



Energy Policy Issue Rankings and Bush's Presidential Approval Numbers

Posted by [Prof. Goose](#) on July 21, 2006 - 11:35am

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I found a [very interesting poll](#) by [Pew](#) yesterday, (hat tip: [Payton Chung over at Gristmill](#)) that I thought I should bring you.

Pew was doing a piece on the impacts of [An Inconvenient Truth](#) on the global warming attitudes--a major focus of the poll, but there's some things to chew on in there regarding energy policy attitudes as well. I discuss some of the findings and implications under the fold.

Once you skip down past the global warming focused questions in the [Pew Report](#), you get down to issue rankings (ranked percentages of people ranking those issues as "very" important).

The difference between the global warming issue importance and the energy policy issue importance surprised me a bit. I suppose that it probably shouldn't with gas prices so high, but I thought the two would be more closely ranked than they are.

Global warming is the least important (19th) issue among self-identified Republicans (23%), while energy policy is the tenth most important issue (56%).

Global warming is only the 13th most important issue among self-identified Democrats (56%), while energy policy is the tenth most important issue (66%).

For energy policy, there isn't much of a partisan pattern, which is a little surprising--or should it be?

Among independents though, global warming is the 13th most important issue (49%), while energy policy is the *seventh* most important issue (67%). I found that interesting as well.

The first thing this tells me there's more political hay to be made amongst swing voters with regard to energy policy than partisans. Of course, that doesn't always mean doing the right thing; it means *appearing* to do *something*.

The issues that politicians will be addressing, with the Republicans attempting to maintain their majorities in both houses of Congress and Democrats attempting to make gains, are going to be the issues that Independents--the folks who are less likely to vote along party lines and whose preferences/behavior are more malleable--think are important, which after you get past the "big three" that are always present (education, health care, and the economy), means a focus on terrorism, Iraq, and Social Security. Energy policy might get a little play, especially if there is a oil price spike, etc., but it won't be a major focus unless world events get even worse, at least not

Remember, as I have said many times, politicians are rational and pragmatic, they do whatever they can to keep their job. That means they watch these polls and put out the biggest fires, hoping that the little fires don't grow and catch them off-guard. Energy policy could be the fuel for one of those fires. (Yeesh, did I just say that? Heh.)

Next up, further down in the report, when we look at Bush job approval on certain issue areas, the numbers are more closely tied together between the climate change and energy policy issues. On global warming and energy policy, Bush received a 26% approval rating, while receiving a 56% disapproval rating on energy policy (44% on global warming).

(What I would like to see is a study on how much people parse these issues. How many people think of climate change and energy policy as inherently tied together?)

Sure, there's no doubt a lot of these approval numbers are tied to increasing gas prices (which to the Bush administration seems to mean increasing supply by whatever means possible, even if that means growing more corn or pushing fuel cells even harder).

However, it seems to me, and I am going to do some digging on this, that the salience of energy policy is increasing--not really going out a limb there, am I? (though I am efforting some data to back that up, see below). While it doesn't mean people are learning about peak oil per se, it does mean that they are thinking about where they get their energy more and more.

The [numbers on energy compiled at Polling Report](#) (I'll work on putting a plot of these together over time--but the questions are asked so differently by the organizations, it's tough to do a valid time series comparison) would seem to indicate an increased salience as well, but it's a tough conclusion to draw from the data.

So, anyway, that's enough for now. Enjoy!



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