

# Hart Research / Chesapeake Beach Consulting

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**TO: Natural Resources Defense Council**  
**FROM: Hart Research Associates & Chesapeake Beach Consulting**  
**DATE: July 15, 2013**  
**RE: Key Findings From Survey On Carbon Pollution  
And Climate Change**

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*From July 1 to 7, 2013, Hart Research, in conjunction with Chesapeake Beach Consulting, conducted a survey of 808 registered voters across the country. The survey, which included both landline and cell phone interviewing, has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5\%$  for the full sample, and a higher margin of error for subgroups.*

*The survey came on the heels of the Obama administration's announcement of its plan to reduce U.S. carbon emissions, which add to climate change. This memorandum outlines the key findings from this research.*

## **1) A commanding majority of Americans support the administration's plan, and support is strong in all regions of the country.**

Survey respondents were read a brief description of the administration's proposed course of action, as follows:

The plan that President Obama announced aims to protect public health and address climate change by cutting the amount of carbon pollution produced by the United States. The plan directs the Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, to establish carbon pollution standards for power plants to limit the amount of carbon pollution these plants can emit. The plan also would increase fuel efficiency standards for new vehicles as well as set energy efficiency standards for new household appliances and new buildings. Further, the plan would increase investment in renewable energy sources, like wind and solar power.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents say they support this plan, including a plurality of 39% who strongly support it. Twenty-seven percent (27%) oppose the plan, including 19% who strongly oppose it.

Respondents across the country support the plan in large numbers, and support is high regardless of whether they live in urban, suburban, or rural areas.

<b>Support Obama Climate Plan</b>	
	<b>%</b>
<b>All Respondents</b>	<b>61</b>
Northeast	68
South	52
Midwest	65
West	62
Urban	71
Suburban	60
Rural	57

## 2) Support for the plan's individual parts match or exceed support for the plan overall.

At least two-thirds—and, in most cases, three-quarters or more—of respondents endorse each of the plan's major components. Increased investment in alternative energy and increased efficiency standards for vehicles are particularly popular.

Respondents favor the plan's centerpiece—having the EPA set standards on carbon emissions from power plants—by a margin of more than two to one.

### Support For Climate Plan Elements Among All Respondents

	<u>Support</u> %	<u>Oppose</u> %	<u>Net Support</u> #
Increasing fuel efficiency for new vehicles	79	18	+61
Increasing investment in renewable energy sources, like wind, solar, and hydroelectric power	78	18	+60
Increasing energy efficiency standards for new appliances and new buildings	78	17	+61
Taking a lead role in encouraging other large countries such as China and India to expand their own efforts to reduce their carbon pollution	76	19	+57
Strengthening communities against the effects of climate change, such as new flood reduction plans in areas hit by Hurricane Sandy and new drought and wildfire preparation plans in the Midwest and West	75	16	+59
Having the EPA set standards for the first time ever on the amount of carbon pollution that electric power plants can release	65	29	+36

## 3) There is broad support for the plan among the key constituency of independents. And while Republican respondents are divided, the data suggest that their reactions seem to be more related to their feelings about President Obama than to the merits of the individual components of the climate plan, which they very much favor.

Support for the plan is strongest among Democrats—86% favor it overall, and their support for each of the plan's individual elements is in the mid-80's to low 90's.

Support among independents is also very strong—58% of independents support the overall plan (versus 35% who oppose it), and large majorities support each component.

Republicans' reactions to the plan are more varied. Their initial reaction to the plan's description—which mentions specifically that it is President Obama's plan—is negative: just 32% of Republicans say they support it, while 51% are opposed. This is not surprising, given that 73% of Republicans have negative feelings toward the president.

Indeed, the surprising thing is that despite their negative assessment of the president, a third of Republicans still support the climate plan. And this is

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underscored by the fact that majorities of Republicans support nearly every individual element of the plan when they are not described specifically as initiated by President Obama. They are even more likely to support than oppose new EPA regulations on power plant emissions.

### Support For Climate Plan Elements Among REPUBLICAN Respondents

	<u>Support</u> %	<u>Oppose</u> %	<u>Net Support</u> #
Increasing fuel efficiency for new vehicles	68	30	+38
Increasing energy efficiency standards for new appliances and new buildings	67	29	+38
Increasing investment in renewable energy sources, like wind, solar, and hydroelectric power	63	31	+32
Taking a lead role in encouraging other large countries such as China and India to expand their own efforts to reduce their carbon pollution	61	33	+28
Strengthening communities against the effects of climate change, such as new flood reduction plans in areas hit by Hurricane Sandy and new drought and wildfire preparation plans in the Midwest and West	59	27	+32
Having the EPA set standards for the first time ever on the amount of carbon pollution that electric power plants can release	49	45	+4

#### **4) Support for the climate plan is not only broad, it is durable and remains consistently high, even when respondents are given a balanced presentation of the issue that includes the main arguments in favor of and against the plan.**

Survey respondents were read two points of view about the climate plan:

SUPPORTERS of this plan say that cutting carbon pollution is essential to keeping our air and water clean, protecting our kids' health, and reducing the devastating effects of climate change. President Obama's plan represents a reasonable and comprehensive approach that will help our economy to continue to grow and recover while sparking innovation in energy technology and cutting our dependence on foreign oil.

OPPONENTS of this plan say it will seriously harm our economy just as it is starting to improve. This plan will mean higher energy costs, making it more expensive for companies to do business and leading to thousands of job losses and higher prices for consumers. All this without having any real impact on climate change, because big polluters such as India and China do not limit pollution from their power companies.

The public's support for the plan barely changes at all after hearing these two sides of the issue—59% say they support the plan (including 40% who strongly support it) and 32% oppose it (including 20% who strongly oppose it). Eighty-four percent (84%) of Democrats continue to support it, as do one in three Republicans. Support among independents narrows somewhat but remains in majority territory—53% support, 42% oppose.

**5) The breadth and depth of support for the president's plan is underscored by an important point—the public's concern about climate change and its effects is on the rise.**

The proportion of the public who consider climate change to be a "serious problem" is largely unchanged from a survey conducted in December 2012; at that time 65% said it was a serious problem, while today 66% say it is.

However, the public's perception of the intensity of climate change as a problem has increased markedly. In December, 31% said it was a "very serious problem", while today 39% say this is the case. This increase in intensity is consistent among men and women; among respondents under age 35, those 35 to 49, and those age 50 and older; and, importantly, among Democrats, independents, and Republicans.

The poll cannot identify what is driving this increase, whether it is climate-related events such as the wildfires in the West or the heat wave in the Northeast. But such a large increase in a relatively short amount of time is significant. Coupled with the fact that 61% of respondents say that major U.S. corporations should be doing more to address climate change and 54% say this of the U.S. government, these findings provide momentum to efforts like that of the Obama administration to have the public and private sectors work together to address climate change by limiting emissions from vehicles, buildings, and power plants.