

Hope on the Horizon:

The Bipartisan Appeal of Renewable Energy

GREENING THE STATEHOUSE CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 19, 2021

 **VOTE SOLAR**



Who We Are

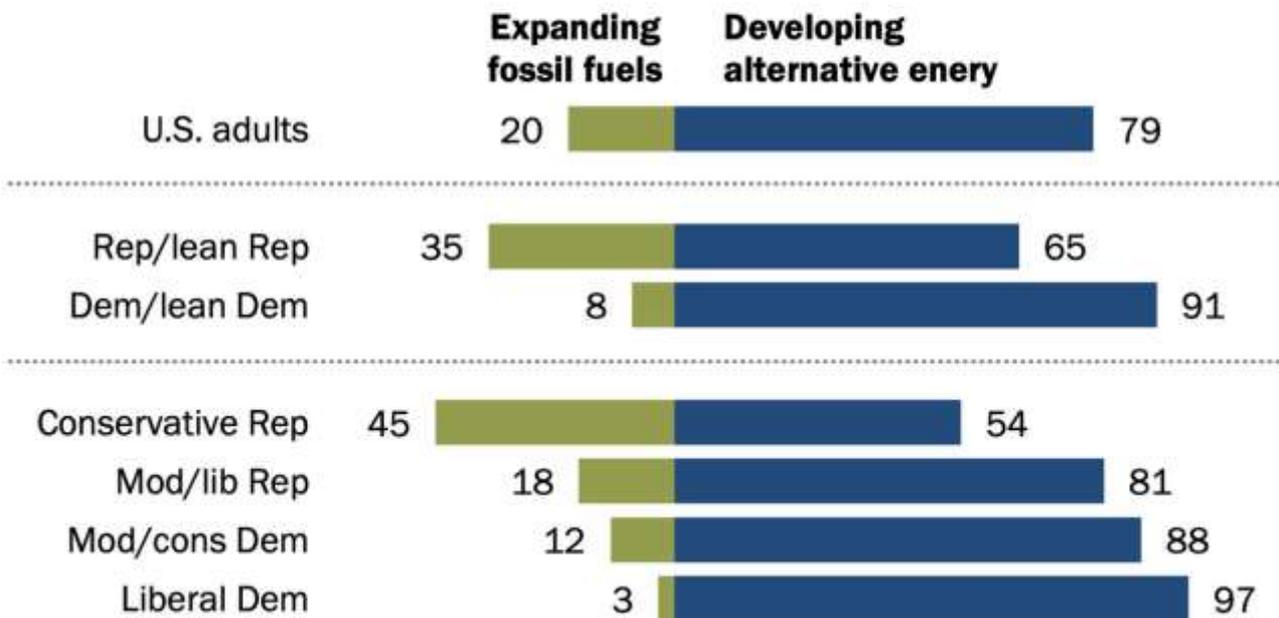
- About 40 staff based in six regions.
- Solar experts focused on climate justice.
- Focused on state-level legislative and regulatory work.
- Active legislative campaigns in Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois.

Renewable energy consistently polls higher than it should...

- Overwhelming majority of both parties support rapid development of renewable energy.
- Degree of bipartisanship unheard of in current polarized political climate.
- Draws support from off-grid conservative Republicans, anti-monopoly free market advocates, and energy democracy activists all at the same time.

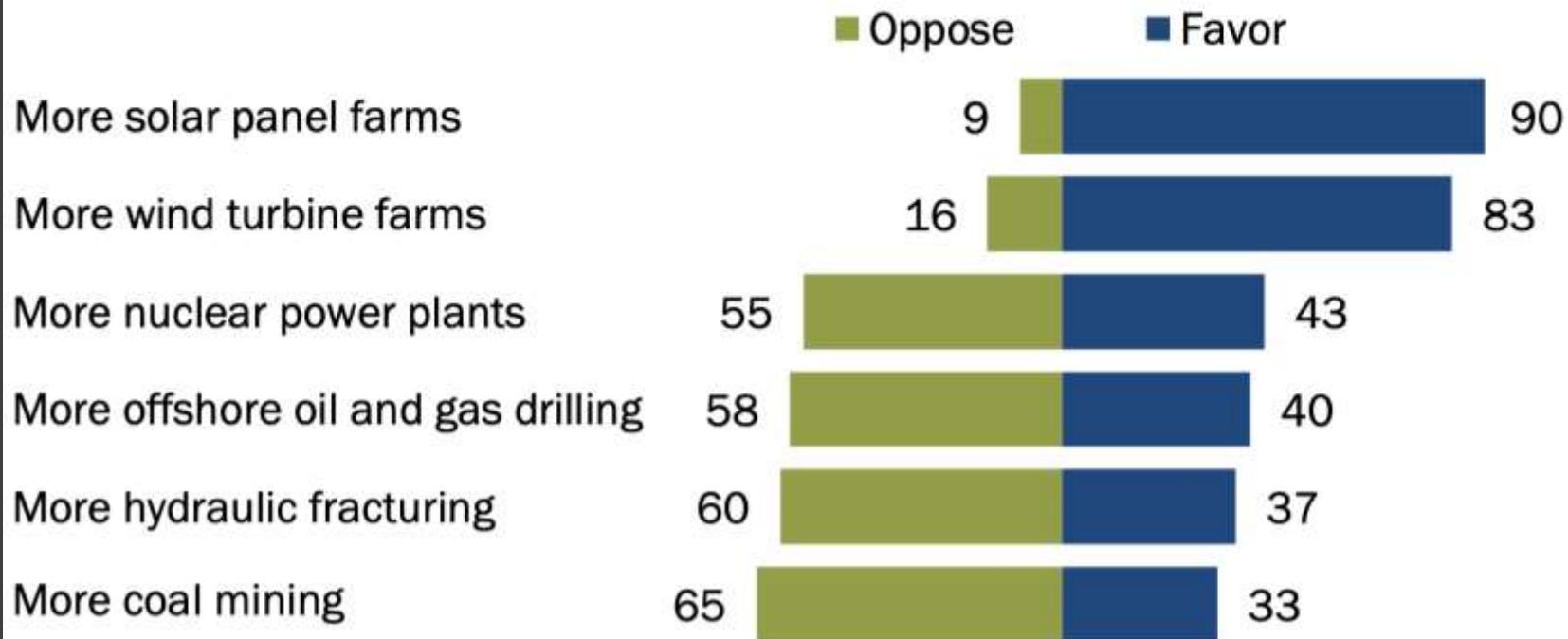
Most Americans prioritize developing alternative energy sources over expanding fossil fuels

% of U.S. adults who say the more important priority for U.S. energy supply should be ...



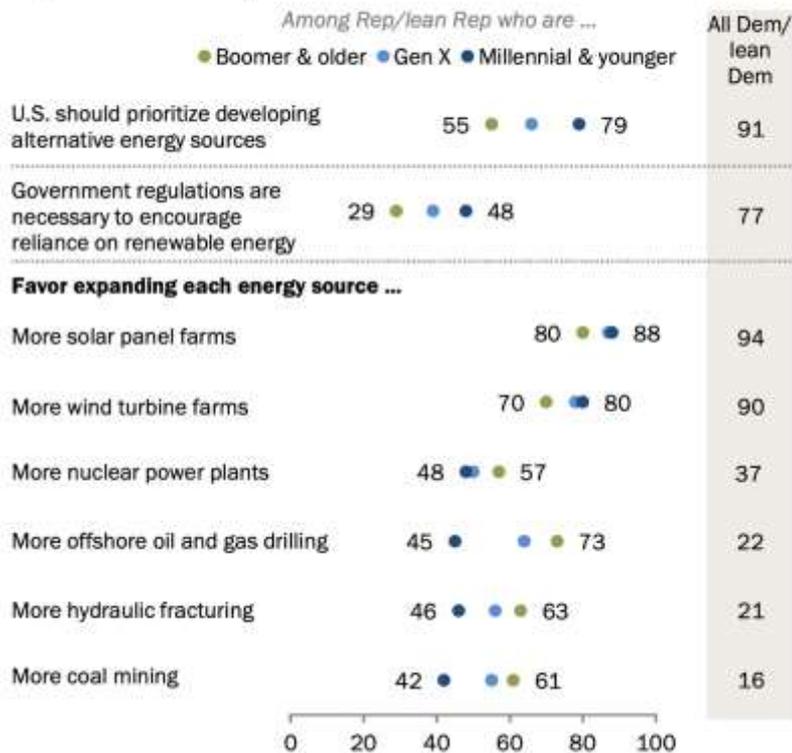
Broad public support for developing more solar and wind power

% of U.S. adults who say they ____ expanding each energy source



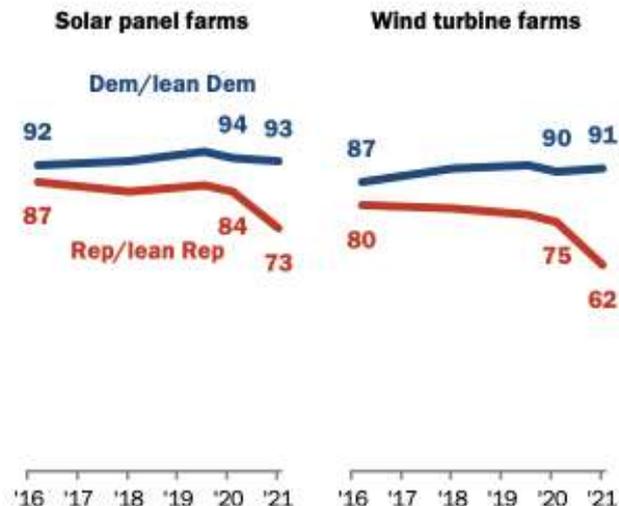
Younger Republicans more likely to prioritize renewable energy sources than older Republicans

% of U.S. adults who say ...



Majorities in U.S. favor more wind, solar power, though GOP support has dipped

% of U.S. adults who favor more ...



Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted April 20-29, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Minnesota

Political Context

Only state in the country with a divided legislature: Republican Senate and Democrat-Farmer-Labor (DFL) House

Democratic Governor

Politically competitive – uncertainty about how the next election will play out

Solar*Rewards, Solar Schools Program; ECO Act

- Minnesota had the most significant bipartisan wins in the country this past Spring.
 - ECO Act – significant expansion of energy efficiency programs
 - Expansion of the rooftop solar incentive program (Solar*Rewards)
 - New program to incentivize solar on public schools
- ECO Act passed out of both chambers with overwhelming majority of the vote
 - 25 of 34 Senate Republicans voted for ECO Act
- Solar*Rewards and Solar Schools program emerged in the omnibus commerce/finance bill
 - Proposed by Democrats, not opposed or negotiated out by Republicans
- Solar Schools had significant bipartisan support – compelling message

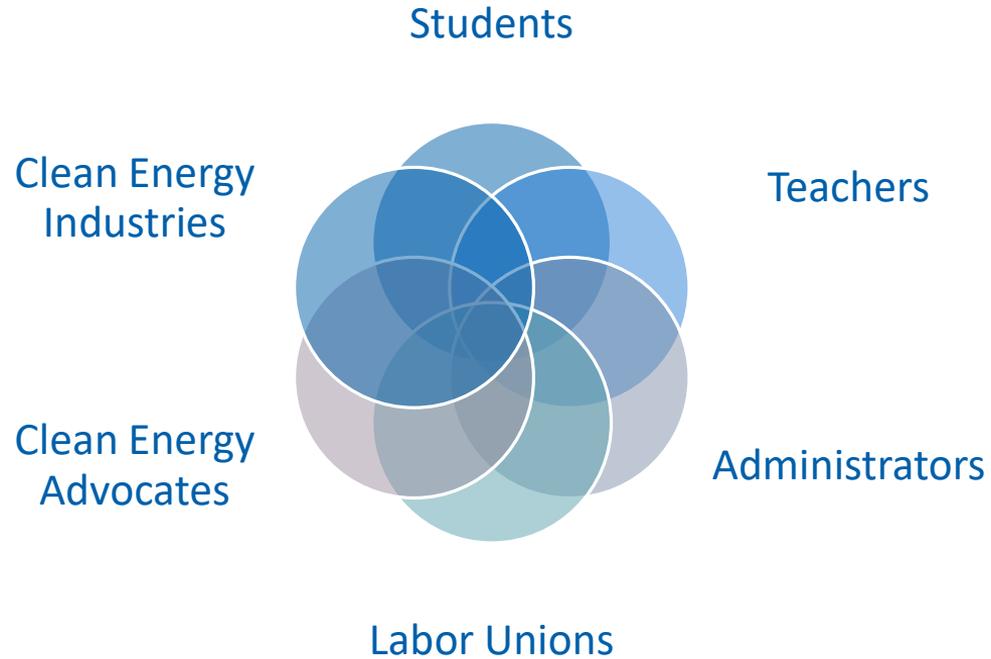


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Republican Sponsor

- "ECO will help move Minnesota energy priorities in the right direction," said Sen. Jason Rarick (R-Pine City). "By expanding consumer choice, we can lower energy bills and our overall energy demand statewide, while also increasing our efficiency. This innovative policy change is good for consumers, small businesses, and energy providers and prepares Minnesota's energy utilization for future technological advancements without picking winners or losers. I am happy that we could get this bipartisan legislation done for Minnesota."

Popular Politics



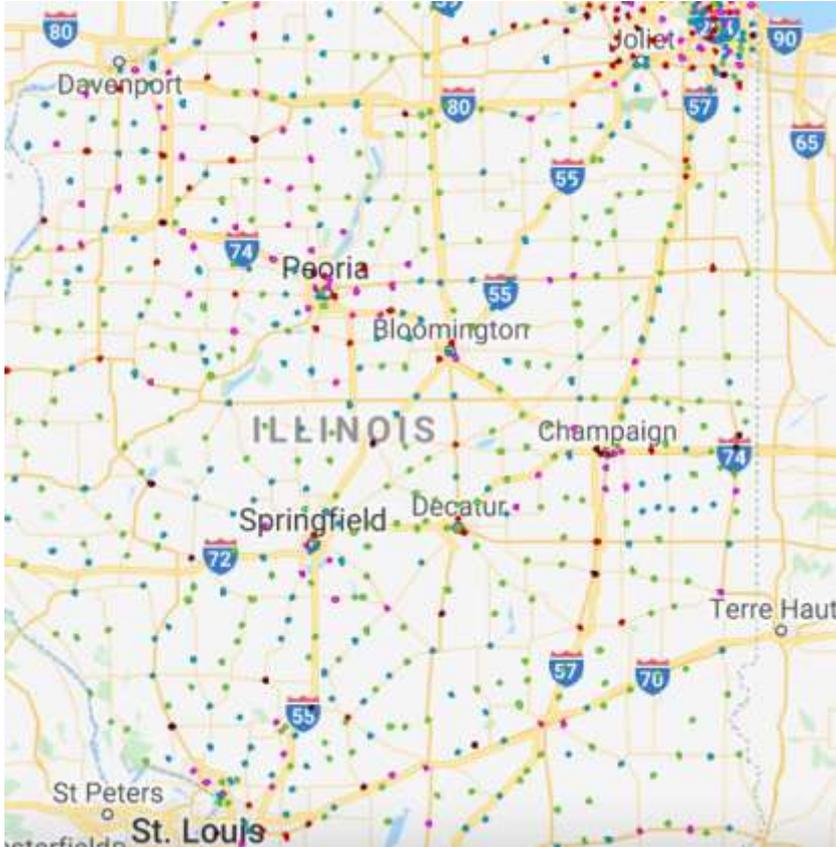
Illinois

Political Context

Democratic supermajorities in
both chambers

Democratic Governor

Strong geographic divide – urban
Democrats and rural Republicans



Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA)

- Most lessons don't transfer, but this one truth crosses state boundaries: Republicans see the tangible benefits of energy infrastructure. They see solar panels and wind farms.
- Another lesson: understand what motivates lawmakers to better understand how you might build power to earn their vote.

Michigan

Political
Context

Republican majority in both
chambers

Democratic Governor

Redistricting could change
statehouse

Community Solar and Solar Cap Fix

- Both bills have bipartisan sponsors and support.
- Utilities are opposed...and influence both Democrats and Republicans.
- Community solar bill introduced for the first time this year. Democrat and Republican sponsors at recent hearing.

Republican Perspective

“With community solar, with rooftop solar across Michigan, people would have control over their energy generation ... I just want to see that cap lifted,” he said. “I want to see increased public pressure on Consumers Energy and DTE and the Energy Committee as well because that’s what it’s going to take to move this forward.”

01

Understand what influences key legislators.

02

Secure support from legislative leadership. Others will follow.

03

Neutralize utility opposition.

04

Build compelling narratives and diverse coalitions.

05

Start now. It takes time to build bipartisan support.

Key Takeaways

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