

August 2, 2018

To: NRDC
 From: Brian Stryker / Oren Savir
 Re: Energy Efficiency for All partners Poll Findings

Voters support a range of measures to improve energy efficiency and are even willing to pay to do so. They also support programs dedicated to helping renters and people of limited incomes. Voters correctly intuit that people who make less money pay more of their income in utility bills, and they support energy efficiency for its benefits in driving down utility bills, tackling climate change, and improving people’s health.

Key Findings

- **Voters support a range of measures to improve energy efficiency.** All of the following proposals receive at least 70% support including majorities across demographic, generational, racial, and regional lines.

Proposals	% Support
<i>Require utility companies to provide financial incentives to help customers cover the cost of energy-saving improvements to their homes.</i>	82%
<i>Require utility companies to provide financial incentives to help customers with limited incomes cover the cost of energy-saving improvements to their homes.</i>	78%
<i>Require all rental homes to meet a minimum standard of energy and water efficiency.</i>	74%
<i>Require all low-income rental homes to meet a minimum standard of energy and water efficiency.</i>	75%
<i>Make sure renters are getting the same benefits as homeowners when it comes to energy-efficiency programs.</i>	84%
<i>Make sure low-income renters are getting the same benefits as homeowners when it comes to energy-efficiency programs.</i>	86%
<i>Provide technological tools for landlords to monitor their buildings' energy usage, letting landlords know how they can better manage energy use.</i>	79%

These findings and recommendations are based on a poll of N=1,600 registered voters, including N=400 in California, N=400 in the Mid-Atlantic (New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia), N=400 in the South (Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana), and N=400 in the Midwest (Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri), conducted from June 26 through July 1, 2018 via landline and cellphone. The margin of error for the full sample of n=1600 $\pm 2.45\%$ and for each region is $\pm 4.9\%$.

<i>Create financial incentives for residential landlords to make energy efficiency improvements like better insulation and more energy-efficient appliances</i>	86%
<i>Create financial incentives for residential landlords of low-income homes to make energy efficiency improvements like better insulation and more energy-efficient appliances</i>	84%

The proposals that specifically reference people of limited incomes are similarly popular to proposals that do not.

- **Voters believe that people who make less money struggle more to pay their utility bills.** Nearly half – 48% - believe that lower-income households spend a higher percentage of their income on utility bills. Younger, higher income, and higher-educated people are especially likely to believe this, particularly voters aged 18-34 (60%) and those with incomes over \$100,000 (59%).
- **People making less money in fact do pay more of their income in utility bills, a larger sacrifice for them.** Voters report having similar monthly utility costs across the income spectrum; for example households making \$100,000 or more per year report paying a similar monthly amount (\$260 on average) as do people making less than \$40,000 per year (\$240 per month). Those households making under \$40,000 per year who are paying a bigger share of their income in utility bills are more likely to report making sacrifices to pay their bills:
 - 43% of people making less than \$40,000 per year say they make a sacrifice (19% serious sacrifice / 24% minor sacrifice)
 - 14% of people making more than \$100,000 per year say they make a sacrifice (3% serious / 11% minor)
- **Racial minorities and low-income renters are hit hardest by high utility bills.** On average, Blacks/African-Americans and Latino/Hispanics report spending 25% and 17% more respectively on their monthly utility bills compared to White/Caucasian households. Not surprisingly, racial minorities also report making sacrifices to pay their utility bills at higher rates compared to White/Caucasian households. Three times as many African-Americans and twice as many Latinos report making serious sacrifices to afford their utility bills compared to White/Caucasian households.

Likewise, low-income renters (incomes less than \$40,000 a year) report making serious sacrifices at higher rates compared to all other homeowners and renters.

- **Even when asked to pay, a majority of voters support the proposals.** Most voters are willing to pay a surcharge on their own utility bills to pay for energy efficiency improvements for households of limited income:

Surcharge Proposal	% Support
<i>Help low-income and working-class households make their homes more energy efficient, paid for by adding fifty cents to every customer's monthly electric bill.</i>	58%
<i>Help low-income and working-class households make their homes more energy efficient, paid for by adding one dollar to every customer's monthly electric bill.</i>	52%

The \$0.50 surcharge also receives majority support in all for regions we surveyed; California (63% favor), Midwest (54%), the South (55%), and the Northeast (59%)