



Evaluating candidates based on energy positions

Findings of a national survey for NRDC Action Fund

April 2011

Belden Russonello & Stewart LLC conducted a nationally-representative survey of 1,001 Americans by landline and cell phone from April 12 to April 20, 2011. The margin of sampling error for a survey of this size is ± 3.1 percentage points.

Overview

As gas prices continue to rise across the country, a majority of Americans prefers political candidates who emphasize fuel efficiency and renewable energy over candidates who focus on more oil drilling in the U.S. Public distaste for the oil industry influencing energy policy is clear: a near majority would be less likely to vote for their member of Congress if he or she took campaign contributions from the oil industry and supported more drilling.

Findings

1. Majorities choose candidates who espouse clean energy over candidates who promote drilling for oil in the U.S.

When presented with a choice of two candidates running for election to Congress, Americans prefer the candidate who emphasizes moving toward renewable energy and away from oil rather than the one who emphasizes the benefits of oil drilling. We asked this question two

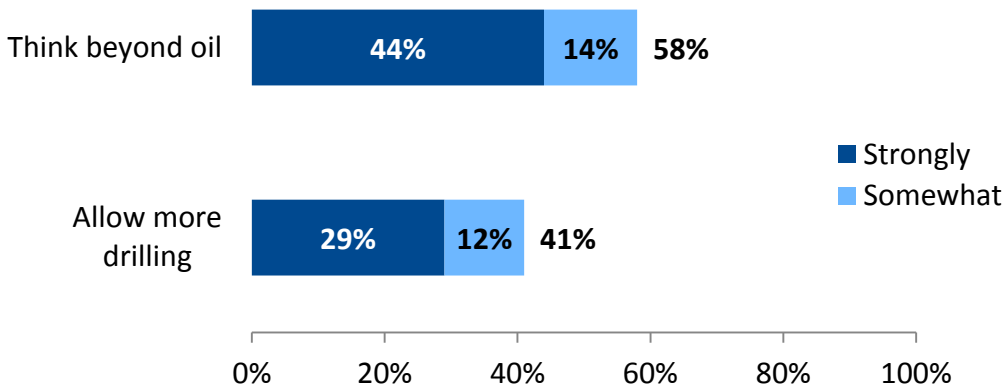
ways, one emphasizing gas prices and one emphasizing national security as reasons to care about energy policy.

When the focus is on **gas prices**, the pro-renewable energy candidate dominates the match-up:

- Nearly six in ten (58%) choose the candidate who says “we need to think beyond oil because the oil companies will continue to charge us whatever they can get away with and we should focus on investing in fuel-efficient cars and clean, affordable, renewable energy that won’t run out;” and
- Four in ten (41%) choose the candidate who says “we need to allow more drilling for oil in the U.S. to protect ordinary people from the increasing gas prices which takes money out of our wallets and makes everything more expensive.”

More than four in ten (44%) **strongly** prefer the candidate who wants to “think beyond oil,” while three in ten (29%) prefer the one who emphasizes more oil drilling.

Choice of Candidate Based on How to Address Gas Prices



Q33. Here are the positions of two candidates running for election to Congress (ROTATE): Candidate A says we need to allow more drilling for oil in the U.S. to protect ordinary people from the increasing gas prices which takes money out of our wallets and makes everything more expensive. Candidate B says we need to think beyond oil because the oil companies will continue to charge us whatever they can get away with and we should focus on investing in fuel-efficient cars and clean, affordable, renewable energy that won’t run out. Would you be more likely to support Candidate A or Candidate B? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

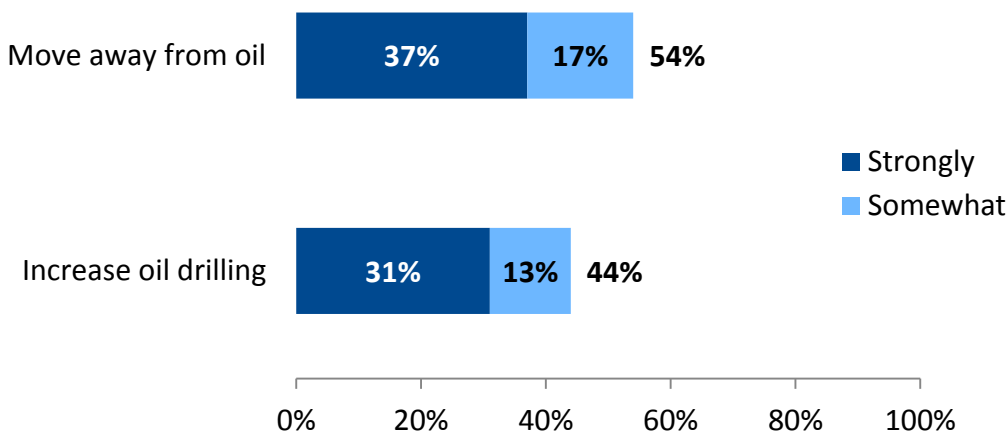
Democrats (72%) and independents (59%) both prefer the clean-energy candidate by large margins, while Republicans prefer the candidate who emphasizes drilling (59%).

When the debate focuses on **national security** the candidates are more evenly matched, but with one who promotes clean energy still in the lead:

- A majority (54%) chooses the candidate who says “real security will come from moving away from oil and investing in fuel-efficient cars and clean, affordable, renewable energy that won’t run out;” and
- Less than half (44%) choose the one who says “the U.S. needs to increase oil drilling in the U.S. to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of oil and protect our national security.”

Strong views are more evenly matched in this case, with 37% feeling strongly in favor of the first, and 31% strongly in favor of the second.

Choice of Candidate Based on Position on Energy and Security



Q34. Here are the positions of two candidates running for election to Congress (ROTATE): Candidate A says that the U.S. needs to increase oil drilling in the U.S. to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of oil and protect our national security. Candidate B says that real security will come from moving away from oil and investing in fuel-efficient cars and clean, affordable, renewable energy that won’t run out. Would you be more likely to support Candidate A or Candidate B? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

Democrats (72%) and independents (57%) still prefer the clean energy candidate, while Republicans again prefer the pro-drilling candidate (66%).

2. Supporting drilling when taking contributions from the oil companies carries risks for members of Congress

Half of Americans (49%) say they would be less likely to support the re-election of a member of Congress who “took campaign contributions from the oil industry and also voted to increase oil drilling” while only 11% say it would make them more likely to support that person and 39% say it would make no difference.

Sixty percent of Democrats would be less likely to support such a member of Congress, along with 52% of independents. Oil industry support is less significant a concern for Republicans, of whom 47% say it would make no difference to them but a sizable segment (36%) say it would make them less likely to support their member of Congress.



NRDC Action Fund Candidates on Energy

April 12 – 20, 2011; n=1001 adults nationwide; margin of sampling error is ± 3.1 percentage points; weighted by age and race. Percents may add to 99% or 101% due to rounding; * indicates less than 1% and -- indicates zero.

LANDLINE INTRO: Hello, my name is _____, and I am an interviewer with BRS – an opinion research firm. We are conducting a public opinion survey and your telephone number was selected at random. We are not selling anything. May I speak with the person in your household who is 18 years or older who had the most recent birthday?

Cell Intro: Hello, my name is _____ and I am an interviewer with BRS – an opinion research firm. We are conducting a public opinion survey and your telephone number was selected at random. We are not selling anything.

Here are the positions of two candidates running for election to Congress (ROTATE): Candidate A says we need to allow more drilling for oil in the U.S. to protect ordinary people from the increasing gas prices which takes money out of our wallets and makes everything more expensive. Candidate B says we need to think beyond oil because the oil companies will continue to charge us whatever they can get away with and we should focus on investing in fuel-efficient cars and clean, affordable, renewable energy that won't run out. Would you be more likely to support Candidate A or Candidate B? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?	Allow more drilling strongly	29%
	Allow more drilling somewhat	12
	Think beyond oil somewhat	14
	Think beyond oil strongly	44
	DK/REF	2

Here are the positions of two candidates running for election to Congress (ROTATE): Candidate A says that the U.S. needs to increase oil drilling in the U.S. to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of oil and protect our national security. Candidate B says that real security will come from moving away from oil and investing in fuel-efficient cars and clean, affordable, renewable energy that won't run out. Would you be more likely to support Candidate A or Candidate B? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?	Increase oil drilling strongly	31%
	Increase oil drilling somewhat	13
	Move away from oil somewhat	17
	Move away from oil strongly	37
	DK/REF	1

If your member of Congress took campaign contributions from the oil industry and also voted to increase oil drilling, would it make you more likely to support his or her re-election, less likely to support his or her re-election, or would it make no difference to you?	More likely	11%
	Less likely	49
	No difference	39
	DK/REF	*

Now I have some questions to help us classify your responses:

IDEO. In terms of your political outlook, do you usually consider yourself... (READ CATEGORIES, REVERSE ORDER)	Very conservative	17%
	Somewhat conservative	30
	Middle of the road	30
	Somewhat liberal	15
	Very liberal	6
	DK/REF	2

PARTY. Regardless of how you are registered to vote, do you consider yourself to be a (ROTATE: a Democrat, a Republican), an independent, or something else?	Democrat	30%
	Republican	25
	Independent	37
	Something else	2
	DK/REF	6

EDUC. What was the last grade of school you completed? (READ ANSWER CODES ONLY IF NECESSARY)	Less than high school	5%
	High school graduate	31
	Some college/technical school/2-year	26
	College grad/BA or BS/4-year	22
	Post-grad work/JD/MBA/PhD/Masters	15
	DK/REF	1

BIRTHYR. In what year were you born?	18-34	25%
AGECAT. (IF BIRTHYR=REF) Are you between...	35-44	18
	45-54	20
	55-64	17
	65+	20
	DK/REF	1
HISP. Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino(a)? RACE1. (IF HISP=NO, DK, REF) Would you say you are white, black or African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American or something else?	White	76%
	Black/African American	12
	Hispanic/Latino(a)	8
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1
	Native American	1
	Other	*
	DK/REF	2
INC. Stop me when I come to the category in which your total HOUSEHOLD income fell before taxes last year. Your best estimate is fine. (READ RESPONSE OPTIONS)	Less than \$25,000	20%
	\$25,000 up to \$50,000	24
	\$50,000 up to \$75,000	18
	\$75,000 up to \$100,000	11
	\$100,000 or more	17
	DK/REF	9
REGION	Northeast	17%
	Midwest	24
	South	38
	West	22
GENDER (DO NOT READ)	Male	48%
	Female	52