

NEW POLL SHOWS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT IN NJ FOR MORE RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CONCERNS ABOUT PIPELINES

ReThink Energy NJ Campaign Launches to Promote Awareness and Support for Renewable Energy

Trenton, NJ (October 22, 2015) – According to a poll conducted by Fairleigh Dickinson University’s (FDU) PublicMind for the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, nearly 80 percent of New Jerseyans believe the state should invest more in developing renewable energy sources, like wind and solar, than fossil fuels, like oil and natural gas. Majority support was found across political parties and all demographic groups.

With that backdrop, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, Pinelands Preservation Alliance and other concerned citizens are sponsoring the launch today of “Rethink Energy NJ.” The campaign aims to inform and empower New Jersey citizens concerning the need for a swift transition to clean, efficient, and renewable energy, with reduced reliance on fossil fuels and pipelines that threaten preserved lands, water, environment and communities.

Former New Jersey Governor Jim Florio, State Senator Kip Bateman (R-16), Assemblyman John McKeon (D-27), Assemblywoman Liz Muoio (D-15), and Assemblyman Daniel Benson (D-14) and joined other New Jersey citizens, researchers and nonprofits at the Rethink Energy NJ press conference held today in the State House in Trenton. Former New Jersey Governor Tom Kean provided a written statement of support.

The poll released today reported that 62 percent of New Jerseyans think the pace at which our state is developing and adopting renewable alternatives is too slow.

“Investing in renewable energy is a win-win for both our environment and economy,” said Tom Gilbert, campaign director for New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Rethink Energy NJ. “Developing clean energy sources like solar and wind will reduce emissions that contribute to climate change and threaten our health, while creating jobs. This is a better path forward for New Jersey than the multitude of fossil fuel pipelines proposed that threaten preserved lands, our air and water, and our communities.”

Gilbert cited a report by the Union of Concerned Scientists, which analyzed the economic benefits of achieving a 25 percent renewable energy standard by 2025. It found that such a policy would create more than three times as many jobs as producing an equivalent amount of electricity from fossil fuels, and would result in a benefit of 202,000 new jobs in 2025 across the United States.



Conducted by phone with a randomly selected sample of 709 registered voters in New Jersey between September 18th and 24th, the new poll indicates that 77 percent of respondents are very or somewhat concerned with climate change in New Jersey. Eighty (80) percent favor setting a goal of having 30 percent of the state's energy coming from renewable sources such as wind and solar by 2020. That is higher than the State's current 22 percent target. Similarly, 78 percent favor a bill requiring a target of 80 percent by 2050.

"For years now, nations in Europe and elsewhere have already locked in this choice to transition to renewable energy. Now it's a growing trend in the U.S.," said Lyle Rawlings, President, Mid-Atlantic Solar Energy Industries Association (MSEIA). "New York, California and Hawaii have all adopted energy plans with very aggressive requirements for renewable electricity. New Jersey can be part of leading the way in this transition to a sustainable future."

The poll also explored public opinion on proposed fossil fuel projects affecting New Jersey. One finding: New Jerseyans favor renewable energy investment over natural gas pipeline investment by a nearly two to one margin.

In addition, most respondents are very or somewhat concerned with the impact of pipelines in the state, including:

- 87 percent concerned about "the seizure of private property for private companies" [to build pipelines]
- 85 percent concerned by "the impact to natural areas and wildlife habitats"
- 84 percent concerned about "the risks to air and water quality"
- 83 percent concerned about "the safety risks associated with ruptures, leaks, or explosions"
- 83 percent concerned about "the use of taxpayer funded and protected open space for construction of pipelines"

An in-depth report on the poll results can be found on www.njconservation.org.

"It is unsettling how so many new pipelines have been proposed throughout our region without any clear assessment of the actual need, or central planning for their approval. If the interstate highway system was developed this way 50 years ago, we would have private companies building roads without regard to how many are needed or how they interconnect," said former Gov. Jim Florio. "Now is the time for us to focus our investments and public policy on advancing truly clean and renewable energy infrastructure."

Added former Gov. Tom Kean: "I am pleased to see the launch of this important new campaign, Rethink Energy NJ, to help educate the public and decision makers regarding the need for much greater scrutiny of new pipelines or fossil fuel infrastructure, and the urgent need to move forward with clean, renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency."

"I am very concerned about the impacts of the proposed PennEast pipeline on preserved lands, waterways, and homeowners," said Senator Kip Bateman. "This unneeded pipeline must be stopped. Instead, we must focus our attention on moving New Jersey forward more quickly on renewable sources of energy. I am proud to be a prime sponsor of legislation that would help make that happen by setting a goal of 80% renewable energy by 2050."

"I am encouraged by the poll data that show New Jerseyans strongly support making renewables a greater portion of our energy mix and that they are looking to those of us in the Legislature to move rapidly toward aggressive renewable energy goals," said Assemblyman John McKeon. "This strong level of support by New Jersey residents will help us move our legislation to adopt a state goal of 80% of energy from renewable sources by 2050."



“It’s time for New Jersey to join other states and countries by adopting progressive renewable energy goals and move beyond the focus on building new fossil fuel infrastructure,” said Assemblywoman Liz Muoio. “The future health of our economy and communities depends on making the right decisions today.”

Michele Byers, executive director of New Jersey Conservation Foundation, said: “As a conservation organization, we are deeply concerned about protecting the land we have helped preserve, often with taxpayer dollars, as well as sustaining the water, air and communities we will leave to our children and grandchildren.”

“Renewable energy comes from sources that are naturally replaced every day,” added Jim Waltman, executive director of the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association. “Natural gas not only isn’t renewable, it isn’t clean. It consists primarily of methane, a greenhouse gas with an impact on climate change far more potent than carbon dioxide.”

“New Jersey has a choice of whether we embrace the clean energy revolution now, or further our reliance on fossil fuels by building more pipelines,” added Carleton Montgomery, executive director of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. “Of the two choices, renewable energy offers a much better deal: cleaner air, more jobs, safer and healthier communities, avoided impacts to our land and water, and greater energy efficiency.”

“This poll confirms that the citizens of New Jersey clearly want our leaders to step away from fossil fuel ‘business as usual’ and into the age of renewables,” said Patty Cronheim, founder of Hopewell Township Citizens Against the Pipeline. “We are in the midst of a renewable energy technology revolution. Now is the time to make the shift for our children’s tomorrow.”

The campaign will also work to provide information and resources for citizens and leaders on the value of energy efficiency and conservation, promoting effective steps the state can take to reduce energy consumption.

Rethink Energy NJ is being led by members of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Stony Brook-Millstone Water Association, Hopewell Township Citizens Against the Pipeline, and Pinelands Preservation Alliance. For more information, find Rethink Energy NJ on Facebook and Twitter @rethinkenergynj.

Contact:

Campaign Director, NJ Conservation Foundation
Tom Gilbert, tom@njconservation.org, 267-261-7325

Media Contact
Jayne O’Connor, jayne@taftandpartners.com, 609-577-8080

Fairleigh Dickinson University’s PublicMind
Dr. Krista Jenkins, kjenkins@fdu.edu, 973-443-8390

