
TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Alex Lundry, Redbud Consulting
DATE: September 9, 2026
RE: New National Survey

THE BOTTOM LINE

Ahead of National Clean Energy Week, the third wave of the Centerline Tracker, fielded in partnership with Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES) Forum, finds something increasingly rare in American politics: real common ground. Across party lines, voters want more renewable energy in the country's mix - by better than 5 to 1 they call it the right direction - and they are pragmatic about how to get there, favoring an all-of-the-above approach with a clear renewable tilt. The instinct is practical, not political - we need more energy, so build it, and build it clean.

KEY FINDINGS

Renewables are the common ground. 71% of voters say making renewable energy a bigger part of the country's supply is the right direction, against just 14% who call it the wrong one. Solar (79% favorable) and wind (74%) win majorities from Republicans, Independents, and Democrats alike. And voters are pragmatic about the mix: 42% want to use all energy sources, 41% want to lean harder into wind and solar, and only 16% want to pull back from renewables. This is a renewable-leaning, all-of-the-above mainstream - one that would rather build than fight.

Voters already picture renewables as mainstream. Asked what share of U.S. electricity comes from wind and solar today, the average guess is about 27% - comfortably above the real figure of roughly 17%. The public is overestimating how far along we already are. And that perception has a meaningful impact: voters who think renewables are already a big part of the mix are the most supportive of expanding them (+59 net favor), while those who lowball it are the least (+33). The lesson is to tell the momentum story - where clean energy is headed and how fast - rather than dwelling on how small today's slice still looks.

Renewable support survives a price tag. We asked half the sample about their support for each energy source if it were to add 5% to their monthly bill. Naturally, support softened for everything - but not evenly. Solar and wind comfortably stayed the most popular sources in the country even at a cost, while support for natural gas was cut sharply and coal fell into net-negative territory. That is real price resilience - and it isn't naïve: the old fight cast renewables as the expensive option, but for new power plants, renewables are now often the cheapest option on the table, not the priciest. The affordable choice and the popular choice are becoming the same choice.

Voters want it built faster - and responsibly. Just 24% think it should be harder to permit and build energy projects; a 40% plurality want it easier, and 67% say a major project's review should wrap up in two years or less. But they are not asking anyone to cut corners: when the choice is framed as speed versus a careful, thorough review, most side with the review. The position that unites them is the common-sense one - build clean energy efficiently, without gutting environmental and community safeguards. That, not "reform," is the language to lead with. One frame to avoid: tie that same permitting question to rising demand from data centers, and opposition to building it more easily climbs

11 points. Faster permitting can't be about data centers - pitch it as a path to clean energy and reliability instead.

Solar is the good neighbor - but siting is still won block by block. Forced to pick which of five facilities they'd most accept within a mile of home, voters choose a solar farm first, and it isn't close: 47%, versus 21% choosing wind turbines, 16% a data center, 9% a gas plant, and 7% a nuclear plant. Solar is the easiest energy infrastructure in the country to put in someone's backyard - a genuine advantage for clean energy. But NIMBY-ism is real: a large data center draws 60% opposition once it's actually proposed nearby. Clean energy holds the best hand at the neighborhood level, but it still has to play it one project at a time.

Data centers are the new pocketbook issue - and voters want a fair deal. Voters are wary of the data-center boom, and a not insignificant part of their worry is about fairness and control. 62% want local residents - not officials, and not the companies - to decide whether one gets built, and 64% do not trust tech companies' promise that data centers won't raise local electricity bills. But, the data show there is a path forward that should inform strategy; when it comes to data centers, ensure voters have a say. Who decides, and who pays is the conversation voters are asking to be engaged in.

WHY IT MATTERS

On an issue the country is told is hopelessly polarized, the data shows a broad and durable consensus: Americans want more renewable energy, they want it built efficiently, and they keep backing it even if it were to cost a little more (though increasingly, it doesn't). The friction that remains isn't ideological. It's about where you build and how you talk about it, not whether to build clean energy at all.

The winning message isn't left or right: build clean energy faster, keep it affordable, and give communities a fair say. Voters aren't asking for a revolution OR a rollback - they're asking for common sense. The groundwork on clean energy is there. The Centerline Tracker will be back in the field next month to see who builds on it.

Methodology: The Centerline Tracker Wave 3 survey was conducted online August 31 - September 3, 2026 by Redbud Consulting on behalf of Centerline Liberties, among N=800 nationally representative registered voters. Results are weighted to national registered-voter targets; the design-adjusted margin of error is approximately ± 3.7 points. Full question wording, topline, and charts available on request.