

THE TARRANCE GROUP

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MEMORANDUM

TO: PALMETTO CONSERVATIVE SOLAR COALITION
THE ALLIANCE FOR SOLAR CHOICE

FROM: DAVE SACKETT

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A STATEWIDE SURVEY OF VOTER ATTITUDES IN
SOUTH CAROLINA

DATE: AUGUST 9, 2017

The Tarrance Group is pleased to present the Palmetto Conservative Solar Coalition and The Alliance for Solar Choice with the key findings from a survey of voter attitudes in the state of South Carolina. These key findings are based on landline-only telephone interviews with N=501 registered voters throughout the state. Responses to this survey were gathered August 5-7, 2017 and the margin of error associated with a sample of this type is $\pm 4.5\%$ in 95 out of 100 cases.

KEY FINDINGS

Energy Sources Reliance:

- Respondents were exposed to five different energy sources that could be used to generate electrical power in South Carolina and asked if they believe that each of these sources should be relied on more than they currently are, the same as they currently are, or less than they currently are to generate electrical power for South Carolina.
- As you can see from the chart on the next page, solar energy is far and away the energy source that most voters in the state of South Carolina believe that the state needs to rely more on, while voters believe that the state should become less reliant on sources like coal and nuclear power.

	More than current	Same as current	Less than current	Unsure
Natural Gas	44%	30%	22%	5%
Nuclear	28%	20%	45%	7%
Coal	15%	20%	59%	6%
Solar	67%	13%	15%	5%
Wind	59%	13%	24%	4%

- Over two-thirds of South Carolina voters indicate that they believe that the state of South Carolina should rely more on solar energy to generate electrical power. This view is “universal” across the electorate.

Rooftop Solar:

- Respondents were exposed to the following statement regarding rooftop solar and asked if they agree or disagree with the statement:

“The opportunity for homeowners to choose rooftop solar energy is an important part of providing choice and competition in electricity.”

- Fully eighty-two percent (82%) of South Carolina voters indicate that they agree with this statement and a majority of voters, fifty-one percent (51%), indicate that they “strongly agree” with this statement.

Views of Solar Industry:

	Positive	Neutral/Unsure	Negative
Solar Industry / Rooftop Solar	59%	23%	18%

- South Carolina voters also have a very positive view of the solar energy industry, including rooftop solar. Fifty-nine percent (59%) have a positive view of the solar energy industry, and only 18% have a negative view. There are 23% that have a neutral view of the industry or are unsure.

Impact of Opposition to Path Forward for Solar:

- Respondents were asked if they would have a more favorable or less favorable impression of their State Legislators if they were to “oppose a path forward for rooftop solar” in South Carolina.
- South Carolina voters would be more likely to have an unfavorable impression of their own State Legislators should they oppose a path forward for rooftop solar. As you can see from the chart on the next page, fully sixty percent (60%) of voters indicate that taking this position would cause them to have a less favorable impression of their legislators.

	More Favorable	No Difference	Less Favorable
All Voters	27%	7%	60%
Duke Power Customer voters	26%	4%	68%
SC Electric & Gas Customer voters	25%	10%	62%
Santee Cooper Electrical Cooperative Customer voters	34%	2%	54%

Oversight & Reimbursement:

- Only twenty-two percent (22%) of South Carolina voters approve of the job that regulators and elected officials did of providing oversight on the V.C. Summer nuclear project, while sixty percent (60%) indicate that they disapprove of the oversight job that was done. There is significant intensity the disapproval, with 42% indicating that they strongly disapprove of the oversight.
- This is a fairly consistent view throughout the electorate, and there is no specific segment of the electorate that expresses any sort of significant level of satisfaction with the job that was done of overseeing the project.
- Not surprisingly, there is virtually universal support for requiring the utilities to reimburse their customers for the money they have already spent on these construction projects. Fully eighty-three percent (83%) of voters believe that customers should be reimbursed, and only 13% believe that this should not be done.
- Approximately ninety percent (90%) of Duke Energy and Santee Cooper Electric Cooperative customer voters believe that customers should be reimbursed, as do seventy-nine percent (79%) of SC Electric & Gas customer voters

Energy Deregulation:

- Fully eight in ten South Carolina voters, eighty percent (80%) indicate that they would favor “*creating more competition in the energy industry through “deregulating” monopoly utilities and then allowing consumers more freedom to choose their own energy provider.*” Forty-nine percent (49%) indicate they would strongly favor this action.
- Support for energy deregulation stands at better than 76% in every region of the state, also stands at 78% or better among voters of all ages. Fully three-quarters of Democrats and Independents would be in favor or energy deregulation, and this view rises to 87% among Republican voters.

Views of Electric Utility Providers:

- Just over two-thirds of South Carolina voters indicate that they have a positive view of their electric utility provider. This view stands at 85% among Santee Cooper Electric Cooperative customers, and 75% among Duke Power customers.

- However, customers of South Carolina Electric and Gas are far less positive, with 41% indicating that they have a positive view of their electric utility provider, and forty-three percent (43%) indicating that they have a negative impression.

	Positive	Neutral/Unsure	Negative
Electric Utility Provider	67%	13%	20%
Duke Power Customer voters	75%	12%	13%
SC Gas & Electric Customer voters	41%	16%	43%
Santee Cooper Electric Cooperative voters	85%	6%	9%

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