



ECHELON

INSIGHTS

To: A Renewable America
From: Echelon Insights
Re: Support for renewable energy in Ohio
Date: December 1, 2015

As the end of the 2015 approaches, multiple programs are up for renewal as the legislative calendar winds down. The Investment Tax Credit (ITC) and Production Tax Credit (PTC) are two of these programs, and are of vital interest to the renewable energy sector.

There is broad support for incentivizing the development and growth of renewable energy in Ohio. Voters see the value in a stable tax policy for renewables, and support continuing tax incentives for the industry.

New research that we have conducted on behalf of the Wind Energy Foundation suggests that support for renewable energy is strong with voters across the political spectrum.

During November of 2015, we conducted a live-interview telephone survey of 600 registered voters in Ohio. In this survey, we found that tax incentives for renewable energy enjoy strong support along with increasing our development of renewable energies in the United States.

VOTERS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPRESSION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY AND A MAJORITY OF OHIO VOTERS BELIEVE INCREASED DEVELOPMENT WILL BRING JOBS TO THE STATE

We asked Ohio voters: "Would you say you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar?" Overwhelmingly, voters said they were favorable, with 75% of voters overall saying they had a favorable impression, and 46% said they were strongly favorable. This included 67% of Republicans and 54% of very conservative voters saying their impression of renewable energy is favorable.

We then asked voters if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “We should accelerate the growth of renewable energy so American innovation can create economic growth and jobs at home.” A strong majority -- 87% -- of voters said they agree, and 61% said they *strongly* agree.

Roughly six out of ten voters in Ohio -- including nearly half of Republicans -- said they believed that jobs would be created in Ohio if there was an increase in renewable energy sources. Sixty-five percent of Independents said the same, as did just over three-quarters of voters between the ages of 18 and 29.

OHIO VOTERS SUPPORT CONTINUING TAX INCENTIVES FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY, EVEN WHEN PRESENTED WITH CONTRASTING ARGUMENTS

Supporting the acceleration of renewable energy is a winning message with Ohio voters, both in the abstract and on the policy specifics. When talking specifically about tax incentives for renewable energy, strong majorities of Ohio voters are receptive to continuing our existing programs.

- Ohio respondents were asked if, in general, they support or oppose continuing to provide tax incentives for renewable energy. Three out of four said yes, including 63% of Republicans and 51% of Ohio voters who identified themselves as “very conservative”.
- Next, voters were read two statements about tax incentives for renewable energy: “Some people say that we should continue providing tax incentives that help make renewable energy like wind and solar cheaper and encourage investment in developing renewable energy sources. Other people say that we have other affordable energy sources like natural gas and coal, so we should not provide tax incentives for renewable energy.” Seven in ten Ohio voters said that we should continue providing tax incentives.
- We also found nine out of ten (93%) of voters between the ages of 18 and 29 support continuing tax incentives. A full three quarters of Ohio voters between the ages of 30 and 39 agree.
- Furthermore, 58% of Republicans in Ohio felt we should continue providing tax incentives for renewable energy even after hearing an opposition argument, along with 76% of Independents and 77% of Democrats.

OHIO VOTERS ARE GENERALLY MORE FAVORABLE TO LEADERS WHO SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY

The issue of renewable energy will no doubt be part of the national conversation over the next year. We asked voters in Ohio if they would be more favorable, less favorable, or if it would not make a difference if a leader in Ohio supported continuing tax credits for renewable energy producers.

A plurality of Ohio voters (44%) said they would be more favorable to a leader who supported continuing tax credits for renewable energy producers. This included over half (56%) of Democrats, nearly half (48%) of Independents, and thirty percent of Republicans.

Only 13% of Ohio voters across the state said they would be less favorable to a leader who supported renewable energy production tax credits. Some 41% of Ohio voters said it would make no difference to them if a leader supported continuing tax credits for renewable energy producers. This includes over half (52%) of very conservative voters, and almost half (48%) of Republicans in Ohio.

OHIO VOTERS RESPOND TO MESSAGING ABOUT ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND ENCOURAGING PRIVATE INVESTMENT

The most successful advocacy for renewable energy focuses on energy independence. We read Ohio voters a series of statements about renewable energy development, and asked them to tell us if they agree or disagree.

- “We should continue to encourage renewable energy development so that the United States can move toward energy independence.” -- 85% of voters, including 81% of Republicans, agree. [61% of Ohio voters strongly agree.](#)
- “Renewable energy is beneficial to the United States economy and our environment, and encouraging private investment in this industry should be a priority.” -- 79% of voters, including 68% of Republicans, agree. [46% of Ohio voters strongly agree.](#)
- “We should have a stable and predictable tax policy, because it makes it easier for the renewable energy industry to plan its investments and continue driving down costs.” -- 76% of voters, including 74% of Republicans, agree. [41% of Ohio voters strongly agree.](#)

- “If we do not continue current tax incentives for renewable energy, the industry will lose significant momentum that has created jobs and important infrastructure.” -- 67% of voters, including 54% of Republicans, agree. [34% of Ohio voters strongly agree.](#)

Voters in Ohio clearly value renewable energy’s ability to help the United States achieve energy independence. Strong majorities agreed with all of the tested messaging on renewable energy investment, though intensity was markedly higher for the message with the most tangible benefit.

We also asked Ohio voters if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “We shouldn’t give special treatment to renewable energy.” A strong majority, 60%, disagreed.

Seven in ten Democrats disagreed that we should not give special treatment to renewable energy, as did 62% of Independents. Republicans were split more evenly, with 44% agreeing and 49% disagreeing. Among very conservative Ohioans, 40% said they disagreed, compared with 52% of those who are somewhat conservative.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Ohio voters see value in continuing tax incentives for renewable energy production and investment. Support for renewable energy is broad and deep, cutting across party lines and finding strong support from key groups such as younger voters and Independents. When benefits, such as energy independence, are made clear, voters respond favorably. Even when presented with counter-arguments, Ohio voters still express broad support for the idea that we should continue incentivizing renewable energy investment and production.

In the Cleveland media market, we found strong support for renewable energy:

- 77% of voters have a favorable impression of renewable energy, and only 11% have an unfavorable impression.
- 87% of voters agree that we should accelerate the growth of renewable energy so American innovation can create economic growth and jobs at home.
- 61% say jobs would be created by an increase in renewable energy in Ohio, while just over a quarter (27%) say jobs would not be created.
- A strong majority, 71%, support continuing to provide tax incentives for renewable energy.
- After being presented with an opposition message, 67% of voters in the Cleveland DMA supported continuing to provide tax incentives for renewable energy, while less than a quarter (22%) said we should stop.
- Nearly half, 46%, said they would be more favorable to a leader who supported continuing tax credits for renewable energy producers. 40% said it would have no impact, and only 13% would be less favorable.
- 84% of voters in the Cleveland media market support continuing renewable energy development so America can move toward energy independence. 79% agree that we should encourage private investment in renewable energy. 75% agree we should have a stable tax policy for renewable energy, and 69% agree the industry will lose momentum if we do not continue current tax incentives for renewable energy.
- Less than half, 37%, of voters in the Cleveland media market agree that renewable energy should not receive special treatment. A full 58% disagree with the idea.