PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

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TO: Interested Parties

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DATE: July 28, 2015

RE: Findings of a Survey of Michigan Business Leaders on Energy Issues

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The bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R) recently completed a survey of Michigan business leaders to assess their attitudes on key energy issues facing the state. Respondents were owners, CEOs, presidents, partners, VPs or senior managers with Michigan-based businesses. Most of those interviewed led small businesses (with 79% representing businesses with no more than five employees). Respondents also tended to be politically conservative: more than twice as many identified as Republicans (35%) as Democrats (16%), with the balance labeling themselves independent.

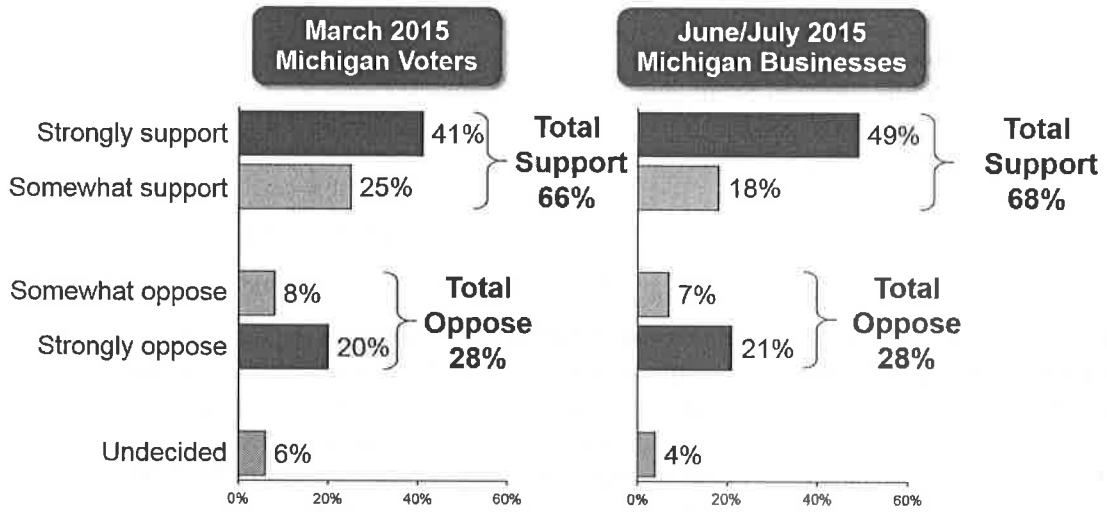
The survey results show that **nearly nine in ten Michigan business leaders favor state-based action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in compliance with the EPA's new restrictions on coal-fired power plant emissions.**[1] Michigan business leaders are especially enthusiastic about energy efficiency, hydro, wind and solar power. They see investment in renewable energy as an engine for job creation and a strategy for reducing long-term energy costs. Elements of a state-based emissions reduction plan which emphasize these benefits are particularly popular, receiving support from the overwhelming majority of business leaders polled.

Key specific findings of the research include:

- **Michigan's business community is optimistic about our ability to have a clean environment and strong economy at the same time.** An overwhelming majority (83 percent) of business owners and managers agrees that *we can have a clean environment and a strong economy at the same time without having to choose one over the other.* By contrast, just 13 percent say *sometimes a clean environment and a strong economy are in conflict and we must choose one over the other.*

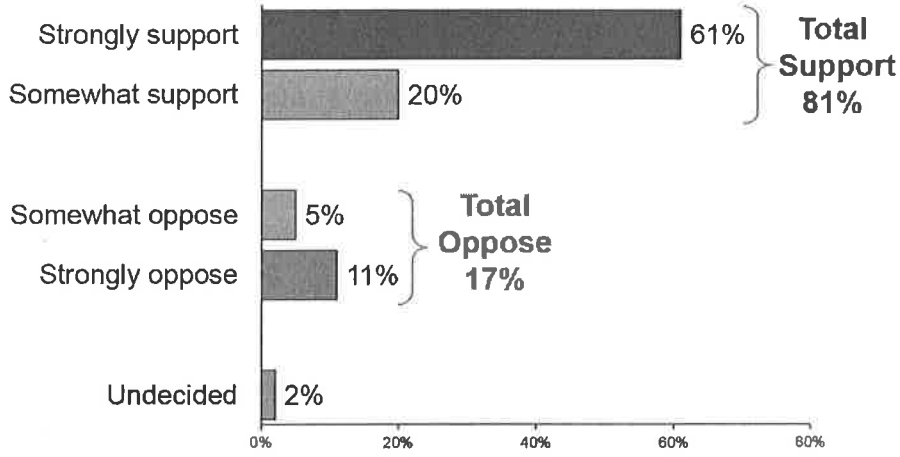
- **A clear majority supports the federal Clean Power Plan.** After hearing a short explanation of the Environmental Protection Agency's pending rules limiting industrial carbon pollution, 68 percent support the plan – and 49 percent "strongly" support it. These views are slightly *more* favorable than those of voters statewide, as measured in a March 2015 survey (as shown in **Figure 1**).

FIGURE 1
Support for Clean Power Plan
June/July 2015 wording: "The Environmental Protection Agency (E-P-A) is expected to soon release rules requiring existing power plants to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide they emit. There are currently no federal limits on the carbon pollution that comes from existing power plants. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the EPA regulating this industrial carbon pollution that comes from existing power plants?"



- **An overwhelming majority of business leaders backs the Michigan Legislature's renewable energy standards, with support crossing party lines.** As shown in **Figure 3** on the following page, more than four in five (81%) support existing *state standards to ensure that power companies deliver a certain amount of our energy from clean and renewable sources such as wind and solar power* – three in five (61%) strongly.

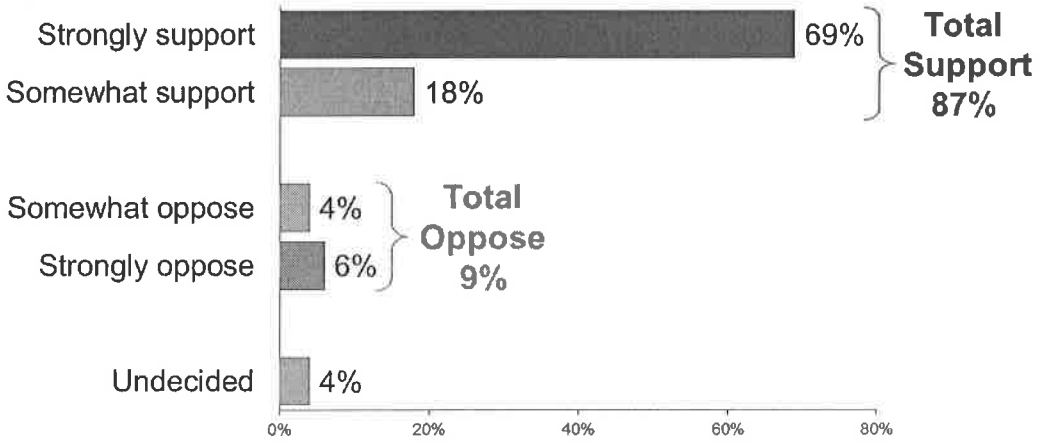
FIGURE 2
Business Leader Support for Michigan's Renewable Energy Standard



- **Michigan business leaders also support the development of a state plan to meet the emissions reduction requirements of the Clean Power Plan.** As detailed below in **Figure 3**, nearly nine in ten business leaders back the development of such a state plan.

FIGURE 3
Business Leader Support for Developing a State Plan to Reduce Emissions

These new federal standards will require Michigan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 31% by 2030. In order to meet these requirements, and to promote the use of clean energy and increased energy efficiency, many states are developing their own energy plans. Would you support or oppose Michigan developing its own state plan to reduce carbon pollution and increase the use of clean energy and energy efficiency?

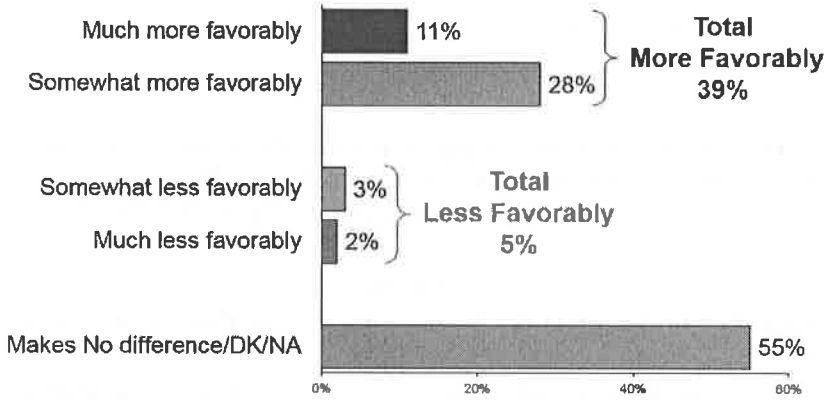


- **Michigan business leaders overwhelmingly support a wide range of individual potential state plan elements, especially those that focus on energy efficiency.** Energy efficiency improvements are most popular, with 90 percent support for *expanding utility programs to*

help consumers improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce their electricity bills. Clean energy is also popular, with 86 percent support for *increasing use of clean and renewable energy like wind and solar* and 74 percent support for *closing certain old, outdated and highly pollution coal power plants.*

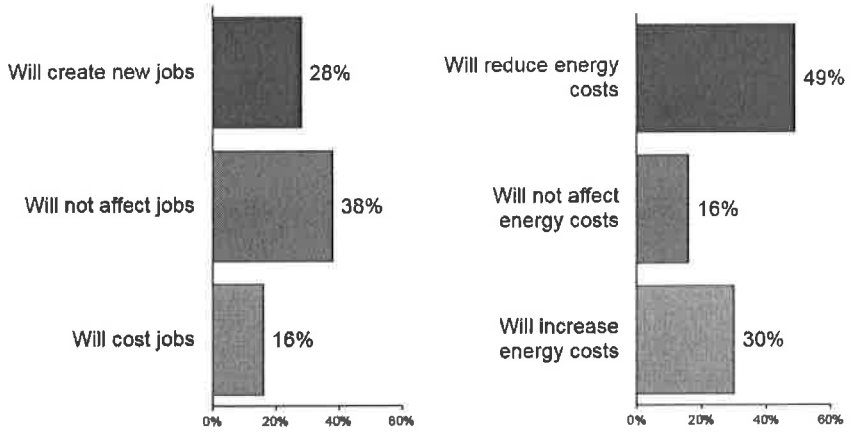
- **Support for a state energy plan would have a positive impact on perceptions of Governor Rick Snyder.** If the governor were to develop a state plan to reduce carbon pollution and promote the use of clean energy and increased energy efficiency, almost four in ten (39%) business leaders say they would view him more favorably. In contrast, only five percent would view him less favorably. These findings are detailed in **Figure 4** below.

FIGURE 4
Impact of Support for a State Clean Energy Plan on Views of Gov. Snyder



- **Business leaders believe that renewable energy will *create* jobs and *lower* energy costs in Michigan.** Just 14 percent believe that increasing the use of clean energy will *cost jobs,* while more than three in five (61%) believe it will *create jobs.* Equally importantly, business leaders believe that investments in clean energy will have a long-term positive impact on energy costs. Only 28 percent say increasing the use of clean, renewable energy sources will *increase energy costs*, compared to 44 percent who say it will *decrease energy costs.* These attitudes are illustrated in **Figure 5** on the following page.

FIGURE 5
Perceived Impacts of Increasing Michigan's Use of Clean, Renewable Energy



Overall, the survey results show **strong support among Michigan business leaders 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 in the Michigan business community.

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[1] **Methodology:** The bipartisan team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R) conducted a survey of 403 Michigan business leaders via landline and cell phone from June 22 to July 20, 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%.