

TO: NRDC Action Fund
 FROM: Global Strategy Group
 DATE: January 16, 2018
 RE: **Recent Poll: Illinois Democratic primary voters strongly support clean energy policies**

According to a new survey conducted by Global Strategy Group on behalf of the NRDC Action Fund in conjunction with The Majority Institute, an overwhelming majority of Illinois Democratic primary voters not only want the state to pursue clean energy policies – even in the face of opposition messaging – but would also be more likely to vote for a gubernatorial candidate who advocates for these policies. Support for clean energy policies is strong among Democrats in all regions of Illinois and among union and non-union households alike.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **J.B. Pritzker currently leads in the Democratic primary for governor.** While voters are favorable toward all Democratic candidates, they are most favorable toward J.B. Pritzker (67% favorable/13% unfavorable) and likely to vote for him at this stage in the race (49% Pritzker/21% Kennedy/10% Biss/2% Hardiman).
- **The race is still very fluid, with many votes up for grabs.** A full 19% of voters remain entirely undecided and an additional 20% are not sure about their vote, saying they only lean toward their indicated candidate, demonstrating that candidates can still increase their vote share by campaigning on policies with broad appeal.
- **A strong majority of Democratic primary voters support a variety of clean energy policies.** As shown in the table below, there is strong support for the five different clean energy policies tested, though there is a range in both overall support and intensity, as the “Silicon Prairie” policy enjoys significantly less intense support.

SUPPORT FOR POLICIES				
STATEWIDE		DOWNSTATE		
TOTAL	STRONG	TOTAL	STRONG	
93%	72%	91%	67%	[INCUBATE] Using state funds to develop job skills and entrepreneurial support for people in low-income communities to work in the renewable energy sector
86	71	80	63	[CARBON EMISSIONS] Limiting the amount of carbon emissions that power plants can produce
89	67	87	69	[CLEAN ENERGY] Requiring electric utilities to increase their use of energy sources, like wind and solar, so Illinois can get 100% of its electricity from renewable sources by the year 2050
87	66	84	63	[EFFICIENCY IN SCHOOLS] Using state capital funds for solar, wind, and energy efficiency projects at local public schools
62	32	58	33	[SILICON PRAIRIE] Using state funds to create a research corridor for battery technology centered around Argonne National Laboratory in Northern Illinois

- **Support for clean energy policies is near universal, extending across demographics and regions.** Each of these policies enjoys majority support across all regions of Illinois, including, as shown previously, downstate. And these policies are consistently popular across demographics. The incubation policy, for example, earns the support of union voters (91% support) and non-union voters (95% support), college graduates (96%) and non-college graduates (92%), white (92%) and African American (95%) voters, and liberals (96%) and non-liberals (90%). Importantly, voters who are undecided or leaners on the primary ballot are extremely supportive of the policy (92% support, including 69% strongly) – a trend that holds true for every policy tested.
- **Support for these policies remains robust after a simulated debate including strong attacks on the policies.** When we explore three policies more in-depth by giving voters arguments on each side of the debate, the clean energy positions win out handily – even against arguments that these policies would kill good union jobs.¹
 - Eighty-two percent of voters continue to support limiting the amount of carbon emissions that power plants can produce – virtually no different from the initial level of support.
 - Ninety-one percent continue to support the policy of developing job skills and entrepreneurial support for people in low-income communities to work in the renewable energy sector.
 - When asked, after a simulated debate, if the state should move to a 100% renewable energy requirement by 2050 or stick with the current 25% by 2030 requirement, two-thirds of voters (66%) support the more aggressive approach, and just 22% prefer the status quo.
- **Candidates can benefit from supporting these policies.** There is virtually no political downside – but tremendous upside – to candidates adding these policies to their platform, with more than half of voters reporting they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports these policies, and very few saying they would be less likely to vote for that candidate.²

MORE/LESS LIKELY TO VOTE FOR A CANDIDATE WHO SUPPORTS...				
TOTAL		UND/LEANERS		
MORE	LESS	MORE	LESS	
59%	2%	57%	2%	[INCUBATE] Using state funds to develop job skills and entrepreneurial support for people in low-income communities to work in the renewable energy sector
54	4	55	1	[CARBON EMISSIONS] Limiting the amount of carbon emissions that power plants can produce
53	5	52	3	[CLEAN ENERGY] Requiring electric utilities to increase their use of energy sources, like wind and solar, so Illinois can get 100% of its electricity from renewable sources by the year 2050

ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey from January 4 through 8, 2018 with 801 likely 2018 Democratic primary voters in Illinois, plus an oversample of 200 voters from downstate Illinois, for a total of 1,001 interviews. The results have a margin of error of +/- 3.5%, and care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the electorate are properly represented. The margin of error on subgroups is greater.

¹ See appendix A for the full text of the language tested in support and opposition to policies.

² See appendix B for further demographic breakdowns of impact on likelihood to vote for a candidate.

Appendix A: Simulated Debates

Carbon Emissions

Supporters say that by placing hard limits on carbon pollution from power plants, Illinois will dramatically reduce toxic air and water pollution, lead to lower energy costs for Illinois families, spur thousands of jobs building new renewable energy in wind and solar power, and improve the environment for future generations.

Opponents say this policy would force many power plants to close, killing thousands of good, union jobs and decimating whole communities. And by forcing us to phase out less-expensive energy sources, this would amount to a massive new energy tax, driving up electricity bills for Illinois families.

Clean Energy

Supporters say transitioning to renewable energy will create thousands of high-paying jobs for all kinds of people, from recent high school graduates to advanced engineers. This transition will dramatically reduce the toxic air and water pollution that comes from burning dirty fuel like coal, and save Illinois families thousands of dollars on their electricity bills.

Opponents say this policy is a massive hidden energy tax that would raise electricity bills for Illinois families by hundreds of dollars a year. Just last year the state passed a sensible law to require utilities to get 25% of their electricity from renewable sources. We should let that law have a chance to work before passing a costly - and unrealistic - new policy.

Incubate

Supporters say that by helping people in every part of Illinois develop the skills to start a business or work in the renewable energy economy, we can revitalize hard-hit communities by creating good jobs while also improving our environment and lowering energy bills.

Opponents say this policy is another example of government picking winners and losers. If these jobs are viable, then the free market should be responsible for their growth and we shouldn't be wasting our tax dollars.

Appendix B: Impact on Likelihood to Vote for a Candidate

NET MORE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR A CANDIDATE WHO SUPPORTS...			
INCUBATE	CARBON EMISSIONS	CLEAN ENERGY	
+57	+50	+48	Total
+54	+44	+44	Non-college
+61	+63	+57	College
+51	+49	+51	Union
+60	+55	+50	Non-union
+52	+58	+53	White
+58	+37	+33	African American
+66	+61	+62	Liberal
+44	+42	+37	Non-liberal
+52	+49	+46	Downstate