fuels agenda of the new Congress is well-financed, a national survey of likely 2016 voters finds that it does not reflect the priorities that Americans currently hold on energy and environmental issues. On issues like increasing exports of American oil, weakening protections for clean air and clean water, and giveaways on public lands to private special interests, proponents of anti-environmental policies face intense opposition that could galvanize widespread blowback.

Given Americans' top-of-mind support for renewable energy development and a transition to cleaner energy sources, progressives are well positioned to defeat anti-environmental attacks in the new Congress and help continue the nation's progress toward a cleaner and more secure energy future. According to the findings of the national survey – conducted by Hart Research on behalf of the Center for American Progress – progressives can defend and advance important energy and environmental priorities for the country by:

- 1) Focusing on how the energy agenda of the new Congress is primarily aimed at helping Big Oil and the other fossil fuel interests preserve their subsidies and boost their profits; and
- 2) Presenting a positive vision for a balanced energy strategy that advances America's energy independence while protecting public health and our lands and waters.

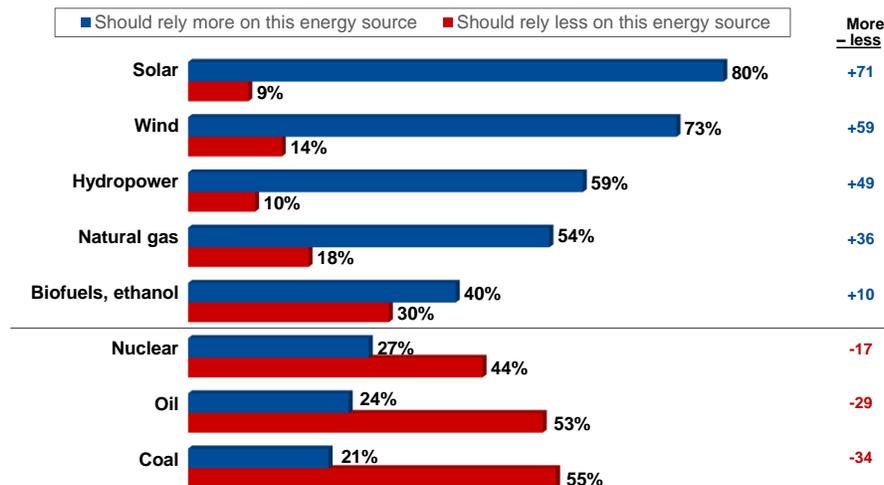
In this memo, we summarize the key findings of this national survey of 1,101 likely 2016 voters. The interviews were conducted by telephone from December 5 to 9, 2014; 30% were on cell phones. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1%.

1) The public opinion landscape is favorable to progressive ideas on energy and the environment. The development of more renewable energy sources is a leading item on the public's energy agenda; voters want the U.S. to move to a cleaner energy mix that is less reliant on coal and oil, and more focused on protections for clean air, public lands, and drinking water.

- Developing more renewable energy sources is the most commonly volunteered suggestion for what voters most want the president and Congress to do with respect to energy policy and environmental policy.
- More than twice as many voters prioritize the conservation of public lands over drilling on them for oil and natural gas. When asked to choose, 58% of voters say the federal government should focus more on protecting public lands and natural places from overdevelopment, while just 28% want the focus to be on opportunities for oil and natural gas drilling on public lands.
- Looking to the near future, voters want the United States to rely more on renewable energy and less on oil and coal. Fully 80% of voters say they think the United States should rely more on solar energy in the next five years, and 73% say the same about wind power. In addition, more than half of voters want the federal government to rely *less* on energy from coal (55%) and oil (53%) in the next five years.

Looking toward the future, voters want the US to rely more on renewable energy and less on oil and coal.

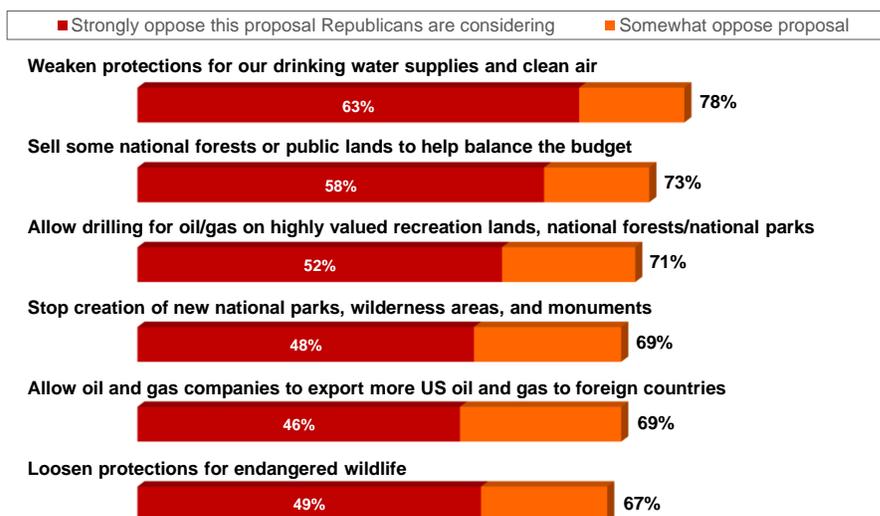
How much should the federal government rely on this energy source in the next five years?



2) Anti-environment proposals from the new Congress are out of touch with public opinion. Progressives can defeat these attacks on the environment by describing the impact of these proposals on America's clean air, drinking water, and prized public lands, and by calling attention to efforts to export more American oil to foreign countries.

- More than two in three voters oppose a number of proposals under consideration by the Congress, and the intensity of voters' opposition is strong, especially among Democrats and independents. Opposition is strongest against Congress's proposals to weaken protections for our drinking water supplies and clean air (78% oppose, including 63% who strongly oppose).
- Attacks on national parks, national forests, and national public lands strike a nerve with voters; in fact, three in four of the most objectionable proposals concern public land. Large majorities of voters oppose selling national forests or public lands to help balance the budget (73%), allowing drilling in highly valued recreation areas and national parks (71%), and stopping the creation of new national parks, wilderness areas, and monuments (69%).

Voters strongly oppose numerous proposals the new Congress is expected to take up.



- Americans strongly oppose lifting the restrictions on oil exports, both on an unaided basis and after hearing point-counterpoint arguments on the topic. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of voters oppose (including 46% who strongly oppose) allowing oil and gas companies to export more U.S. oil and gas to foreign countries, including 75% of Democrats, 69% of independents, and 61% of Republicans. Although public opinion appears more split on building the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline and drilling off the Atlantic or Pacific coasts, the survey results suggest that voters are uncomfortable with the idea that resources might be exported. More than four out of five (82%) say they would

support a proposal to require oil extracted from American public lands or offshore areas to be used only in the U.S.

3) Highlighting the money that Big Oil and other fossil fuel interests are spending to preserve their subsidies – and the size of those subsidies – is a compelling frame against an anti-environment agenda in Congress among the broadest swath of voters.

- Voters' biggest concerns about Congress's energy policies are that they would put our clean air and drinking water supplies at risk (36% choose this as their top concern) and would continue big giveaways to Big Oil companies at the expense of taxpayers (30% choose this).
- When tested separately against two different frames – one focused on Big Oil influence and subsidies and the other on air, water, and environmental impacts - the congressional Republican frame for their energy agenda falls far short of opponents' criticisms.

Congressional Republican approach: The best way to advance America's energy independence is to take full advantage of the abundant oil, gas, and coal resources already in the United States. We need to let the free market and the public's preferences determine which energy sources succeed by reducing regulations on the development of traditional energy resources and ending government subsidies for alternative energy ventures that often fail.

Opponents/Big Oil frame: This would only help Big Oil companies, which dump millions of dollars into TV ads and political campaigns to protect their government giveaways. The fossil fuel industry already gets as much as \$18.5 billion in taxpayer-funded subsidies every year. Instead of giving oil and gas companies more subsidies, we need to focus on investing in clean and renewable energy and protecting the environment for our children and grandchildren.

Opponents/environmental frame: The Republican approach is not a balanced one because it will harm the environment and increase American dependence on non-renewable and dirty energy sources. The Republican plan calls for more drilling in America's oceans, national forests, and public lands, reducing protections against air and water pollution, and will increase carbon pollution that scientists say is responsible for climate change.

- The Big Oil frame is more effective overall (57% of voters say they agree with this more) than Congress's approach (29%), primarily because it appeals to more moderate voters. Independents choose this frame by 43 points (61% agree more with the Big Oil frame, 18% agree more with Congress's approach). By contrast, independent voters prefer the environmental frame by 15 points (46% agree more with the environmental frame, 30% agree more with the Congress's approach).
- Democrats slightly prefer the environmental frame (84% agree) although the Big Oil frame still clearly resonates (79%).

4) **Progressives should continue to offer a clear and positive vision for America’s energy future. The survey finds that talking about a **BALANCED energy policy** and a **CLEAN energy policy** are effective frames.**

- Voters find a balanced and a clean energy approach especially appealing. Both of these frames have a stronger appeal than an “all-of-the-above” energy policy.

Voters’ Preferred Approaches to Energy and the Environment		
	<u>8-10 rating¹</u>	<u>Best approach</u>
	%	%
A balanced energy policy that meets our needs for energy independence while better protecting public health, our national public lands, and clean drinking water	68	29
A clean energy policy that promotes American innovation and manufacturing jobs, speeding up the nation's transition to cleaner, renewable forms of energy like wind and solar	66	27
A consumer-first energy policy that ends taxpayer subsidies for the oil industry, improves the efficiency of our cars, and provides Americans with more choice and more energy alternatives to coal and other dirty fuels	50	16
A true all-of-the-above energy policy that boosts the use of ALL domestic energy resources including coal, oil, and gas, and renewable energy sources like wind and solar	47	25

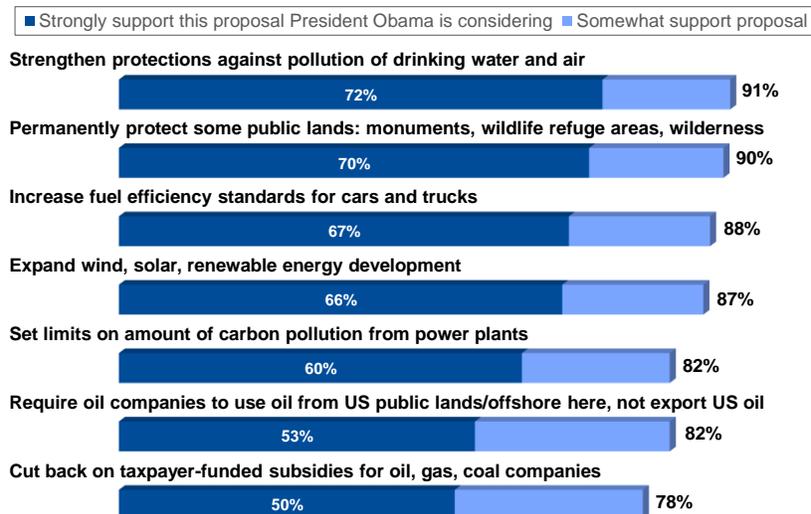
¹ 8-10 ratings on a zero-to-10 scale, 10 = extremely appealing.

- A balanced energy policy is the most consistently preferred approach across party lines and the more appropriate framework to adopt among mixed audiences: 28% of Democrats, 30% of independents, and 29% of Republicans all choose this as the best approach out of the four.
- Among solidly Democratic audiences, the clean energy approach is the most compelling way to describe an all-encompassing progressive energy agenda, as it is the top chosen approach among Democrats (38% choose this as the best).

5) **Progressives should stay on offense to advance policy ideas that benefit every American. Large majorities of voters support major progressive policy initiatives, including strengthening protections on drinking water and clean air and permanently protecting public lands.**

- Nine in 10 (91%) voters support strengthening protections against the pollution of drinking water and air and permanently protecting some public lands such as monuments, wildlife refuge areas, and wilderness (90%). Another 88% of voters support increasing fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks.

Large majorities of voters support progressive policy proposals.



- Intensity of support is high across party lines for the three proposals. Large majorities of Democrats and independents and more than half of Republicans all *strongly* support proposals to protect clean air and water, protect public lands, and increase fuel efficiency standards.
- When presented with both President Obama and Congress's platforms on energy and the environment, voters show a clear preference for President Obama's. At the beginning of the survey, voters said they trusted President Obama more to have the right approach on issues related to energy and the environment by three points (43% trust Obama more, 40% trust Republicans more). By the end of the survey, Obama's lead increased to 13 points (47% trust Obama more, 34% trust Congress more).
- Hearing about proposals from both sides had the largest impact on younger voters. Among 18- to 34-year-old voters, Obama strengthened his lead over Congressional Republicans on energy and the environment from 19 points to 37 points. Similarly, voters ages 35 to 49 moved from giving Obama a four-point lead to a 14-point lead.