

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Eily Hayes and Harrison Hickman
RE: Recent Nebraska Poll Results
DATE: February 11, 2010

Overview. Nebraska voters are concerned with rising energy prices and support wind power as a source of clean, efficient, and inexpensive energy. Their opinions on issues about the role of private investment and ownership are more muddled. These issues are not central to their thinking, and they are receptive to arguments on both sides of the issue.

Key Findings. Nebraska voters have an overwhelmingly favorable impression of wind power (94% favorable, 69% *strongly* favorable), and view wind energy as the cleanest and least expensive way to generate power. Nearly all (91%) agree that “Nebraska should meet its electricity needs by using renewable energy such as wind power.” Support extends across demographic subgroups, although men (particularly Republican men and college educated men) express somewhat lower levels of support for wind energy.

A strong majority (79%) favors requiring electric utilities to use renewable energy resources for at least 20% of the electricity they generate. Half (51%) are less likely to support the proposal when told millions of dollars of necessary infrastructure improvements would be passed on to them in monthly energy bills. Even with this information, 73% favor the proposal.

Most Nebraska voters are willing to pay at least one dollar more on their monthly utility bills to facilitate the expansion of wind energy production.

Voter opinions are ambiguous on changing Nebraska law to allow private companies to build wind farms in the state. Most (64%) support privatization when wind projects “might benefit taxpayers,” although support is lower (53%) if most wind energy would be sold out of state. Older Nebraskans, particularly women, are most leery of private ownership. When the issue is framed as a decision between public or private funding for expanding transmission lines and developing wind power, most (61%) say the state should pay to develop wind power and utilities should remain publicly owned. Not surprisingly, Democrats are most supportive of public ownership, and Republicans are more likely to favor private ownership. Voters also are conflicted on the question of a sales tax exemption for wind energy equipment.

Technical note: *This memo is based on a sample of 500 registered voters in Nebraska. Telephone interviewing was conducted February 7th–10th, 2010. Sample was selected in such a manner that all households with a working landline telephone were equally likely to be contacted. All polls are subject to errors associated with interviewing a sample rather than the entire universe. The estimation associated with a sample of 500 is +/-4.4 points. In other words, these results are within 4.4 points of the results that would be obtained from interviewing the entire population of Nebraska registered voters.*