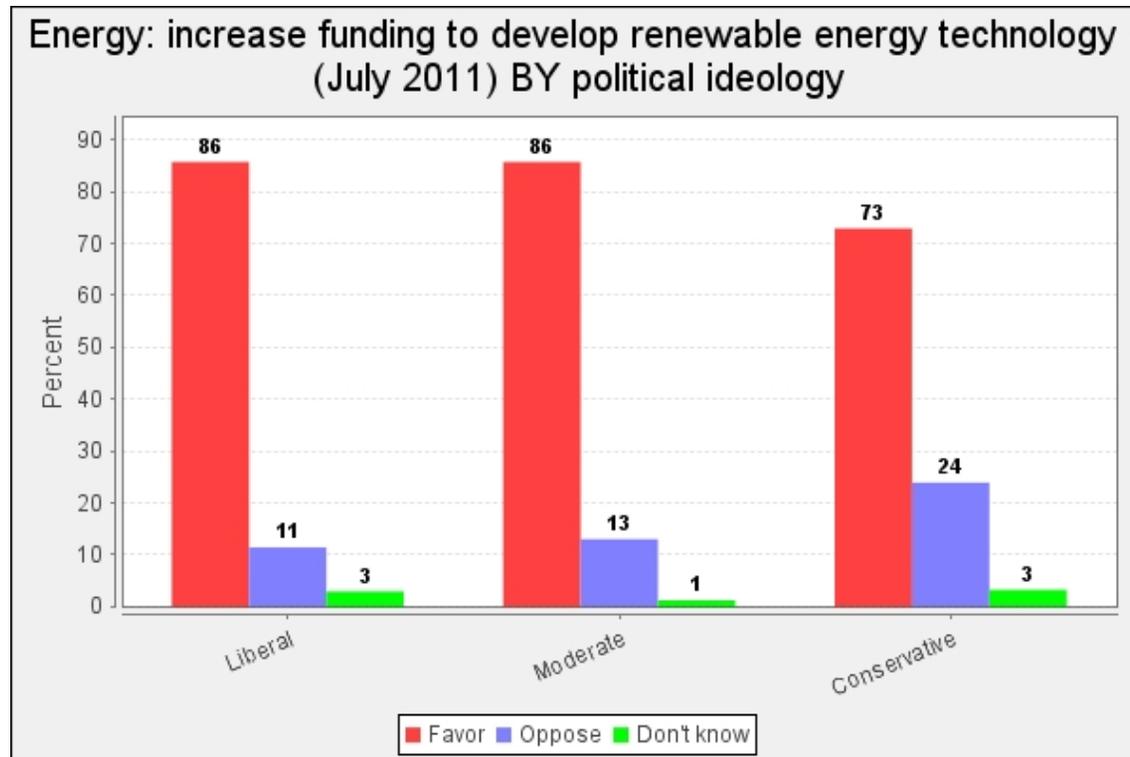


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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS FROM CALIFORNIA AND BEYOND

Green energy: California poll finds overwhelming support

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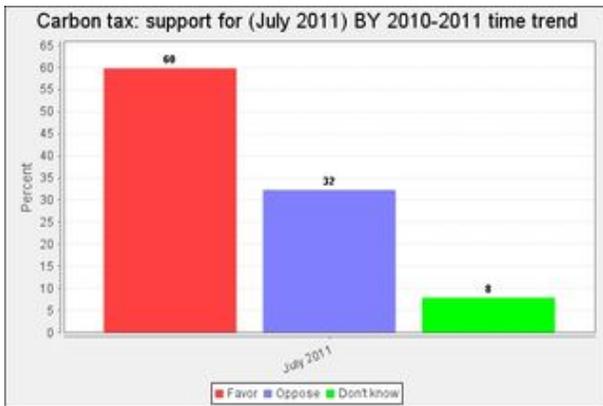
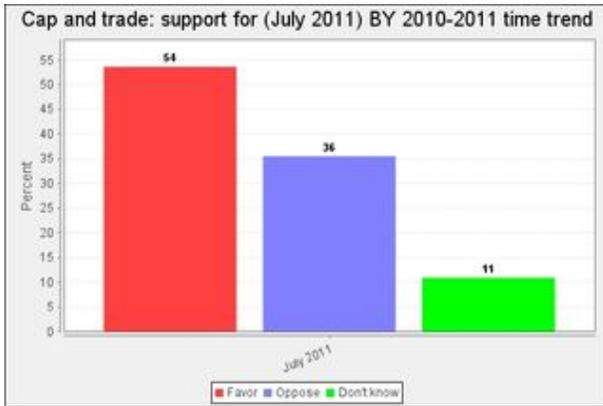
A new statewide [survey](#) of environment issues conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California found more residents favor climate change policy, want to cut greenhouse gas emissions and believe they are already experiencing the effects of global warming.

“This is a clear mandate that people want to move beyond dirty energy,” said David Graham-Caso, [Los Angeles Sierra Club](#) spokesman.

The survey, the 11th since 2000, sampled more than 2,500 people and found Californians are strongly supportive of policies that encourage fuel efficiency and renewable energy, according to Mark Baldassare, president and CEO of PPIC.

Most survey takers (67%) support the state’s law reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Across the board, state residents agree that automakers should be required to improve fuel efficiency standards (90% Democrats, 81% independents, and 76% Republicans).

They also overwhelmingly favor (79%) government regulation of the release of greenhouse gases from sources such as power plants, cars and factories to reduce global warming. While 79% favor greenhouse gas regulations, they are split between a cap and trade system (54% in favor) and a carbon tax (60% in favor).

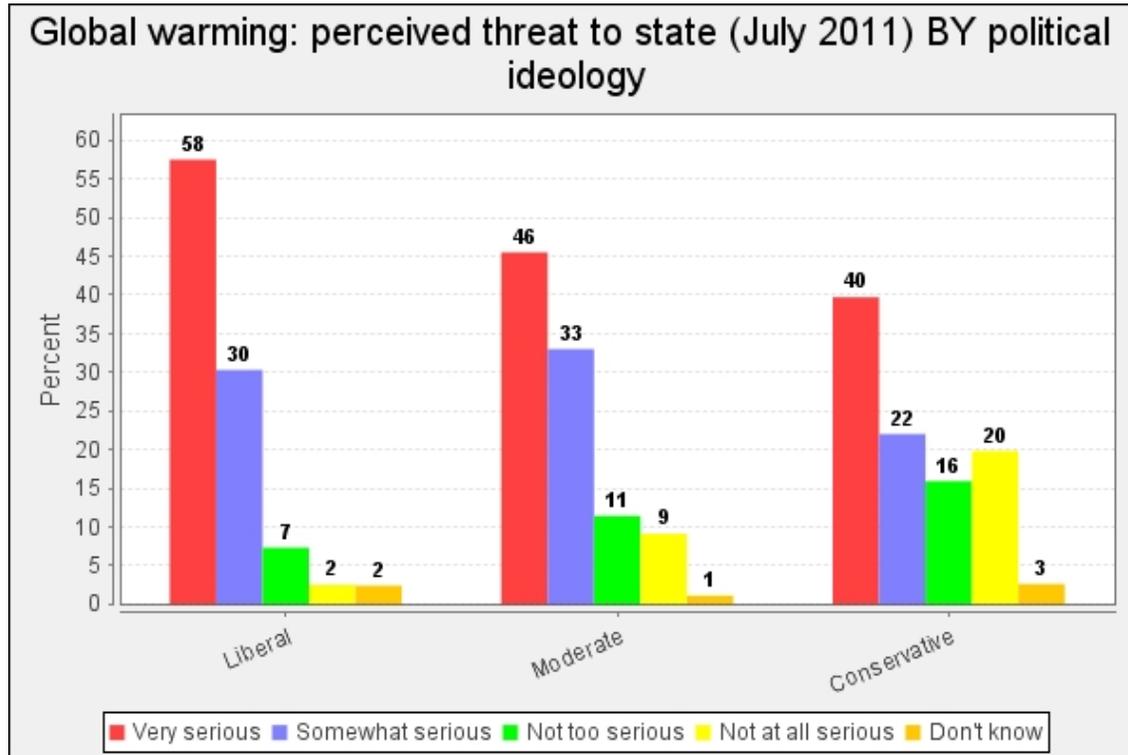


“People see it as a tax to discourage fossil fuel use and to improve state infrastructure,” said Jim Metropulos, senior advocate of the Sierra Club in Sacramento. “The Sierra Club believes something like a carbon tax would make it easier to achieve outcomes that we want quickly.”

Sixty-six percent of Californians consider air pollution “a big problem” but are divided when asked whether pollution is a more serious health threat in lower-income areas than in other

areas in their region (50% yes, 45% no). The survey found blacks (36%) and Latinos (26%) are more likely than whites (14%) or Asians (11%) to see regional air pollution as a very serious health threat.

On the other hand, 75% view global warming as a threat to the economy and 61% believe the effects of global warming have already begun. This is an increase of 7 points since last July (54%). The percentage of Republicans who believe the effects of global warming are starting to show went up by 10 points, by 7 points among independents, while among Democrats it remained the same.



“In California, environment issues are somewhat less polarized,” said David Jenkins, a spokesman for the [Republicans for Environmental Protection](#), a organization that works with Republican elected officials and voters on environmental issues.

The group is working to put pressure on the GOP to be more in line with conservation policies than it has been in the last couple of decades. “Republican leadership has been particularly hostile to environmental policies that most Americans think are common sense,” Jenkins said.

Republican influences such as former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and former Reagan Administration Treasury Secretary George P. Shultz spoke forcefully about environment issues, molding the issue into a bipartisan concern, Jenkins said. With Shultz’s help, [Proposition 23](#), the ballot initiative to suspend California’s ambitious global warming law, was defeated last year.

“The whole nation could learn from California,” Jenkins said.

Jenkins also points to unique state issues, such as wildfires and water scarcity, that are influencing skeptics to favor policies that combat global warming. This is supported by the PPIC

survey, which found Californians are more concerned about the increased severity of wildfires (56%), air pollution (48%) and drought (45%).

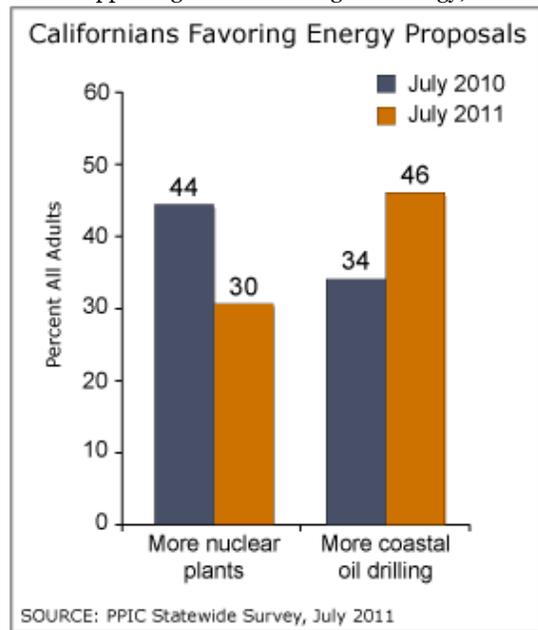
“Clean air is not a partisan issue, Graham-Caso said. “Stimulating the economy through sustainable energy policy is a common-sense issue.”

Seventy-seven percent of the survey takers agree with California’s plan to develop green energy technology such as wind, solar and hydrogen power. Yet if the policy results in higher electricity bills, only 46% are still on board.

Support for building nuclear facilities dropped sharply from last year, which PPIC attributes to fears created by the recent [Japanese nuclear crisis](#). Sixty-five percent oppose building more plants, 30% in favor, which is 14 points lower than last year.

“The support for nuclear energy is going to be waning until people find renewed comfort in the ability to mitigate its risks,” Jenkins said.

While supporting investment in green energy, Californians are split over offshore drilling on the coast, with 46% favoring more drilling and 49% opposed. “There are residents who don’t



want to see the coast marred by offshore drilling rigs, and then there are people who think offshore drilling will lower gas prices,” Metropulos said. “But in the short term, it takes a long time to lower gas prices.”

Seventy percent of the sample said they commute by driving alone, with just 12% carpooling and even fewer taking public transit (8%). Seventy-six percent also said recent gas price hikes have caused households financial hardship.

The rough economic atmosphere suppressed the reaction to last year's [BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico](#) because of gas prices, Jenkins said. “But what people don’t realize is most of the easy and cheap oil has already been tapped.” Dependency on foreign nations, which Republicans see as a threat to national security and the job market, is another reason they are more accepting of green, sustainable energy policies, he said.

“We need to be leading that charge and getting products to market, or else we are going to have a problem with jobs in this country,” Jenkins said.

The federal and state governments' rating on handling environmental issues dropped this year, with residents [disapproving](#) of [Gov. Jerry Brown](#), [President Obama](#) and both [federal](#) and [state](#) congress.

“Gov. Brown is doing the best that he can, but he was obviously consumed by the budget,” Metropulos said. “There is a lot more he can do now that he’s not weighed down by budget issues. The Sierra Club finds no fault with the way he’s handled the environment.”

Jenkins said Obama has talked about going forward with environment policies but has not led on the issue.

The people sampled by PPIC interviewers were contacted by land line or cellphones July 5 to 19, 2011. Interviews were held in English, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Korean and Vietnamese. The margin of sampling error hovers around ±3 percent.

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--Ashlie Rodriguez