

Eight in 10 Americans Support McCain-Lieberman Climate Change Legislation

June 25, 2004

Majority Willing to Accept Increased Costs of \$15 a Month

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Eighty-one percent of Americans polled said that they support the targets of the legislation commonly known as the McCain-Lieberman legislation or the Climate Stewardship Act, which calls for large companies to reduce their emissions to year 2000 levels by 2010 and to 1990 levels by 2020.

When told it has been estimated that this would increase costs to the average American household by about \$15 a month, 67% still said they would support it. If a candidate would support the legislation, 52% said this would increase their likelihood of voting for him or her, while just 14% said that it would decrease the likelihood (no effect: 32%). These are some of the findings of a new PIPA-Knowledge Networks poll of 753 Americans nationwide conducted June 8-14 (margin of error plus or minus 3.6%).

A majority (62%), however, opposes the idea, included in the McCain-Lieberman legislation, of permitting companies to trade greenhouse gas emission allowances (known as "cap and trade"). At the same time, a modest majority did find the arguments in support of the idea convincing, suggesting that opposition is not deep-seated.

A more popular strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions was through tax incentives. Seventy-five percent supported providing "tax incentives to utility companies to encourage them to sell environmentally clean energy, such as solar and wind power, to consumers," and 80% favored giving "cash incentives like tax credits and rebates to individual households that upgrade to more energy-efficient appliances like refrigerators and air conditioners."

Very large majorities also supported efforts to reduce automobile emissions. Eighty-two percent favored "requiring car manufacturers to meet higher fuel efficiency standards." More significantly, when asked in a follow-on question "What if that meant it would cost more to own or lease a car?" 63% still said they would favor higher fuel efficiency standards. Seventy-one percent favored "that by 2010, half of all new cars produced are hybrid-electric or some other type that is very fuel-efficient." Seventy-eight percent favored "continuing the tax credit for purchasing a hybrid-electric car." On the other hand, 83% opposed "continuing to give large SUVs and Hummers a bigger tax credit than for ordinary cars used for business purposes."

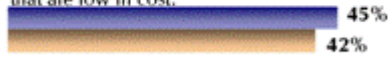
Views of Reality and Urgency of Climate Change

There is a controversy over what the countries of the world, including the U.S. should do about the problem of global warming. I'm going to read you three statements. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your own point of view.

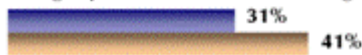
Until we are sure that global warming is really a problem, we should not take any steps that would have economic costs.



The problem of global warming should be addressed, but its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually by taking steps that are low in cost.



Global warming is a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs.



PIPA/KN 6/2004 Three in four embraced the idea that

global warming is a real problem that requires action. However, this majority divided on the question of whether the problem is pressing and should include steps with significant costs, or whether the problem can be dealt with more gradually through low-cost steps. Given three options on the issue of global warming, only 23% chose the option that "Until we are sure that global warming is really a problem, we should not take any steps that would have economic costs." Overall, 76% chose options that said that global warming is a real problem. However, these were divided between 45% who chose the position that "its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually by taking steps that are low in cost," and 31% who took the position that "Global warming is a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs."

Watching the recent blockbuster film "The Day After Tomorrow" did not significantly affect attitudes.

Support for taking steps is high even though only 43% believe there is a consensus among the scientific community about the reality and danger of global warming. Fifty percent assume that scientists are divided on the question, and another 4% assume a scientific consensus that it is not a real problem.

Steven Kull, director of PIPA, comments: "It is interesting that two out of three are willing to accept costs of \$15 a month to address the problem of climate change, even though there is not a majority perception that the scientific community has come to consensus that climate change is a real problem. If there was a broader perception of scientific consensus, support for action could be even higher."

Americans seem to overestimate how much their elected representatives support the Kyoto Treaty--which has not been approved by Congress and is opposed by the Bush administration. Fifty-eight percent assume that their member of Congress would vote for Kyoto, 46% assume that the majority of Congress would vote for it, and only 48% are aware that President Bush does not favor it. Two-thirds (64%) said they would want their member of Congress to support the Kyoto Treaty.

A central issue in the debate surrounding climate change is whether developing countries should be required to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Seventy-two percent rejected the argument that developing countries should not be required to limit their emissions at all, but 64% took the position that they should not be required to reduce their emissions.

One of the reasons that such a strong majority supports taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions appears to be the widespread belief that doing so will actually benefit the US economy. Asked to choose between two statements only 29% chose the position, "Efforts in the United States to reduce the release of greenhouse gases will cost too much money and hurt the US economy," while 67% chose the position "The US economy will become more competitive because these efforts will result in more efficient energy use, saving money in the long run."

The poll was conducted with a nationwide sample of 753 respondents over June 8-14. The margin of error was plus or minus 3.6%.

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided Internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.

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