

May 6, 2019

To: Climate Action Campaign and Partners
Fr: David Di Martino and Keven Kennedy, Climate Action Campaign Communications
Re: Poll Memo on April 2019 “Arizona Green New Deal (GND)” Message Poll

*The Climate Action Campaign commissioned messaging research, conducted by Climate Nexus in an online survey of 1,005 registered voters in Arizona between April 4, 2019 and April 11, 2019 with a margin of +/- 3.2%, which examined voter attitudes regarding climate change, climate action, investing in clean energy, and support for the Green New Deal (GND). It also measured those issues against other top issues, including healthcare reform, the economy, federal spending and federal deficits among other issues and in order of priority. The top line findings from the research and broad messaging recommendations are presented here. **Please note: this is not a public poll and should only be used for internal purposes.***

KEY FINDINGS

Among Arizonans, Support for Climate Change is Strong

Concern about climate change is high among Arizonans as a supermajority of more than two-thirds (68%) believe climate change is an issue that needs to be addressed, including a near majority (49%) who believe it is a severe threat that needs to be urgently addressed now. Roughly two-thirds (66%) of Arizonans also support government action to address climate change, and the same number agree that if the federal government fails to address climate change, their state or local government should take action.

Majorities of Arizonans also say that climate change is having an effect on the economy, agriculture, health, and extreme weather in both the US and Arizona. However, beliefs about the impacts climate change is having on Arizona itself are not quite as strong as beliefs about the impacts climate change is having across the US.

Arizonans Make Clean Energy Solutions A Top Priority

As Arizonans consider the relative importance of policies that need to be addressed by lawmakers, they are focused on high priority issues you might suspect for a state like Arizona, including health care reform, federal spending, budget deficits and public lands protection, but climate change/clean energy solutions are climbing the list in importance. While large majorities of Arizonans put veterans’ health reform (87%), federal spending and budget deficits (84%), preserving public lands (80%) and passing health reform (78%) ahead of it, investments in clean energy had very strong support in the state with 77% of voters in the state thinking it’s a top important or important priority.

And, in identifying their **top priority** issue, just under half of Arizonans said investing in clean energy sources was at the top of their list of issues (45%), which was on par with addressing federal spending and the budget deficit (45%), veterans’ health care (48%), and passing a healthcare reform bill (46%).

There is also broad support for environmental protections, climate and clean energy policies generally. In fact, more than three quarters of Arizonans (76%) support increased fuel efficiency requirements for cars, trucks and SUVs while nearly the same number (74%) support increasing funding and government

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investments in renewable energy such as solar energy. Another 67% support expanding charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. Fifty-five percent of Arizonans even support passage of a carbon tax to encourage reductions in carbon pollution.

Green New Deal Has Surprising Initial Awareness/Support, But is Vulnerable to Attacks

While the Green New Deal (GND) is by no means a “household word” in Arizona, this latest survey of registered voters show a majority of Arizonans (51%) had heard “a lot” or “some” about the Green New Deal. Previous Climate Nexus polling indicates that the share of voters nationwide who have heard of the Green New Deal has more than tripled in recent months, from 15% in December 2018 to 48% in March 2019.

Perhaps even more surprising for a traditionally red state like Arizona, a majority of Arizonans support it (57%) while less than a third (31%) indicated opposition with 13% saying they weren’t sure either way. A plurality of Arizona voters (44%) even said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported the Green New Deal.

However, the proposal, introduced by freshman congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Massachusetts senator Ed Markey, showed vulnerability among voters presented with opposition messages. Faced with attacks such as causing higher taxes, hypocrisy from its bill sponsor, and/or allegations that Democrats themselves were split on the measure, support for the Green New Deal plummeted and opposition increased with a twelve and eight point swing respectively (Support 57% to 45% and Opposition 31% to 39%). Predictably, Republicans and Independents showed the most significant loss of support after hearing positive and negative messages.

Generic Ballot Results

In the run up to the 2020 Senate election in Arizona, name recognition and the resulting voter attitudes define the current political landscape in the state. Martha McSally, who was appointed in 2018 to serve out the term of the late Arizona Senator John McCain, is well known throughout the state, as 85% have an opinion of her, while 10% have heard of her but have no opinion and only four percent have never heard of her. More than half (56%) of Arizona voters have an opinion of her likely Democratic challenger, Astronaut Mark Kelly. However, Kelly owns a net favorability advantage of 16 points over McSally. Thirty-six percent of Arizona voters had a favorable opinion of Kelly while 19 percent had an unfavorable opinion. Nearly half have heard of Kelly but have no opinion (23%) or have never heard of him (23%). Although more Arizonans have an opinion of her, voters were more evenly split on McSally, who had a net favorability rating of one percent (43% favorable to 42% unfavorable).

Here is a summary of key findings:

- ***Roughly two-thirds (66%) of Arizonans support government action to address climate change, and the same number agree that if the federal government fails to address climate change, their state or local government should take action.***

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- *Majorities of Arizonans say that climate change is having an effect on the economy, agriculture, health, and extreme weather in both the US and Arizona – though this belief is less strongly held about the effects in Arizona.*
- *While nearly half of Arizonans say reforming veterans' health care (48%) and passing a healthcare reform bill (46%) should be a top priority for Arizona, they put investing in clean energy sources (45%) as the next most urgent priority.*
- *A majority (51%) of Arizonans have heard "a lot" or "some" about the Green New Deal – although this is at the state level, it's the first time in our polling we've crossed the majority mark on this.*
- *Initial support for the Green New Deal is at 57%. Opposition sits at 31%, and 13% say they aren't sure.*
- *At least half of Arizonans find each of the GND support messages convincing – and the most convincing support messages are about increasing jobs in the solar sector and creating 21st century jobs.*
- *The most convincing opposition messages are about tax increases, AOC campaign's hypocrisy, and Democrats being unable to agree on the GND.*
- *After messaging, support for the Green New Deal drops from 57% to 45%, and opposition increases from 31% to 39%.*
- *Mark Kelly has a net favorable rating (36% favorable, 19% unfavorable), but nearly half of Arizonans either have no opinion (23%) or have never heard of him (23%).*

MESSAGING RECOMMENDATIONS

Our central argument should combine the best of our health and impacts messaging while quickly pivoting to economic opportunities messaging. Messaging should focus on clean energy jobs, the need for climate action and be less reliant on the Green New Deal as a policy platform.

OUR CORE MESSAGE (To All):

Arizonans are seeing and feeling the impacts of climate change and overwhelmingly support government action to address the climate crisis. A majority of Arizonans are calling on their federal representatives to follow the lead of local leaders and businesses who are already working to meet America's pledge to reduce carbon pollution and bolster the clean energy economy.

KEY MESSAGES FOR ARIZONANS

- Setting sensible limits on pollution from power plants, automobiles, and the oil and gas industry will make our air, land, and water cleaner and safer for our families and children. (77%)
- The U.S. has been the world economic leader because of our ability to introduce new technology. If we stay committed to research and development, we will continue the rapid transition to a clean energy economy and bring thousands of jobs with it. Companies such as Apple, GM, and Wal-Mart are already committed to getting 100% of their electricity from clean energy sources, because it saves them money and spurs innovation. (75%)

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- We have a moral responsibility to future generations to pass along to them a cleaner and healthier planet, and the best way to do that is through the continued development of clean energy sources to power our schools, homes, and businesses and reduce dangerous pollution. (75%)

STRONG SECONDARY MESSAGES:

- Arizona cities and businesses are meeting “America’s Pledge” to reduce the carbon pollution that contributes to climate change by moving forward with local clean energy solutions.
- Across the state and nation, businesses large and small, mayors, and other local leaders are driving the transition to clean energy and the economic growth, health benefits and environmental protections it provides.
- These local and state actions are helping us meet America’s pledge to reduce carbon pollution, address climate change and keep us economically competitive through development of cleaner, safer energy and the jobs that go with them.

Counter-Messaging the Green New Deal

While the Green New Deal should not be a messaging priority, there are effective counter arguments to mitigate the attacks on the resolution.

Core message: The Green New Deal is just a first attempt to kick-off development of legislation to transition Arizona and the rest of our country to a clean energy economy – with cleaner cars, investments in renewable energy development, and other industries moving toward net-zero carbon pollution while boosting American innovation.

- More than 3 million jobs have already been created as part of our transition to a clean energy economy. The Green New Deal will build on that success, creating more 21st century jobs that will support urban, suburban, and rural communities across the country (66%)
- The Green New Deal says nothing about banning hamburgers or air travel. It calls for cleaner and safer energy solutions for our economy to reduce the carbon pollution that contributes to climate change and encourage innovation in agriculture practices to protect our food supply. (55%)
- Despite being the “sunniest state”, Arizona is trailing far behind the average job growth in the solar sector, which is growing nine times faster than the overall economy. Independent experts at ASU say increasing clean energy, through policies like those called for in the Green New Deal, “builds and keeps jobs in Arizona.” (66%)

CONTACT

For more information contact David Di Martino, Blue Engine Message & Media, 202-331-0009 david@blueenginemedias.com or Keven Kennedy, 202-276-3159, keven@kevenkennedy.com .

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