

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Hart Research Associates

DATE: June 3, 2014

RE: Virginia Attitudes about EPA Carbon Regulations and Climate Change

On behalf of the League of Conservation Voters, Hart Research Associates conducted quantitative research on public opinion about new EPA regulations on power plant carbon pollution. This survey consisted of 600 interviews with registered voters throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The interviews were conducted by telephone, including both landline and cell, from May 28 to June 1, 2014. The margin of error is \pm four percentage points and higher among subgroups. This memo reviews the survey's key findings.

1) There is solid majority support for new EPA regulations that are being proposed to limit the amount of carbon pollution released by power plants.

- Two in three (67%) Virginia voters favor the EPA's proposed regulations to limit the amount of carbon pollution that power plants can release into the air. Just 29% oppose the EPA's regulation of carbon pollution. There is strong consensus in favor of the new regulations in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC (68%), the Richmond area (70%) and in the Tidewater area (66%) but the proposal also is strongly supported in Southwestern Virginia (60%), which includes Roanoke, Lynchburg, and Tri-cities media markets where traditionally there has been greater support for coal. Democrats (86% to 11%) join independents (65% to 29%) in supporting the measure, while Republicans are divided (49% to 47%).
- While women (75%) and 18- to 34-year-olds (76%) are especially favorable toward the new regulations that are being proposed, majorities across demographic groups agree: 58% of men favor the new regulations, as do 64% of voters age 65 and over.

2) Voters trust the EPA, not Congress, to set regulations on carbon pollution.

- By three to one, Virginians say they have more trust in the EPA to decide whether there should be regulations on carbon pollution (60%) than the United States Congress (20%, a difference of 40 points). The EPA enjoys greater public trust than Congress among Democrats (by 68 points), independents (by 41 points), and Republicans (by 11 points).

3) Twice as many Virginians feel more favorable toward an elected official who supports the EPA regulations as feel less favorable.

- By a margin of 46% to 22%, Virginians say they would feel more favorable rather than less favorable toward an elected official who supported the new regulations.
- Virginians are consistent, with 46% feeling less favorable toward an elected official who opposed the new regulations. Just 19% would feel more favorable toward an elected official that opposed the new regulations.

4) A majority of Virginians recognize that climate change is a serious problem and many penalize elected officials who deny this scientific consensus.

- Two in three (67%) Virginians say that climate change is a serious problem, including 39% who say it is a very serious problem and 28% who say it is a somewhat serious problem. This view is widespread, including a 71% majority in Northern Virginia, 67% in the Richmond area, 67% in the Tidewater area, and 61% in Southwestern Virginia.
- Denying climate change is a substantial liability for elected officials, with half (50%) of Virginians saying that it would make them less favorable toward an elected official in their state if they said that climate change is not a problem and opposed measures to reduce carbon emissions. An overwhelming 72% majority of Democrats would feel less favorable, as would 52% of independents. Republicans are divided, with 28% saying they would feel less favorable and 26% saying they would feel more favorable toward an elected official who denied the problem and opposed measures to reduce carbon.

5) A strong majority believe that addressing climate change creates jobs rather than costs them.

- By a 63%-to-28% margin, Virginia voters select a statement that addressing climate change would create jobs by boosting wind, solar, and other clean energy industries over one that says addressing climate change costs jobs because it would hurt the oil, gas, and coal industries.
- The view that addressing climate change would create jobs is held by a majority of men (57%) and women (68%), and by majorities across all age categories rising from 55% of Virginians over 65 years old to 79% of 18- to 34-year-olds. A 64% majority of Northern Virginia residents believe doing more to address climate change would create jobs and this view is shared with majorities in Richmond (66%), Tidewater (69%), and Southwestern Virginia (51%).

6) After Virginians heard arguments for and against the regulations, support for them holds strong, with greater than three in five wanting their senator to support the regulations.

- The survey tested arguments in favor of and against the new EPA regulations. On the opposition side, voters heard the most frequent arguments against the new regulations, including that it is part of the war on coal, would raise electricity rates, and that it would kill jobs. On the proponents' side, voters heard the most common arguments in favor of the regulations, including the moral obligation to protect the planet for future generations, the importance of reducing climate change for public health, Virginia's vulnerability to sea level rise and a competing message about job growth. After hearing both sides, voters overwhelmingly say they want their US senator to support the new regulations (61% compared with 31% who want their senator to oppose).