

## Californians back offshore drilling by slim margin

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SAN FRANCISCO &ndash; Fifty-one percent of Californians favor more oil drilling off the coast &ndash; a 10-point increase since July 2007 &ndash; according to a statewide survey released by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

This is the first time since 2003, when PPIC first posed the question, that more Californians favor offshore drilling than oppose it (45%), a shift caused in large part by a surge in support among Republicans. It is also one of many reactions to soaring gas prices that the PPIC survey reveals. The survey was conducted with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and is the eighth in a series about Californians and the environment.

As the national debate intensifies over how to respond to rising energy costs in a lagging economy, Californians report that they are changing their behavior. The number of workers who drive to work alone has dropped 11 points in five years (73% 2003, 62% 2008). Nearly seven in 10 residents (69%) report cutting back significantly on their driving, and nearly three in four (74%) are seriously considering a more fuel-efficient car the next time they buy a vehicle.

### WORRYING ABOUT WARMING

Despite the pain at the pump, residents are concerned that global warming is a threat to California, which has the nation's toughest goals for cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Half of Californians (52%) say global warming is a very serious threat to the state's economy and quality of life, and more than six in 10 (64%) say its effects have already begun, a 7-point increase from 2005.

But here, too, a partisan divide exists, with nearly seven in 10 Democrats (67%) saying global warming is a very serious threat, compared to about half of independents (49%) and just one in four Republicans (25%).

Similarly, 74 percent of Democrats say the effects of warming have already begun, compared to 64 percent of independents and just 41 percent of Republicans. Majorities of Californians say governments are not doing enough to address global warming at any level &ndash; federal (66%), state (51%), or local (52%). However, opinion is again divided along party lines, with less than half of Republicans saying that federal (43%), state (29%), or local (33%) governments are not doing enough about global warming.

The barrage of bad news about the economy has not dampened residents' enthusiasm for taking immediate action against global warming.

Eight in 10 (80%) believe steps should be taken right away, a percentage that has increased 7 points since 2003. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents express this view.

Californians disagree with the notion that state leaders, who must fill a multibillion-dollar budget deficit, should wait to implement AB32, the 2006 law that set goals to slash greenhouse gas emissions. Nearly six in 10 (57%) say the state should take steps right away, while a little over a third (36%) say that government should wait until the economy and budget have improved.

"Tough economic times have not diminished the importance of environmental issues for Californians," says Mark Baldassare, president and CEO of PPIC. "The environment is seen as a matter of health and well-being, and residents don't want to cut corners there."

"At the same time, Californians are living with the financial hardship of higher gas prices, and they're changing their behavior. They're driving less, which is an environmental win because auto emissions increase global warming. The issue for the state's leaders is to transform Californians' values and their day-to-day economic challenges into a policy that moves the state forward."

### TRANSIT ROUTINES SHIFT &ndash; MAINLY FOR YOUNGER, POORER COMMUTERS

Three in four Californians (76%) say that increases in gasoline prices have caused financial hardship in their households. A majority of workers (62%) report that they drive alone to work, but more workers are carpooling (17% today, 13% 2007). Since last year, about the same percentage of workers report walking, bicycling, or working at home (13% today, 12% 2007), or taking public transit (7% today and in 2007), perhaps reflecting that these commuting choices are not available to all Californians.

Those who are richer and older are more likely to drive to work alone: An overwhelming percentage (70%) of residents with household incomes above \$80,000 are solo commuters, compared to less than half (44%) of those with incomes under \$40,000. While more than 68 percent of Californians between ages 35 and 54 drive to work alone, 52 percent of Californians between ages 18 and 34 do. Among Californians who drive to work alone, 31 percent own or lease an SUV and 6 percent own or lease a hybrid.

### WHERE SHOULD THE ENERGY COME FROM? POLITICAL VIEWS VARY

How should the nation meet its energy needs? The new support for offshore oil drilling (51% today, 41% 2007) has come from all adults &ndash; Republicans (77%, up from 60%), independents (44%, up from 33%), and Democrats (35%, up from 29%). Still, most Democrats (60%) and half of independents (50%) oppose more drilling.

Support for building more nuclear power plants has also increased. Four in 10 (44%) residents support it and half (50%) are opposed. The partisan divide is wide on this issue, with Republicans supporting it (66% in favor, 29% opposed), independents slightly in favor (51% in favor, 42% opposed), and Democrats opposed (60% opposed, 34% in favor).

But there is bipartisan support for alternative proposals to meet the nation's energy needs. More than eight in 10 Californians (83%) support federal funding for research on renewable technologies, such as wind, solar, and hydrogen. Across political parties, more than three in four voters agree with this view.

Seven in 10 Californians say automakers should be required to significantly improve fuel efficiency in cars, even if this

increases the cost of buying a car. This view also has strong backing across party lines, with support from 81 percent of independents, 80 percent of Democrats, and 68 percent of Republicans.

Visit the PPIC's Web site at [www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org).

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