



# PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

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TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Dave Metz and Emma White  
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

Lori Weigel  
Public Opinion Strategies

DATE: February 2, 2015

RE: Findings of a Virginia Statewide Survey on Energy Issues

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A recent statewide survey in Virginia finds that **eight in ten, including majorities across party lines, favor state-based action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in compliance with the EPA's new restrictions on coal-fired power plant emissions.**<sup>1</sup> Virginians are especially enthusiastic about energy efficiency and wind and solar power, which they see as creating jobs, cleaning the air, and increasing energy independence. Unsurprisingly, therefore, components of a state-based emissions reduction plan which emphasize these actions are particularly popular, receiving support from over eight in ten.

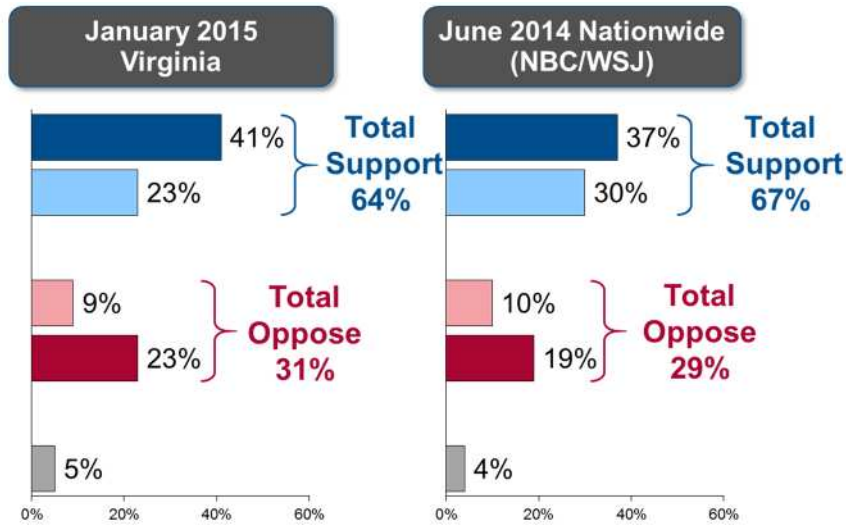
Key specific findings of the research include the following:

- **The Clean Power Plan finds majority support.** After hearing that *President Obama has directed the Environmental Protection Agency, known as the E-P-A for short, to set strict carbon dioxide emission limits on existing coal-fired power plants with a goal to reduce emissions significantly by the year 2030*, 64 percent support the plan, including 41 percent who “strongly” support it. Opposition stands at 31 percent (23% “strongly”). This closely matches national results from the June 2014 NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, which found 67% “support” to 29% “oppose,” as shown in **Figure 1** on the following page.

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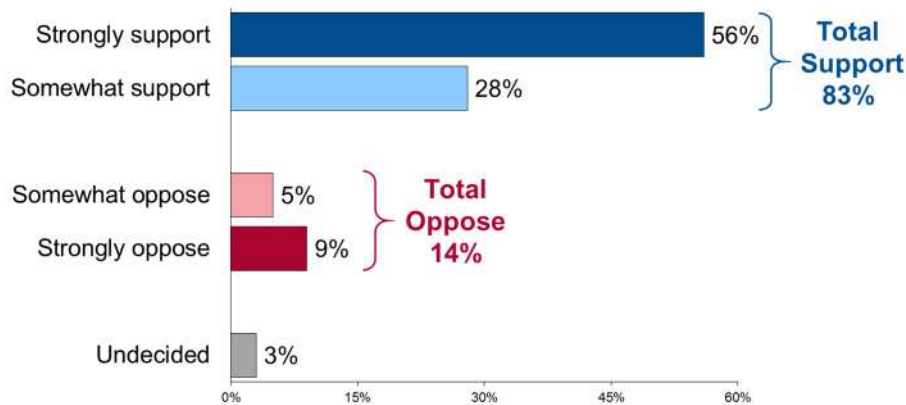
<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** The bipartisan team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) and Public Opinion Strategies (POS) conducted a survey of 400 registered voters in Virginia via landline and cell phone from January 7-11, 2015. The margin of sampling error for the full study is +/- 4.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups will be higher. Due to rounding, some percentages may not sum to 100%.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Support for Clean Power Plan**



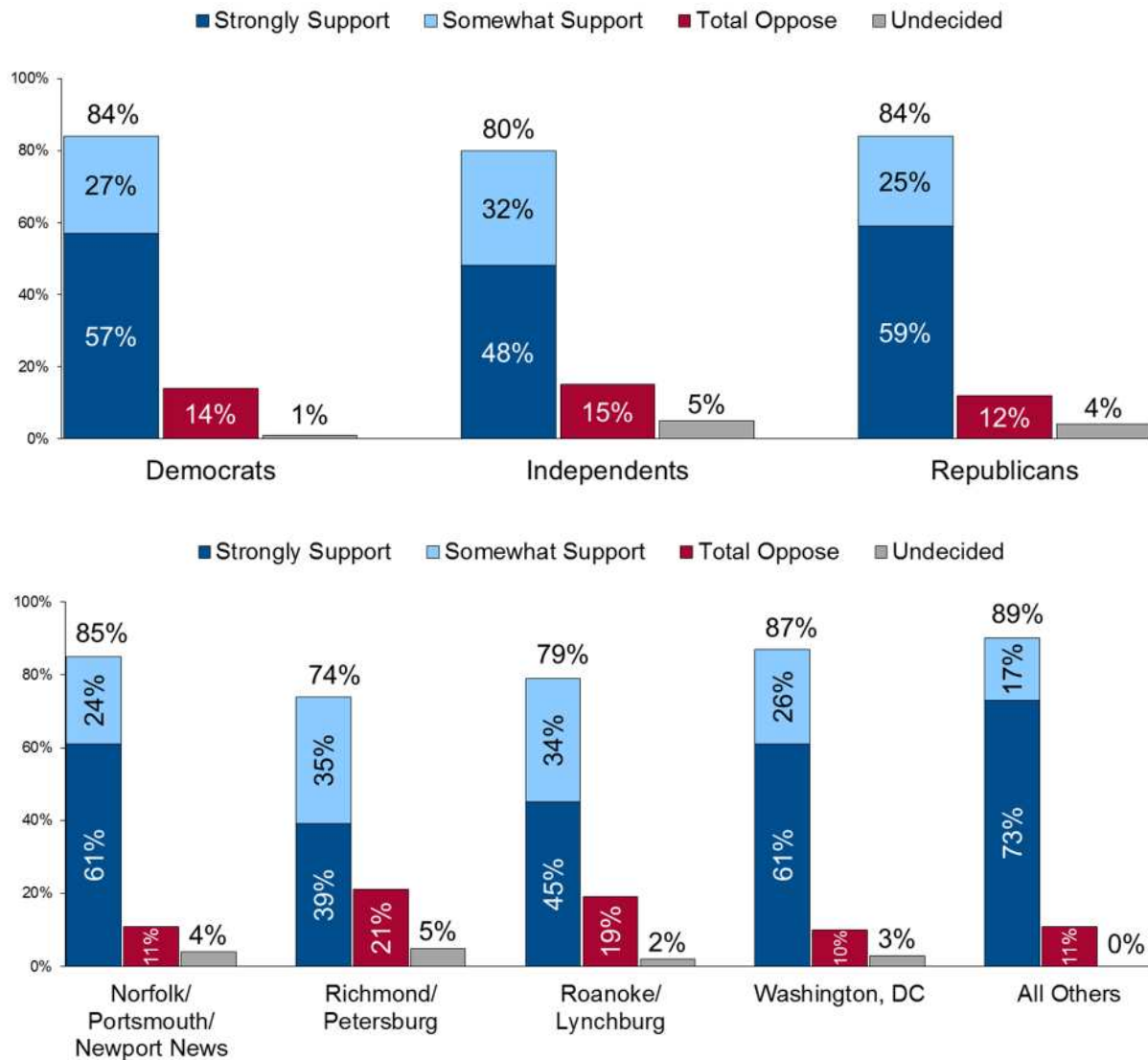
- **A Virginia-specific clean energy and pollution reduction plan is even more popular, with support crossing party lines.** As shown in **Figure 2**, eight in ten (83%) support *Virginia developing its own state plan to reduce carbon pollution and increase the use of clean energy and energy efficiency*, after hearing that *new federal rules will require Virginia to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 38 percent by 2030*.

**FIGURE 2:**  
**Support for a Virginia Carbon Reduction Plan**



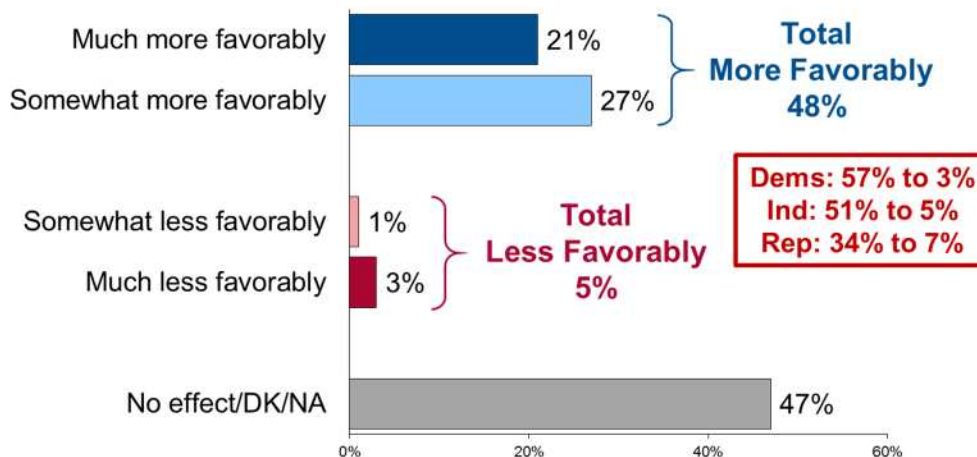
In addition, as shown in **Figure 3** on the following page, broad majorities of Democrats (84%), Republicans (84%) and independents (80%) support developing a state-level plan, along with majorities in every media market in the state.

**FIGURE 3:**  
**Support for Virginia Carbon Reduction Plan by Party and Media Market**



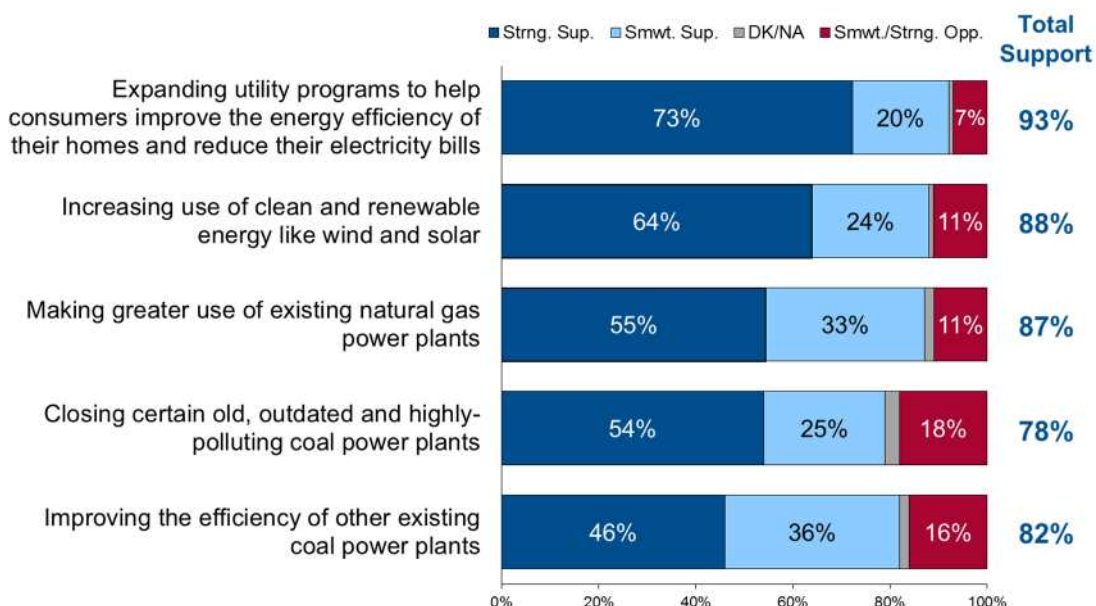
- Support for a state plan would have a positive impact on perceptions of Governor McAuliffe.** If the governor were to develop a state plan to reduce carbon pollution and promote the use of clean energy and increased energy efficiency, nearly half (48%) say such an action would make them view him more favorably, while only five percent would view him less favorably. The impact is a net positive among all political parties, as shown in **Figure 4** on the next page.

**FIGURE 4:**  
**Impact on Views of McAuliffe if He Supports State Plan**



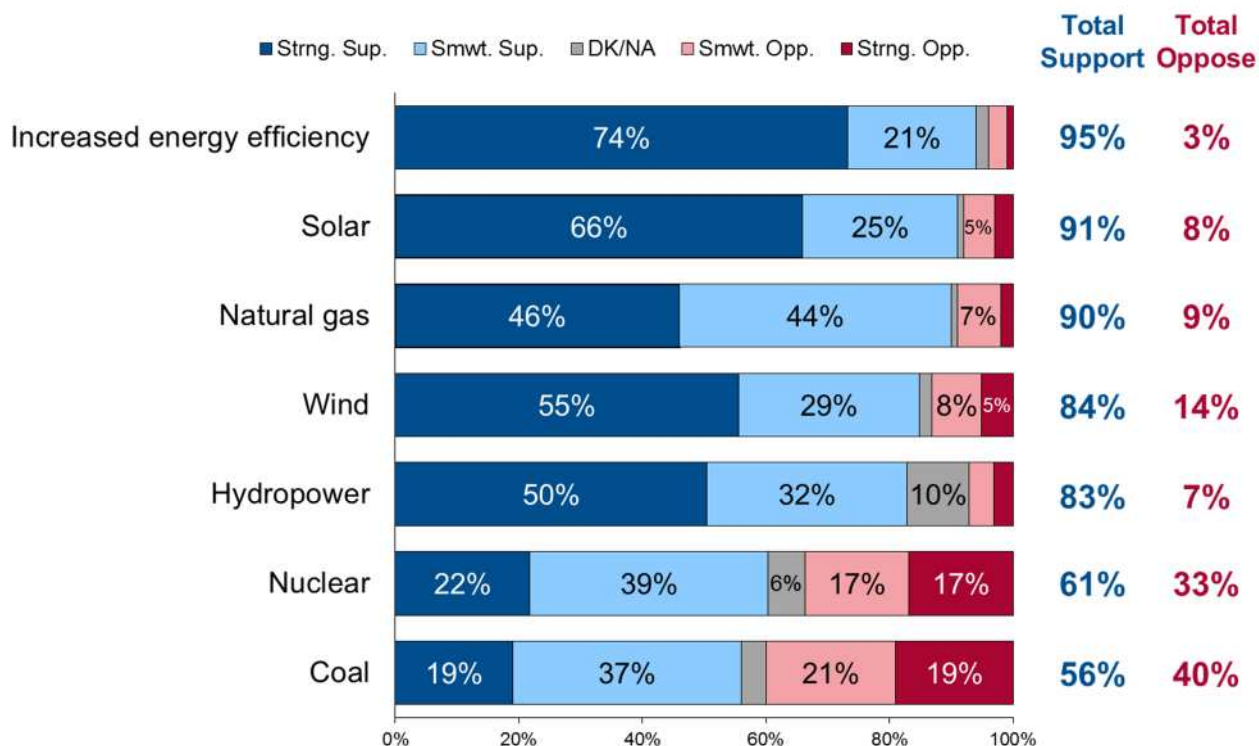
- **Broad majorities support all elements of the plan, with efficiency and clean energy particularly popular.** Virginians support all elements of a potential plan for Virginia presented in the survey and are especially enthusiastic about potential components that focus on clean energy and energy efficiency, as shown in **Figure 5**. For example, 93 percent support *expanding utility programs to help consumers improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce their electricity bills*, (73% “strongly”) and 88 percent support *increasing use of clean and renewable energy like wind and solar* (64% “strongly”).

**FIGURE 5:**  
**Support for Components of Potential Virginia Emissions Reduction Plan**



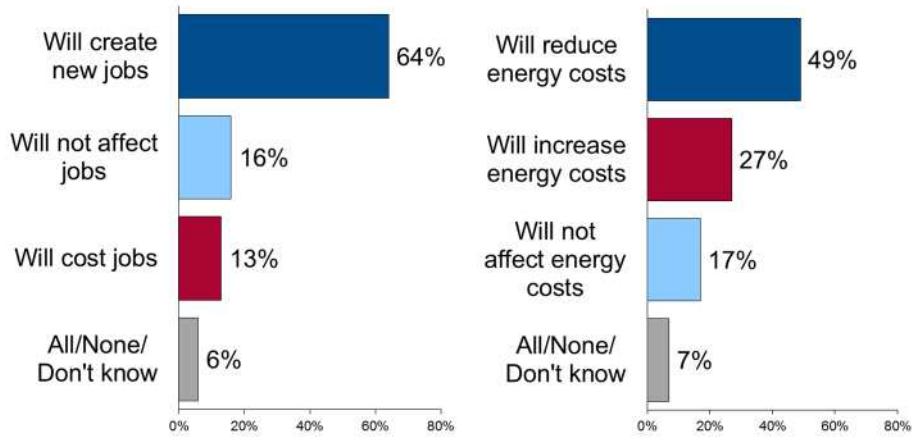
- **Virginians are enthusiastic about the state increasing its use of energy efficiency and clean energy sources and show somewhat weaker support for coal and nuclear.** As shown in the following graphs, nearly all favor *increased energy efficiency* (95% support) as a way to meet Virginia’s future needs, and over eight in ten want to increase the use of a number of renewable sources, including *solar* (91% support), *wind* (84%), and *hydropower* (83%). Majorities strongly support the use of each of the above, as shown in **Figure 6**.

**FIGURE 6:**  
**Attitudes toward Increasing Use of Various Energy Sources in Virginia**



- **Majorities believe clean energy will create jobs and will not increase costs for consumers.** Over six in ten say that increasing the use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power in Virginia *will create jobs* (64%), while only 13 percent say it *will cost jobs*. Equally importantly, most do not believe these benefits come with a financial cost. Only 27 percent say increasing the use of clean, renewable energy sources will *increase energy costs*. Almost twice that number (49%) say it will *decrease energy costs*, while 17 percent believe it *will not affect energy costs*. These attitudes are illustrated in **Figure 7** on the following page.

**FIGURE 7:**  
**Perceived Impacts of Increasing Virginia’s Use of Clean, Renewable Energy**



Overall, the survey results show strong and bipartisan support for a state-based plan to reduce coal-fired power plant emissions, particularly when the plan emphasizes investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power. Putting forward such a plan has the potential to generate substantial enthusiasm among Virginians.