

Date: March 17, 2004
To: Interested Parties
From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

RE: The Energy Bill

Americans are deeply concerned about the energy bill, which includes numerous provisions that stir public outrage. Voters are eager for an energy bill that reduces reliance on Middle East oil, but they reject the energy bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. In a national survey of 800 likely voters, the public exhibits a remarkably and unusually high level of concern about several components of the energy bill, including but not limited to the MTBE provisions. The following are key findings from the survey, conducted February 23-25, 2004.

- **Voters are outraged when they learn about the contents of the energy bill. Voters are most concerned about the bill's special exemptions from enforcement and huge taxpayer subsidies to big corporate polluters, while preventing communities from protecting the health of families.**
- **Shielding MTBE producers from accountability for contaminating drinking water is the most egregious aspect of the energy bill.** An astounding 77 percent of voters say the MTBE provision (described below) raises serious doubts, including 49 percent *very* serious, an incredibly high percentage.

The energy bill allows big corporations to pollute groundwater with the dangerous fuel additive MTBE without being held responsible. MTBE, which may cause cancer, has contaminated drinking water in many areas across the country, including near some schools. The energy bill takes away the right of communities to take legal action against companies that put MTBE in their drinking water, saving these polluters about twenty-nine billion dollars in clean-up costs, and even gives them extra money to bail them out of their bad investment in MTBE.

In addition to MTBE, two other important issues stand out:

- *Subsidies to the nuclear industry and rule changes making it easier to dump radioactive nuclear waste.* Changes in the rules for classifying nuclear waste,

which will make it easier to dump radioactive waste in the Southwest raises serious doubts for 69 percent of voters (40 percent very serious). Not surprisingly, this is particularly effective in the Southwest, which will be most adversely impacted.

- *Exempting oil and gas companies from clean water laws, making local governments powerless to stop oil and gas companies from polluting local waterways.* This issue raises serious doubts for 70 percent of voters (36 percent very serious).

Some important demographic trends emerge from the data:

- *Independents* react negatively to the energy bill, particularly the MTBE and nuclear waste components. The MTBE exemptions raise serious doubts for 78 percent of Independent voters, as high as Democrats. And the rule changes making it easier to dump nuclear waste raises serious doubts for 74 percent of Independents.
- *Swing state voters* are the most concerned about this energy bill. The MTBE, oil exemption and nuclear waste provisions actually raise more serious doubts for voters in the swing states than for voters in either the red or blue states.
- *Voters under 30* are troubled by the energy bill more than any other age group. The MTBE provisions raise serious doubts about the energy bill for 85 percent of these young voters, while the nuclear waste rule changes raise serious doubts for 76 percent of them.

The public's strong negative reaction to these and other aspects of the energy bill should send a clear warning to Congress and to the White House about the ramifications of passing an energy bill that gives special exemptions and taxpayer handouts to corporate polluters, instead of investing in American technological know-how to reduce dependence on Middle East oil.

Doubts about Proposed Energy Bill (Percent Responding)		
	% Very Serious Doubts	% Total Serious Doubts
The energy bill allows big corporations to pollute groundwater with the dangerous fuel additive M-T-B-E without being held responsible. M-T-B-E, which may cause cancer, has contaminated drinking water in many areas across the country, including near some schools. The energy bill takes away the right of communities to take legal action against companies that put M-T-B-E in their drinking water, saving these polluters about twenty-nine billion dollars in clean-up costs, and even gives them extra money to bail them out of their bad investment in M-T-B-E.	49	77
The energy bill allows big corporations to pollute groundwater with the dangerous fuel additive M-T-B-E without being held responsible. M-T-B-E has contaminated drinking water in many areas across the country, including near some schools. The energy bill takes away the right of communities to take legal action against companies that put M-T-B-E in their drinking water, saving these polluters about twenty-nine billion dollars in clean-up costs, and even gives them extra money to bail them out of their bad investment in M-T-B-E.	45	75
The energy bill exempts oil and gas construction sites from clean water laws, meaning local governments would be powerless to prevent oil and gas companies from releasing pollution into local waterways	36	70
The energy bill changes the rules for the classification of highly toxic nuclear waste - making it easier to dump radioactive nuclear waste in the Southwest	40	69
The energy bill provides more than two billion dollars in subsidies for nuclear companies and guarantees that the nuclear power plant companies would not be held fully responsible if there is an accident at a plant.	37	68
The energy bill weakens some of our most important environmental protections. It exempts oil and gas companies from clean air and clean water laws as they explore for oil and gas, and it provides huge subsidies to coal companies without requiring them to install cleaner pollution controls in their older plants	33	65
The energy bill includes very little money for development of clean, new energy sources like wind and solar power, and only 4 percent of the money in the bill goes to developing fuel efficient cars that get more miles per gallon. Instead, most of the money goes to dirtier energy sources like oil and coal.	33	64
This energy bill is being called the Hooters and polluters bill because it includes nearly 40 million dollars to help corporate polluters like oil and utility companies, and even includes money to build a Hooters restaurant in Louisiana	33	63
The energy bill gives nearly forty billion dollars to those who need it the least--big corporate polluters, including Halliburton, and big oil, coal and nuclear companies	30	62
The energy bill for the first time creates a special office in the White House for corporate polluters to help oil and gas companies speed up permitting and completion of drilling on public lands	29	58

Convincing Reasons to Support the Proposed Energy Bill (Percent Responding)		
	% Very Convincing	% Total Convincing
The energy bill includes incentives for increased domestic oil and gas production, which will reduce America's reliance on Middle East oil	34	67
The energy bill requires mandatory reliability for electric power grids, which reduces the chances of another blackout.	24	62
The energy bill will stabilize natural gas prices so households and businesses that use natural gas won't have such big fluctuations in monthly gas bills	24	59