



**TO: Interested Parties**

**FROM: Dan Judy, North Star Opinion Research  
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**RE: Key Findings from Survey of Iowa Registered Voters**

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Our survey of Iowa Registered Voters, conducted August 28-31, 2019, finds broad agreement among voters regarding the existence of climate change and the need to take steps to address it, along with strong support for a wide variety of policy proposals that would encourage the increased development and use of renewable energy sources.

Key findings from the 600 interviews, with a margin of error of  $\pm 4.00$  percent, are:

**1. Majorities of Iowa voters say the country is off on the wrong track and disapprove of President Trump’s job performance, but Senator Joni Ernst has a net favorable rating, including among independents.** Iowa voters say the country has gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track by a 52 to 37 percent margin, including 47 to 40 percent among independents. Voters disapprove of Trump’s job as president by 51 to 45 percent, including 52 to 44 percent among independents, 49 to 46 percent among voters age 18 to 34, and 64 to 33 percent among college educated women.

Senator Joni Ernst’s favorable-unfavorable rating is a net favorable 45 to 40 percent among all Iowa voters, including a wide 72 to 14 percent rating among Republicans and a narrow 42 to 39 percent rating among independents (Democrats give her a negative 19 to 67 percent rating). Senator Ernst has an even 41 to 42 percent favorable-unfavorable rating among women, including a positive 45 to 37 percent rating among non-college women, but a negative 37 to 48 percent rating among college educated women. Her rating is linked to President Trump’s job approval, although there is not total overlap – she has a 70 to 12 percent favorable-unfavorable rating among voters who approve of his job, versus a 23 to 65 percent rating among those who disapprove.

**2. Virtually all voters accept that climate change is happening, with over two-thirds saying it is something we will need to address either now or in the future.** Denying that climate change is happening has been an increasingly difficult position to sustain, and now virtually no voters hold that position – just 5 percent of Iowa voters overall, including only 9 percent of Republicans. Among all voters, 68 percent say that “climate change is a severe threat that we must start addressing now,” or “climate change is an issue that we will need to address in

the years ahead, but it's not urgent now," including majorities of 65 percent among independents and 93 percent among Democrats, and a plurality of 47 percent among Republicans. Majorities of Republicans who say they are "somewhat conservative" or "moderate" say that climate change is a problem we will need to address at some point – 55 percent and 62 percent, respectively – and over 80 percent of every GOP demographic group believes that climate change is happening. Moreover, majorities of voters in key subgroups say that climate change is not only happening, but is a severe threat that we must start addressing now, including 53 percent of independents, 66 percent of moderates, 59 percent of women (including 66 percent of college educated women), and 58 percent of voters age 18 to 34.

These views on climate change are reflected in voters' issue priorities when making voting decisions. Among all voters, the economy (39 percent) and health care (37 percent) top the list, but climate change/environment is third at 27 percent – on par with immigration/border security. Climate change is relatively less important among Republicans (12 percent – ranking 6<sup>th</sup>) than Democrats (44 percent, ranking 2<sup>nd</sup>), but similar to the overall number among independents (27 percent, ranking 4<sup>th</sup>). It is the 2<sup>nd</sup>-most important issue for college educated women, as well as voters age 18 to 34 (at 34 percent and 33 percent, respectively). Additionally, climate change and the environment are the top priorities of voters that disapprove of President Trump and those that hold an unfavorable view of Senator Ernst.

**3. Private sector solutions, or a mix of public and private initiatives, are far more popular than government mandates alone when it comes to the development of clean energy technologies.** We asked, "*Which of the following statements comes closer to your view about addressing climate change by reducing carbon emissions?*" offering three choices along a private-public spectrum:

*The most effective way to reduce carbon emissions is to free up the private sector to develop new clean energy technologies that can replace fossil fuels when they become cost effective for consumers. Supporters of this approach say that getting the federal government's burdensome regulations out of the way is the quickest path to affordable clean energy.*

*The most effective way to reduce carbon emissions is for the federal government to invest in clean energy research and development that all private sector companies can use to develop new technologies. Supporters of this approach say that the government is best suited to fund this sort of research like it did with the space program, and that private companies are best suited to turn this research into affordable technologies for consumers.*

*The most effective way to reduce carbon emissions is for the federal government to set strict emissions caps that all businesses must meet, and enforcing them with fines or other penalties if they are not met. Supporters of this approach say that we simply cannot trust big polluters to do this on their own, and the government has a responsibility to ensure a cleaner environment.*

Among all voters, 34 percent prefer the private sector approach, 35 percent prefer the mixed approach, and 25 percent prefer the government approach. This mix of preferences is generally consistent throughout the subgroups, including key swing voters, with most voters preferring a balance on solutions with no clear consensus.

It is clear, however, that only the most liberal Democrats prefer a government-only approach. Indeed, just 31 percent of Democrats overall choose the government-only option, as do 30 percent of voters who say that climate change is the most important issue, and 29 percent of voters who say that climate change is a severe threat. Promoting solutions that involve the private sector as well as government has the widest appeal to voters.

**4. Iowa voters strongly support moving towards more renewable energy use to reduce carbon emissions, and favor infrastructure improvements and tax incentives to help achieve those goals.** We presented voters with two broad goals for energy production, along with a counterpoint. First, we asked:

*In the next ten years, we should produce electricity using one-hundred percent renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar.*

*Moving towards one-hundred percent renewable energy sources such as wind and solar is too costly and unnecessary.*

All voters support a one-hundred percent renewable goal by 69 to 20 percent, including 47 to 36 percent among Republicans. This plan is also popular among swing groups – 72 to 16 percent among independents, 77 to 11 percent among college educated women, and 73 to 18 percent among young voters.

We also asked:

*In the next thirty years, we should eliminate carbon emissions in the U.S. by using a mix of clean energy sources, such as wind, solar, biodiesel, nuclear, and carbon recapture from fossil fuels.*

*Eliminating carbon emissions in the U.S. by using a mix of clean energy sources, such as wind, solar, biodiesel, nuclear, and carbon capture from fossil fuels is too costly and unnecessary.*

This plan has the support of all voters by a similar 63 to 29 percent margin, with the “all of the above” 30-year option even stronger among Republicans at 54 to 31 percent support. This option retains solid support among key subgroups, including 55 to 39 percent among independents, 67 to 21 percent among college educated women, and 67 to 28 percent among young voters.

We also tested two sets of competing viewpoints that involved policy solutions for increasing renewable energy. First, we asked:

*We should upgrade and expand our energy infrastructure, including our electricity power grid, so that we can move energy, such as wind power, from states like Iowa to coastal population centers. It would help grow renewable energy sources, which are cleaner, cheaper and American.*

*Rebuilding our electricity power grid is too costly to taxpayers. The more energy is moved across power lines, the more loss will occur. Building a national power grid is a wasteful and inefficient and there are better ways to spend American taxpayer dollars.*

All voters support upgrading infrastructure by 56 to 31 percent. Republicans split at 43 percent between the two statements, with 53 percent of very conservative Republicans saying that rebuilding the grid is too costly, and 52 percent of somewhat conservative and moderate Republicans supporting infrastructure expansion. Majorities of swing groups support energy infrastructure expansion, including 56 percent of independents, 60 percent of college educated women, and 53 percent of young voters.

Next, we asked:

*The renewable energy industry in Iowa now produces over one-third of the state's electricity. It is cleaner, supports thousands of high-paying jobs, pays millions to landowners, and costs consumers less. We should continue to use tax incentives to encourage the use of renewable energy because it is better for our environment and good for the state's economy.*

*Tax incentives for renewable energy are another giant government subsidy that picks winners for a favored industry. They unfairly punish consumers in states where there is little wind or solar energy by asking them to subsidize states where those resources are abundant. We should end any tax incentives that favor renewable energy.*

Tax incentives are even more popular than infrastructure expansion, with voters supporting the first statement by 66 to 25 percent, including 54 to 35 percent among Republicans and 46 to 40 percent among conservatives. While having a strong appeal among the Republican base, this policy is also popular among swing voters, including 65 percent of independents, 75 percent of moderates, 77 percent of college educated women, and 66 percent of young voters.

**5. A variety of clean energy and environmental policies enjoy strong, bipartisan support among Iowa voters.** We tested a wide variety of specific policies related to clean energy and the environment, with a number enjoying strong support across the partisan spectrum, including among key swing subgroups.

Top-tier policies (those with support of 80 percent or more of all voters) are:

- *“Allowing homeowners nationwide who put solar panels on their rooftops to get credit on their energy bills for sending surplus power back to the grid.”* “Net metering” enjoys near universal support, including 89 percent among all voters and similar majorities among all subgroups.
- *“Investing heavily into upgrading our power transmission grid so that renewable energy, such as wind and solar, can reach our cities.”* 82 percent of all voters support this policy, including 71 percent of Republicans, 82 percent of independents, and 93 percent of Democrats.
- *“Incentivizing Iowa farmers to use healthy soil practices to reduce the need for fertilizer and improve water quality for local communities.”* 80 percent of all voters support this policy, including 75 percent of Republicans and 71 percent of independents. Additionally, 68 percent of rural voters support the proposal.

Second-tier policies (those with support in the 70s among all voters) are:

- *“Adopting a new ‘Clean Power Plan’ that seeks to limit carbon emissions from power plants.”* 79 percent of all voters support a Clean Power Plan, including 70 percent of Republicans, 83 percent of independents, and 86 percent of Democrats.
- *“Requiring oil and gas producers to update equipment to measure and stop the leaks of methane, a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon.”* 77 percent of all voters support this measure, including 68 percent of Republicans (including 50 percent of very conservative Republicans and 58 percent of voters who strongly approve of Trump). The policy also has majority support among key swing groups such as moderates (86 percent), and college educated women (83 percent).
- *“Using natural gas as a ‘bridge fuel’ for trucks, buses, and fleet vehicles since it is cleaner and cheaper than oil.”* 77 percent of all voters support increased use of natural gas, including large majorities across the ideological spectrum.
- *“Preventing China from becoming the lone super-power on renewable energy by investing into clean energy technology.”* This idea has the support of 73 percent of Iowa voters, including 69 percent of Republicans, 73 percent of independents, and 79 percent of Democrats.

- *“Deregulating local utilities to allow more competition from renewable energy suppliers.”* Utility deregulation has the support for 73 percent of all voters, including majorities of Republicans, independents, and Democrats.

Third-tier policies (those with support in the 60s among all voters) are:

- *“Setting a goal of meeting 100 percent of U.S. energy demands using renewable energy within ten years.”* As seen above, this goal is popular among Iowa voters, with support from 69 percent statewide, including 55 percent of Republicans, 71 percent of independents, and 85 percent of Democrats. 83 percent of college educated women and 73 percent of young voters also support this goal.
- *“Adopting renewable portfolio standards nationwide so that every state has to get a percentage of their electricity from renewable energy sources.”* 69 percent of all Iowa voters support this policy, including 60 percent of Republicans. The idea is less popular, however, among voters who strongly approve of Trump’s job (39 percent support) than it is among other Republicans (76 percent support).
- *“Supporting manufacturing jobs, such as the seven million autoworkers, from global competition by helping the American auto industry create the next generation of electric vehicles.”* 69 percent of all Iowa voters support this policy, including 57 percent of Republicans, 66 percent of independents, and 86 percent of Democrats.
- *“Using an ‘all of the above’ strategy that involves nuclear and renewable energy to slowly phase out fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas.”* 66 percent of all voters support an “all of the above” plan, including 57 percent of Republicans as well as 73 percent of college educated women, and 72 percent of young voters.
- *“Making nuclear energy, which produces zero carbon emissions, part of the solution to climate change.”* 60 percent of all voters support nuclear energy, including 64 percent of Republicans, 58 percent of independents, and 59 percent of Democrats. Nuclear is especially popular among men (69 percent), young voters (66 percent), and college educated voters (68 percent).