



NEWS

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Floridians ready to embrace renewable energy to attract high-tech industry and new jobs

TaxWatch survey reveals public support for moving energy policy forward

Tallahassee- According to a statewide scientific poll conducted for Florida TaxWatch, an overwhelming majority of Floridians want their elected leaders to take action to increase renewable energy production in Florida – and many are willing to pay for nominal increases in their monthly utility bills to do so.

The bipartisan poll by McLaughlin & Associates and Anzalone-Liszt surveyed 800 Florida voters who are utility customers, representing a statistically significant cross-section of the public. The survey's findings show that more than 80 percent of Floridians support their elected leaders taking action to increase renewable energy production in Florida, and more than 70 percent of Floridians believe that paying a dollar or more on their monthly utility bill is reasonable for renewable power generation.

With the election of an entirely new Gubernatorial Administration and Cabinet and new legislative leadership focused so heavily on job creation and good public stewardship of Florida's natural resources, Florida TaxWatch commissioned the public opinion survey to better assess taxpayers' understanding and willingness to balance the short and long-term costs and benefits of a pragmatic renewable energy policy. This should help inform and guide the new Executive and legislative leadership pursue a renewable public policy agenda that Floridians can understand and support.

“The benefits of a vibrant renewable energy policy should far outweigh both environmental and financial costs over the long term. However, it is important to ensure consumers are ready and willing to make the necessary investment, particularly in this very tough economy” said **Dominic M. Calabro**, President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch. “This survey provides valuable insight for our new Governor, Cabinet and lawmakers as they work to build meaningful renewable energy policies that will create good paying jobs.”

Florida TaxWatch analyzed the costs and benefits of renewable energy policy in April 2009 and called for immediate action and assertive policy to realize the significant economic advantages of solar production in the Sunshine State. The economic benefits outlined in the research Briefing, [*The Positive Economic Impact of Solar Energy on the Sunshine State*](#), include permanent, high paying jobs for Floridians.

According to the econometric analysis conducted by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory noted in the Florida TaxWatch April 2009 research briefing, a critical mass of installing 1,500 Megawatts of solar energy production would create 45,000 jobs directly and approximately 50,000 jobs indirectly throughout the state -- 95,000 new jobs that will stimulate and diversify Florida's economy. These 95,000 potential jobs can go a long way to pay down the more than \$3 Billion the state of Florida owes the Federal Government in outstanding loans (as of June 30, 2011) to balance the state's Unemployment (Tax) Compensation Trust Fund.

When asked their opinion on the potential benefits of renewable energy, 88.8 percent of Floridians agreed that investing in renewable energy is important to helping reduce our dependence on foreign oil and make our nation more secure while 84.4 percent believe that renewable energy is important to creating jobs for Floridians and improving the state's economy.

Highlights of the survey include:

- Floridians have the highest favorable opinion of solar energy (87.0%), but also like other clean energy sources, including Natural Gas (78.6%), Wind (77.5%) and Waste to Energy (67.4%).
- Floridians cite job creation and attracting high-tech industry as the two most important reasons for investing in renewable energy.
- A majority of Floridians believe that more of the state's energy comes from renewable sources than actually does occur.
- 83.4 percent of Floridians have reduced or are planning to reduce their own energy consumption at home.
- About 8 percent of Floridians have invested in their own renewable energy generation such as rooftop solar panels, and another 26.7 percent are considering it.
- Support spans party and gender lines.

"Floridians are looking for leadership and appear ready to support substantive policies that will solve both immediate and long-term challenges that face our state and economy," Calabro said. "Every new job created in Florida can put someone who was unemployed/ underemployed to more productive work and result in significant taxpayer savings. Our newly elected leaders should be encouraged by Floridians' willingness to embrace renewable energy policies that can get people back to work sooner rather than later."

***** Survey Findings, Methodology, and Questions are Attached *****
Date cross-tabulations are available at Florida TaxWatch

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Florida TaxWatch is a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit research institute that over its 31-year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Its mission is to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research, and education on government revenues, expenditures, Florida's economy, taxation, and public policies and programs that increase the productivity and accountability of Florida's state and local government and improve the economic health and vitality of the people of Florida. Its support comes from homeowners and retirees, small and large businesses, philanthropic foundations, professional firms, and non-profit organizations. Visit us at www.FloridaTaxWatch.org.