



**Global Warming and Renewable Energy Focus Groups
A Report for the Breakthrough Institute**

**Tucson, Arizona
October 16, 2007**

American Environics conducted two focus groups on October 16 in Tucson, Arizona to examine the attitudes on global warming by voters who do not view global warming as a top priority. In our previous polling, and in our review of other public opinion polling, we've found the vast majority of voters to rank global warming as a relatively low priority. We hoped to understand how these voters reason about global warming in an effort to understand how to motivate them to support federal action to address global warming.

We chose Tucson for a variety of reasons. First, many political experts believe that Arizona will be a battleground state in the upcoming presidential election. Secondly, while the state has two Republican Senators, they are split on the issue of global warming (with Senator McCain advocating for a cap-and-trade policy). Finally, Tucson is home to the 8th Congressional District which was held by Republican Jim Kolbe until 2007, when Democrat Gabby Giffords was sworn in to replace the retiring Kolbe. The National Journal describes the 8th District as including "all of Tucson except the Latino west side that is in the 7th District. The 8th also includes the eastern half of surrounding Pima County and much southeastern Arizona desert real estate: All of Cochise County (including Tombstone and Bisbee), Douglas and Sierra Vista near Fort Huachuca, site of the Army Military Intelligence Center, the training site for military interrogators; and very small portions of Santa Cruz and Pinal Counties. Politically it is closely divided, voting narrowly for George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004." Pima County, home to Tucson, was won by John Kerry in 2004, where he received 52.6% of the vote.

In screening participants, we looked for Caucasian likely voters who reported sometimes voting for Democrats and sometimes voting for Republicans. We also asked participants to imagine an ideological scale from 1 to 7 where 1 means very conservative and 7 means very liberal. We recruited those indicating partisanship levels of 3, 4 and 5. We then asked the potential participants to pick two issues from a battery of seven including global warming. As we are attempting to discern ways to motivate voters for whom global warming was not a top concern, we eliminated those who listed global warming as a top priority. In the end, we recruited a mix of Republicans, Democrats and Independents with a wide range of ages and socio-economic backgrounds.

This report contains recommendations for advocates and policy makers attempting to pass substantive public policy prescriptions to tackle climate change, a summary of the key findings of the focus groups, and a detailed description of the conversations that transpired in the groups.

The Focus Groups were conducted by Dr. John Whaley of American Environics and observed by Jeff Navin of American Environics. Both collaborated on this report.¹

¹ Dr. John Whaley is a Senior Vice President at American Environics. Experienced in quantitative and qualitative research, Dr. Whaley has conducted hundreds of focus groups for a variety of clients across the country. Jeff Navin is Managing Director of American Environics Strategies. Navin has served as Chief of Staff in the U.S. Congress, and was Research Director for Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle.

Recommendations

These focus groups, as well as the public opinion survey conducted prior to the focus groups, provide key insights for advocates and law makers pushing for action on climate change and renewable energy. Our recommendations for advocates and policymakers are listed below.

Make “Energy Independence” and “Creating New Jobs” Primary Message

While voters are less inclined to support massive regulations or investments to combat global warming, they are very eager to support substantive government action on efforts designed to achieve energy independence and create new jobs. Voters support regulations and investments to deploy renewable energy projects, but their support is driven by a desire to end a dependence on foreign sources of energy and to create jobs based upon the creation of new products that can be sold in the United States and exported abroad. Proposals *primarily* viewed as achieving energy independence and creating new jobs received a great deal of support. Proposals viewed primarily as solving global warming were met with varying degrees of skepticism.

Make Investment a Key Message Over Regulation

While the groups supported the idea of polluters paying, the cap-and-trade and carbon tax proposals were met with skepticism and some outright opposition. Substantive public investment, on the other hand, was widely supported by both groups. The men, who were quite skeptical of a cap-and-trade proposal, were very supportive of spending \$300 billion on clean energy technologies. Importantly, adding an investment component to cap-and-trade increased support of overall bill, as it better permitted the proposal to be framed as achieving energy independence and spurring economic growth. Although the hybrid bill still received less support than investment alone, investment appears to be a way to increase support for regulatory efforts.

Adding Investment Component to Regulations Increases Support for Regulations

While there was relatively little support for a cap and trade proposal in which credits were given away, support increased for a cap and trade proposal that includes the proceeds of a credit auction funding innovation. Even among men, who had strong concerns about the impacts on the economy, the carrot of investing to achieve energy independence and create jobs increased overall support for cap and trade. By including measures to invest in technologies perceived to lower dependence on foreign oil and achieve energy independence, there is potential to increase support for regulatory measures such as cap and trade.

The Problem Must Seem Solvable, Goals Achievable

When participants felt like global warming was difficult to solve and difficult to comprehend, they were less likely to believe it was occurring and less likely to support immediate action to solve the problem. When the discussion turned to America’s entrepreneurial spirit and our country’s ability to solve problems, however, there was widespread belief that we could solve the problem. There was no question in the groups that we can achieve energy independence and create new green jobs. In fact, when those issues were discussed, participants were convinced that taking those steps would also solve the problem of global warming relatively quickly.

Private Sector Involvement is Critical for Public Support

There is no question that partisanship, the war in Iraq and the handling of Katrina have created deep feelings of cynicism about the government's ability to solve global warming. Respondents broadly supported plans that engaged the private sector, and provided significant private sector roles for the creation of innovative technologies and activities to reduce global warming. This cynicism provides a wide opening for opponents of global warming reduction efforts, yet can be countered by including the private sector which is seen as entrepreneurial, innovative and results oriented. It's important that progressives claim entrepreneurialism, innovation, and ingenuity as key parts of their agenda to address climate change.

Finding the Right Messenger is Key to Addressing Global Warming

Environmental groups are viewed with a high degree of hostility by these voters, and anyone having "an agenda" is viewed as an untrustworthy messenger on global warming. Even Al Gore, who had won a Nobel Prize days before these groups, was viewed by some as "having an agenda." Independent scientists and academic experts were viewed most favorably by the groups, and highlighting scientific consensus and the independence of their research was the most effective way to gain these voters' confidence. Effectively communicating with these voters will require messengers seen as credible. Independent (meaning without an "agenda") scientific experts and academics are the most credible experts on global warming related issues.

Pollution Successes Cause Problems for Global Warming Efforts

While there has been considerable effort to frame global warming as a pollution problem, the fact that traditional air pollutants are perceived to be under control presents problems for global warming advocates. Participants in both groups cited reductions in traditional pollutants as evidence that the United States is doing a "good job" on global warming. Participants cited pollution in India and China as evidence that the US is leading when it comes to climate change. Continuing coverage of air pollution in China as a part of the 2008 Olympics coverage will likely make this point of confusion even more potent as an argument against taking immediate action. Linking global warming to traditional forms of pollution seems to hinder, rather than help, create consensus that the United States must take immediate and substantive action to address the problem. Global warming is different than traditional forms of air pollution. It should be treated as such.

Voters Are Willing To Spend Money on the Right Priorities

There was widespread belief in the groups that America could afford to spend money on energy independence and creating green jobs because those efforts were viewed as important priorities for the country. The war in Iraq seems to have created a belief that we can find the money when necessary, and there is widespread belief that by shifting money from misguided priorities we can fund worthy projects. While participants have concerns about the deficit, they are open to spending money on important priorities. Advocates should recognize that voters are willing to spend money on priorities such as achieving energy independence and creating jobs and economic growth.

Expected Economic Changes Will Sustain Support for Energy Independence; Jobs

Voters in these groups expressed concerns over the price of energy and expressed anxiety over the economy (particularly as it relates to dependence on foreign oil). If economic forecasts

predicting increases in the price of oil and electricity and slowed rates of economic growth (if not a recession) are accurate, messages focused on achieving energy independence and creating jobs and spurring economic growth should remain effective with these voters.

Key Findings

Global Warming is Not Seen As a Pressing Concern

While most participants were aware of the potential impacts of global warming (citing droughts, floods, starvation, and disease), there was little support for the government taking immediate action to address the problem. Most participants viewed the impacts of global warming coming decades into the future, and some expressed a belief that humanity would invent a solution to global warming before the impacts hit. Others expressed disbelief that humans could do anything to stop global warming, and thought our efforts were better spent on mitigation efforts to prepare for the changes. There was widespread support for the idea that “we don’t know enough” about the causes and potential solutions to global warming to take action, and the participants thought it important to delay action until a scientific consensus emerged. This confusion about the “truth” about global warming, and the efforts of those to create the perception of a lack of scientific consensus, cause participants to support delaying action on global warming.²

Broad Support for Energy Proposals that Achieve Energy Independence and Create Jobs

Even among those who had serious questions as to the proper course of action on addressing global warming, there was broad support for proposals to expedite the deployment of clean energy technologies. For the most part, the support for these proposals came from strong feelings that America must end its dependence on foreign oil and a strong belief that developing clean energy sources would result in new jobs and economic growth. Proposals to spend \$300 billion of government money on global warming received strong and broad support among the participants, far eclipsing support for efforts to cap greenhouse gas emissions.

Belief in the Idea that America is Entrepreneurial and Innovative

Before we talked about global warming, we asked participants to identify those things that America does well. Both groups identified America’s entrepreneurship and our ability to solve problems as key American strengths. This theme continued through the discussion, as some expressing a belief that global warming will be solved because American innovators will invent the solution to the problem. When solutions involving innovation were discussed, no participants expressed any doubt that America would not create innovations that would address the problem.

Cynicism Around the Federal Government’s Ability to Address Global Warming

A common thread running through the discussions of the various government solutions ran into a deep cynicism about the government’s ability to solve the problem. As one participant noted, the federal government couldn’t clean up after Katrina, so there was little reason to believe they could prevent a catastrophe like global warming. The women in particular were very concerned about perceived corruption in the government around the expenditure of money (e.g. concerns around pork), and the auctioning of credits. One woman noted a belief that companies could get

² These participants were selected because they did not rank global warming as a top concern. The focus groups were designed to understand how these kinds of voters reasoned about these issues. Our previous public opinion survey, and review of publicly available polling data confirms that addressing global warming is not a top priority for most voters.

around the caps by simply giving money to the right politician's campaign. Likely as a result of this cynicism, the groups were very supportive of efforts to include private sector and independent experts in any solution.

Global Warming Seen as Difficult to Solve

When the groups began discussing how to solve global warming, both men and women noted that it was a very complicated issue and was difficult to comprehend. This led to resignation about actually solving the problem. Both groups noted that the war in Iraq and the political situation in the Middle East were much easier issues to solve than global warming.

Foreign Involvement is Key to American Sacrifice

Both groups, but the men in particular, repeatedly raised concerns about the United States being forced to make sacrifices while letting other countries off the hook. There was a belief that the United States was already doing a good job of preventing global warming, and the participants cited examples of the air, water and land becoming cleaner. There was also a concern expressed about industries sending jobs overseas if other countries weren't forced to comply with the same standards.

America Seen Leader on Preventing Pollution, Global Warming

Repeatedly, participants in the groups noted that America was doing a good job and had come a long ways on reducing air pollution, which they saw as related to global warming. Noting that the air, water and land used to be a lot dirtier, they noted that industries had taken steps to make air cleaner. In expressing a belief that places like China and India were doing worse on global warming issues was supported by citing the dirty air in those questions.

The Public Has Questions about Cap-and-Trade Proposals

While there was some concern about the costs of cap-and-trade proposals being passed onto consumers and driving up the cost of living, there was confusion about credits, caps and auctions. The term "credit" elicited criticism from participants who viewed it as a "way out" for polluters who, in their minds, shouldn't be polluting in the first place. There was concern that politicians would allow favored industries to avoid the caps, and skepticism about the federal government fairly administering an auction. One woman noted that such an auction would favor big business over small businesses because the big businesses had more money to spend for credits.

Independent Academics Seen As Credible Source on Global Warming

Both groups were very suspicious of groups and organizations perceived to have "an agenda" in providing reliable information about global warming. There was widespread suspicion of "environmental organizations," and many participants viewed Al Gore as "having an agenda." In fact, the groups rated their electric companies as more credible than environmental organizations in terms of providing credible information on global warming. Academics were universally seen as the most credible messengers, but the groups were clear that they trusted academics "without an agenda" that were not affiliated with a particular industry, group or cause.

Support for Large Technology Investment over Proposals to Cap Emissions

By a substantial margin, the participants favored a \$300 billion investment in clean energy technology over two cap and trade proposals. Some of the most enthusiastic supporters of investment were also less inclined to believe that global warming was occurring or deserving of action. The groups were motivated to support such an investment to 1) achieve energy independence, and 2) create new jobs and economic growth. Global warming was mentioned in the discussion, but there was little opposition to investing in clean energy regardless as to one's belief that global warming was occurring. Interestingly, when the criticisms of the investment strategy were discussed, it caused support for the program to increase among the men – even though a majority of the men in our group did not believe that immediate action on *global warming* was warranted. While the men were generally unenthusiastic about taking action on global warming, they were very enthused about this program which they perceived to be about achieving energy independence and creating new jobs.

Summary of Focus Group Proceedings

Below is a detailed summary of the responses elicited in the focus group. This summary generally follows the actual chronology of the focus groups. Where applicable we've included illustrative quotations and summaries of written responses.

America: What Works, What Doesn't

To start off the groups, we asked the participants to discuss what makes America special, to discuss those things that we as a country do right. While, predictably, much of the discussion focused on rights such as the freedom of speech, in both groups, participants mentioned entrepreneurialism and innovation. One woman noted, "I think we are a very industrious country and very innovative.... Most of the biggest inventions and explorations have come out of us American people because we started 200 years ago with people that are gutsy who came here and left the stagnation behind." Other women mentioned the ability to reinvent oneself as something uniquely American.

The men agreed. The very first thing offered by the group of men was the idea of capitalism. When asked to expand upon his answer the man noted, "we're very entrepreneurial; people take an idea and run with it." Another participant noted that one of America's strength's is "the way we organize and come together to tackle problems, it's very entrepreneurial."

We then asked the participants to identify those things that hold America back as a country. While the participants listed a number of issues from the lack of personal responsibility to a sense of entitlement, one man mentioned energy as a particular concern, noting that while France has invested in nuclear energy he noted that "we are just toying... for the last 35 years [it's been] just promises. It'd be nice to see the President have some substantial solutions to those problems." There was also discussion about perceived problems with the government. In particular the groups noted "politicians being too concerned with getting reelected," and the American people being too divided along racial and ethnic lines. No participants mentioned anything related to global warming or the environment.

America's Top Priorities and the Barriers to Solving These Problems

We asked each the participant to identify the issues that should be the top priorities for the next President. Health care and Iraq topped the list, with concerns about border security and terrorism also receiving strong support from the participants. The women did not mention anything relating to either the environment or global warming, but the men mentioned the need to update infrastructure which led to a discussion about the updating our electrical system incorporating environmental technologies to reduce pollution. The women also mentioned concerns about the government spending too much money on the wrong priorities, singling out pork as a particular problem. Besides updating infrastructure, however, there was no mention of global warming or energy.

When asked what gives the group confidence about the ability of America to solve the problems, there was a distinct divide between the two groups. The men agreed that the "fortitude of the American people" would allow us to overcome our obstacles, noting the history of Americans

coming together to solve problems since the American Revolution. The women, however, had little hope that America would rise to the occasion to solve these problems. “Washington is such a quagmire of good old boys,” noted one woman, “I’m not sure any of it will get resolved.” This comment received widespread agreement among the female participants.

When asked to expand on the obstacles to success, the women continued to discuss the inability of the federal government to tackle big problems. Government is “a big mess that no one can grasp any more,” noted one participant. She added, “We need to give more power to states to handle” problems facing the country.

The men agreed that “partisanship” was one of the major obstacles in the way of solving problems. There was a strong sense among both groups that government was not well prepared to solve problems because of partisanship and division among various factions in the country.

The Government Solving Energy Problems

Discussion around energy caused both groups to think, first and foremost, about oil rather than electricity. Among the women, while there was some indication of an entrepreneurial America that could overcome the problems, they were concerned with the ability of government to overcome perceived strong power by interested corporations to solve the problem. One woman noted, that in “America we are great problem solvers, and we have really intelligent, creative people, but added “there’s too much of the power in the good old boy network.” She noted that Shell and the “good ‘old boys’ prevent any reform, noting that “we have an entire town of flat roofs, but it’s the good ‘old boys that prevent solar.” Her response elicited agreement from other participants, with one noting “I think everything is run by big, big power. Corporations run the government.” There seemed to be an important distinction in the groups: *America* is capable of solving big problems but *government* often gets in the way.

Energy Dependence Leads to Frustration

But while there was a strong sense of cynicism around the federal government’s ability to solve problems, there was an acknowledgement that we face real challenges regarding energy. “I feel like we’re sleeping with the enemy,” noted one woman. “I feel like there are other cultures in the world that are so aggressive towards our beliefs, they’re not tolerant, yet we are continuing to allow them to provide our resources to us. And it bothers me. And I do agree there are alternative resources that we should be putting more money and research into. We have a big country. There’s lots of resource here. Why aren’t we tapping into that? It makes me very uncomfortable to rely on a different culture.” There was a sense of frustration and anger that our country hadn’t taken greater steps to become energy independent.

The kinds of cynicism about big business did not arise with the men, but they mentioned “oil” and “war” as the top things that came to mind around energy. They also noted some frustration that there was not more action around renewable energy. “We live in Arizona,” noted one man, “We should be at the forefront of solar energy. Why is there not a huge solar farm at Casa Grande?”

Energy as a Priority for Congress

We then asked the participants the degree to which they would agree with their member of Congress stating that “addressing energy problems in this country should be our number one priority.” The women came down firmly in the middle; the men were much more supportive of the statement. Interestingly, no women rated their agreement with the statement a 5. One-third of the men gave the statement the highest score, and another third rated their agreement as a four.

How America Benefits From Addressing Energy

When asked to discuss the potential benefits from addressing energy problems, both women and men mentioned energy independence, creating jobs and a cleaner environment. The discussion around environmental issues centered around cleaner air, and there was not a mention of global warming as a separate issues. The men mentioned that high energy costs result in higher prices for consumers as businesses pass these costs onto consumers, and they noted that China and India will need clean energy creating the potential for export markets for American products. The women, however, noted that the technological innovations already exist but that American corporations are preventing the new technologies from being made available to consumers. They also noted concern about the price of energy with one woman commenting, “Remember when your electric bill was \$30? Now mine is \$400.”

Best Ways to Address Energy

Following the discussion about the potential benefits of addressing energy problems in the United States, we asked the groups to work together as a group to rank a set of five potential benefits in order of importance. The potential benefits were:

- j. Decreasing the price of gas, electricity, and heating oil
- k. Making American less dependent on foreign oil
- l. Fighting global warming
- m. Helping U.S. farmers by increasing demand for ethanol and other crop-based energy sources
- n. Creating jobs and increasing economic development by emphasizing innovation in hybrids, solar and other clean-energy technologies

Benefits of Addressing Energy, in Order of Importance for Women’s Group	Benefits of Addressing Energy, in Order of Importance for Men’s Group
Creating jobs and increasing economic development by emphasizing innovation in hybrids, solar and other clean-energy technologies	Creating jobs and increasing economic development by emphasizing innovation in hybrids, solar and other clean-energy technologies
Making American less dependent on foreign oil	Making American less dependent on foreign oil
Fighting global warming	Decreasing the price of gas, electricity, and heating oil
Helping U.S. farmers by increasing demand for ethanol and other crop-based energy sources	Fighting global warming
Decreasing the price of gas, electricity, and heating oil	Helping U.S. farmers by increasing demand for ethanol and other crop-based energy sources

The idea of creating jobs (N) and achieving energy independence (K) topped the list of both men and women and did so by large margins. There was debate in both groups as to whether creating jobs (N) or achieving energy independence (K) should be the top priority, but both were seen as substantially more important than the items ranked number three and lower. Both groups had suspicions about ethanol citing both existing subsidies and potential food shortages. The women listed decreasing the price of energy as the least important; the men as the third most important issue. The men listed fighting global warming as the second lowest and the women placed it in the middle. Both groups were very quick to put achieving energy independence and creating jobs at the top of the list, and both groups noted that fighting global warming would happen if we developed new sources of energy and decreased our dependence on foreign oil.

When the men were asked why they placed “creating jobs” first, they noted that “It makes it all work,” and added, “once you start with that, things will flow naturally and the others will be taken care of.” Another participant noted “it builds on our strengths, innovation and all of that.” Participants in both groups noted that by taking action on their top priorities, global warming would be addressed.

Global Warming First Impressions

The ranking exercise gave these voters an opportunity to discuss global warming as a separate issue. When pressed, one man noted that it wasn’t clear that man could actually take steps to cool the earth. “There’s no doubt the warming is occurring, and there’s no doubt that human activity has some role,” he noted. But he also added, “We’re not really sure we’re going to cool the earth no matter what we do.”

Another noted that America could not do it alone, saying that “it’s also going to require China and India.” The final comment was from a man who noted that the United States was not the problem, but rather pollution from other countries. “The United States does a better job on this than other countries... It’s not like it was in the 1970’s,” when we had issues such as Love Canal. Later, this same sentiment was raised by one of the women who noted that “we’re not the worst” when it comes to global warming, and that other countries needed to increase their attention to addressing climate change.

Global Warming: What Comes to Mind?

When asked what comes to mind when the participants think of global warming, many of the images of damage to nature came to mind. Extinction of animals such as polar bears, the melting of the ice caps and flooding were all top of mind concerns. But as these concerns were raised, cynicism around government was again raised, particularly among the women. One woman noted that “there are so many other ways to address global warming -- awareness, people taking responsibility -- without the government getting involved.” The men noted that we need to raise consciousness “about how we treat the planet,” and that “we could really reduce it by using more public transportation.” Their comments were not about public policies to encourage these things, but about personal decisions made by individuals.

While there seemed to be a strong feeling that individuals were more likely to solve the problem than government, there was a strong sense by one of the women that man was being too confident in his ability to substantively impact global warming.

Making Global Warming a Priority

We pointed out to the participants that while many of them in a pre-session survey said that global warming was a problem, few of them thought the government should take immediate action to solve the problem. We asked them to explain the contradiction.

The women noted that the government does “such a poor job at everything else” and noted that the problem should be solved by individuals rather than by government action. Others noted that relative to other issues, addressing climate change wasn’t as important. “What’s the big concern about global warming,” noted one woman, “if we get blown up by terrorists?” Another woman called global warming a “celebrity news thing,” and not a serious issue like the war or terrorism. One woman noted that she felt helpless to do anything about it. “What can we do about it? What can any of us do. So you put it lower on your list because it’s out of your control.” Another noted, “terrorism is more in our control than global warming. The problem is more with China and India, and it’s natural. No one person can solve this problem. We have more control over terror and health care.” Another woman noted that “global warming seems too big to address. I need to use my car tomorrow; I need to drive to work.” One other woman noted that “Other issues are in my face. Seeing buildings being blown up, health care -- those things are wrong.” She noted that she was more concerned about “the things that are right here, right now, not a possibility in 20 years.”

The men wanted more proof that global warming was occurring, and more proof that humans had the potential to address the problem. They noted that Iraq was the top priority because “men and women are dying.” Another said that “I think our soldiers being beheaded is a more immediate, more solvable problem.” Another called it “daunting, hard to get your arms around it” and noted that it’s not a problem “our country is going to solve by ourselves.”

Federal Government’s Ability to Solve the Problem

There was also strong skepticism in the government’s ability to solve the problem. “Our government can’t clean up Katrina, how are they going to make any headway against the lobby groups to do one thing or another on global warming.” There was also widespread concern about the US acting alone, saying that other countries need to be brought in diplomatically.

One man also noted that the United States was doing a good job on global warming and was concerned that additional regulations would “put a stranglehold on our business and hurt our economy.” Others thought that “people ought to do something about it, not government. If everyone turns off one light in Tucson, we can have an impact.” There was also concern about what specific actions would be taken with one man noting, “we don’t know enough about what the government should do to start taking action.” Others noted that we need to be involved with other countries and not try to solve it on our own.

When asked what would change their mind about the importance of global warming, the men answered that “irrefutable evidence” would help, as would the discovery of “a magic gadget that

would solve the problem.” There was also an interesting observation from one man who noted “I’d take it more seriously if I saw the government doing something,” noting that the government isn’t doing anything and that no candidates are talking about the issue. The lack of government action, he asserted, was evidence that the issue wasn’t a relatively important issue.

Global Warming and Government Action

The women were unanimously opposed to the idea of a carbon tax to fight global warming as they didn’t believe the money would actually be used to fight global warming, and they didn’t think that raising prices would lead to conservation. They noted that they didn’t think that raising the price of gasoline would change behavior. The women thought the best approach would be to make cleaner technologies (such as hybrid vehicles) more affordable. Some noted they looked at buying hybrids but did not because of the price. But the idea of individual action to address the problem was broadly supported by the women. When asked about the best way to address global warming, there was widespread belief that switching light bulbs and driving smaller cars was the best way to solve the problem. Others noted that we need to prepare for health epidemics. There was no top of mind recommendation for any government action.

The men noted that economic incentives such as tax credits would work, although they were divided on taxing gas guzzlers (one participant noted that such a tax was “an infringement on personal freedom”). While there were a few who thought that a gas tax would reduce energy consumption, others noted that it would be a hardship, particularly on working people and the poor. One man noted “I drive 17 miles each way to work, and there is no one on my shift that lives around me,” noting that he had no other option but to drive alone to his job.

Global Warming: The Need for More Information

When asked about their understanding of global warming, both groups expressed skepticism that we know enough to solve the problem. There was also skepticism by those who believe global warming is occurring, but who expressed doubts that humans can do anything about it. One woman noted, “I don’t understand the narcissism of the people who think we have so much power that we can change the world. That’s ridiculous.” In the other group, a man noted “I love how man thinks so much of himself that he can solve it and that he caused it, because one volcano eruption puts out more CFCs than all the CFCs that man has ever created.”

There is an understanding, however, of the potential impacts of global warming as discussed by advocates such as Al Gore. The groups believed that icebergs and glaciers would melt, and that there is potential for “people dying because of thirst and hunger.” One of the men noted that major health epidemics would come from the changes in climate, another noted that we’d lose Bangladesh. There was an understanding that we’d see increased severe weather, hurricanes, floods, mass starvation and drought. Finally, a woman elicited laughter from the group by noting that California and New York would be underwater.

But there was also a degree of confusion. Both groups indicated a belief that respected scientists on both sides disagreed as to whether or not global warming was occurring, and whether or not there was anything humans could do to slow warming. One woman noted, “I don’t think there’s enough information to make a conclusion about what is in fact happening.” The men were even stronger in the skepticism of the impacts of global warming, citing specific examples of relating

to core samples taken from Antarctica, and stating a belief that global warming has occurred “nine or ten times” in the past.

Global Warming: Severity and Timing

When asked, the majority of the women said the effects of global warming would be major, but most believed that the threat was far into the future, with impacts beginning to be felt in their children’s lifetime or their “children’s children’s” lifetime. The men were more likely to believe the effects would occur in their lifetime, but a majority still believed the impacts would be felt decades in the future.

Credible Sources on Global Warming

When thinking about trusted sources on information related to global warming, both groups agreed that scientists and scientific publications like National Geographic were credible. The women were very concerned about people or groups deemed to have “an agenda” and/or a financial interest in the outcome of the global warming debate. The “agenda” concern was raised repeatedly and applied to more than organizations with a pecuniary interest in the debate. Al Gore and environmentalists were deemed to have “an agenda.” There was also an expression of frustration about getting good information on global warming. Three of the men expressed that they had a tough time finding a credible source on global warming, and that they don’t know where to go for good information. The women debated whether or not Al Gore was a credible spokesperson, with most tending to view him as more of a “politician” than an expert, even though he had won the Nobel Prize less than a week before the groups.

To gauge levels of credibility we asked the participants to rate the credibility of four messengers on global warming on a scale of one to five. The messengers tested were “Al Gore,” “academics,” “environmental groups,” and “your electric company.” By a large margin, both groups rated “academics” as the most credible messengers. “Al Gore” was second, followed by “Your Electric Company.” “Environmental Groups,” were the lowest scoring group. Among the women, “Environmental Groups” were the lowest rated group by a considerable margin. Among the men, “Al Gore,” “Environmental Groups,” and “Your Electric Company” all scored equally low.

The men made clear that the credibility of academics was premised on their objectivity. It was important to the women that they had “no agenda” and were not funded by interest groups on either side of the issue. The women were particularly hard on environmental groups, with half giving them the lowest rating of one, and the other half giving them a two. Interestingly, on the whole, participants rated their electric company as a better source of information on global warming than environmental groups.

We were surprised to hear the harsh skepticism around environmental groups and asked participants to talk about these perceptions. The women called them “extreme” and said they “don’t tell you the whole picture.” The word “extreme” came out repeatedly with the women. One woman noted, “many of them are extremists. They can’t strike a balance. They’re like terrorists in that they’re extreme.” Another noted that she can’t relate to environmentalists. She noted, “For me personally, those people aren’t real to me to me... they don’t have a life. They don’t drive kids to soccer; they’re not doing all the things that I’m having to do. And frankly, I

think a lot of them are willing to live a lower lifestyle than I'm willing to live. It's not relatable. I can't relate to these people. They're from a different planet."

The men had similar feelings.. They noted that environmental groups were "anti-business," "anti-entrepreneurship" and "anti-American." They viewed the groups as "violent." One participant, however, noted that environmental groups do a good job of raising awareness of problems, allowing academics to study the problems and create solutions.

Specific Legislative Approaches to Global Warming

After our discussion about global warming and potential responses, we tested three specific legislative proposals based upon current ideas being discussed to address climate change. The first is a cap-and-trade proposal that encourages innovation by setting a price for carbon. The second was \$300 billion investment into clean energy technologies over a period of ten years. The third was a cap-and-trade proposal that included an auction for credits, the proceeds of which would be dedicated to clean energy technology investment.

We asked the participants to rate each of the proposals on a scale of one to ten. We then read a series of likely attacks on the proposals. After the proposals were attacked, we asked the participants to again rate the proposal on a scale of one to ten.

By a very large margin, with both men and women, the \$300 billion investment proposal scored highest. The cap and trade program without an auction scored the lowest, and the cap and trade proposal with an auction scored in the middle with both groups. After being subject to the attacks, all of the proposals fell by between one half-point and one and a half points with one exception. After hearing the attacks on the investment proposal, the men actually *increased* their support for proposal to invest \$300 billion. Not a single man dropped his support and one increased his support, noting that the more he heard about the proposal, the more he liked.

A detailed summary of the discussion around the specific proposals follows.

Cap and Trade without a Credit Auction

We described the cap and trade proposal without a credit auction as follows: *"The Global Warming Act of 2007 would establish a cap on US carbon emissions. It would require business and industry to reduce their emissions by 80% by the year 2050 and it would allow businesses that could not reduce their emissions as much as required to purchase pollution credits from businesses that had reduced their emissions below the level required by the cap."*

This proposal scored lowest of all proposals with both groups.

The women liked that "someone was trying," and they liked that if enacted the law wouldn't be fully implemented until 2050, giving everyone "plenty of time to comply." This came up repeatedly, with a degree of confusion about what when the actual requirements would go into effect. Others wondered if an 80% reduction is possible, and noted that it would "cause the price of products to go up." Others didn't think it went far enough noting that "it's too much time" and that "the credit thing gives people an out." In fact, the idea of credits was a problem in both groups. Both men and women thought the "credit" system allowed companies to get out of

doing the right thing, and that suspected they would be misused to allow continued bad behavior. Other men thought that it was “too much government interference” and noted that “hopefully by that time [2050] innovation is probably going to happen and make it irrelevant.” Others thought it should cover traditional air pollutants besides carbon, and another said that he thought it might cause jobs to move overseas where there are less stringent rules. Others wondered what other countries would be doing if we took action.

Next we subjected the proposal to a series of attacks and asked the participants if they found the attacks effective.

First, we told participants that some argued *“this proposal would likely result in much higher gasoline and energy costs over the next several decades, potentially doubling or tripling the price of gasoline, heating oil, and electricity in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.”*

Most women found this argument effective. Conversely, by a two-to-one margin, the men did not. One man noted “we’re talking 40 years plus, we don’t know what the state of alternative energy will be then.” Another man was unconvinced noting that in the long run, the “American entrepreneur will develop new energy sources -- it’ll be a good thing.”

Next, we noted that some believed *“this proposal would impose costly new restrictions on the American economy and American consumers while requiring no such commitment from our economic competitors, such as China and India.”*

Most of the women and all but one of the men found this argument effective. This paralleled a lot of concern we heard from the men about the economy, China and India, and the prospect of jobs moving overseas.

After we read the arguments against the proposal, we asked participants to again rank the initial proposal on a 1 to 10 scale to see if their opinion had changed. Most participants reduced their ranking from their initial score, with the men dropping their support slightly more than the women.

Investment in Clean Energy Technologies

Next we tested support for this proposal: *“The Apollo Energy Act would invest \$300 billion over 10 years to develop new, low-cost clean energy technologies and industries. The goal of the project would be to eliminate America’s dependence on foreign oil within ten years, create jobs in new clean energy industries, and dramatically reduce US carbon emissions.”*

The support for this plan was twice the level recorded for the cap and trade proposals.

The plan to invest \$300 billion was widely supported by the participants. One woman noted that “it addresses everyone’s concern. It addresses alternatives, reduces carbon... and is low cost.” Another noted the job creation aspect to and another said it would prevent us from “having to go to war.” The men were equally enthusiastic, noting that “this was number one on our list. It will create new jobs. It’s a win-win.” The men liked the jobs portion of the bill, and said it would be

a good return on our investment. On the negative side, there was concern about where the money was coming from and one man thought the money should come from the oil companies rather than the government. One man noted “- it’s a small amount of money, only \$30 billion a year. It’s not enough to accomplish the goals they mentioned.”

After the initial discussion we told participants that some argued “*this proposal would cost hundreds of billions of dollars yet there is no plan for how to pay for it. That means that either our taxes will go up or the federal deficit will increase.*” We then asked them to rate the argument as effective or ineffective.

Most of the women said this argument was effective, but remarkably not a single man thought the argument was effective. One woman noted, “once you take care of my social security, you can spend the money.” Another countered, “we’ll have enough money if we bring the troops home.” The men noted that they were aware of the spending requirements when they made their initial decision to support it. Another man noted that if we created those technologies and exported them, it would actually have the opposite effect on the treasury.

Next, we told participants that some argued “*this proposal will spend hundreds of billions of dollars on developing new clean energy technologies but there is no requirement that polluting industries actually reduce their carbon dioxide emissions.*”

No men and only one woman found this argument persuasive. “I don’t buy it, I have faith in America,” noted one woman.

After we read the arguments against the proposal, we asked participants to again rank the initial proposal on a 1 to 10 scale to see if their opinion had changed. Support among women dropped roughly one point, but support among men actually increased. Only one man changed his mind, and he *increased* his level of support after hearing the arguments against the proposal.

The men were strongly in favor of this proposal and their support was quite deep. The women seemed moved by concerns over pork barrel spending, but their end score was much higher than either of the cap and trade proposals before or after the attacks.

Because these arguments failed to move opinion by the men, we pressed them to see what potential arguments or questions they have about the policy. There wasn’t a great deal of skepticism about the proposal, although one man noted “The government isn’t going to do this in an effective way. That’s probably the strongest argument against it.”

Cap and Trade with Credit Auction

Next we tested support for this proposal: “*The Clean Energy Act of 2007 will create a cap on US carbon emissions and will create a system of credits for companies that can not reduce their emissions to meet the caps. These credits will be auctioned off by the government, and the \$300 billion raised from the auction will be used to develop cheap, clean energy sources that reduce our dependence on foreign energy, create American jobs, and reduce carbon emissions. The*

investment is designed to result in developing new energy sources as well as reducing the cost of existing clean energy sources like solar and wind.”

Initial support for this proposal fell in between the levels of support for the other two proposals; it was slightly more favored by men than women.

While the score on this was lower than the investment strategy, a few women were effusive in their praise, noting that this was “perfect” and that it “takes care of the issue and makes the polluters pay for it.” They liked the idea that the polluter pays. The men liked the idea that this one “raises the money,” but there was concern about “putting all the costs onto businesses.” The women still opposed the idea of a credit noting “it should be a penalty” and that “a credit sounds like a reward.” There was concern about getting the government involved, and that it would create a new bureaucracy. Some of the men reiterated a concern that this would drive jobs to places like Mexico because they wouldn’t have the same regulations.

After the initial discussion we told participants that some argued *“this proposal will force American businesses to pay \$300 billion over ten years. It will increase the cost of electricity, gasoline and the cost to ship goods across the country. The companies will simply pass these costs onto consumers who will be forced to pay more for electricity, gasoline, and most consumer items.”* We then asked whether or not this was an effective argument.

Most women and all of the men found this argument effective. Both men and women noted that when it comes to raising prices, “they already do it now.” The men were more adamant this would happen noting “any time there’s an increase on a business; they’re going to pass it on.” Women were even more cynical. But their cynicism helped in this instance with one noting that “they’ll find a way to raise it anyway,” as a reason the argument was not effective.

We then told participants that some argued *“this proposal will hurt the economy by making American companies pay big fees for emissions credits. It will cause some industries – like the coal and oil industries – to lay off workers and even close their doors.”*

No men and only a couple of women found this argument effective. One of the women who said she found the argument effective also noted that she wanted the oil industry to close their doors. Another noted that the auto industry claimed that seatbelts and airbags were going to put them out of business. Men pointed out larger issues in the economy (e.g. the lack of exports) as being a larger source of the problem.

We then told participants that some argued *“this proposal creates new government regulations, a huge tax on American industry, and gives \$300 billion to government bureaucrats to spend on pet projects.”*

This was a major concern for women with all saying the argument was effective. Most of the men also found this argument effective. The women were adamant that this would be a problem, but both groups were resigned that this was simply how government conducts itself.

After we read the arguments against the proposal, we asked participants to again rank the initial proposal on a 1 to 10 scale to see if their opinion had changed. Support for these proposals fell moderately across the board.

We asked those who changed their minds to expand upon the reasons for their drop. The women didn't like the bureaucratic aspect of the plan, and they noted that ultimately the money comes from consumers saying "it always hits us." They also preferred having the private sector determine where the money would go as "the government is very wasteful." They also thought that corruption would lead to abuse noting that companies could get around the credit issues "if you're paying for someone's campaign." They noted "\$300 billion isn't that much when you think about what we're spending our money on now." The men didn't like to see the energy companies penalized, they were concerned about the price tag, and there were concerns over the impact of the regulations on the economy.

Summary of Levels of Support

There was broad and sustained support for the investment strategy, with the men actually increasing their support after hearing the arguments. The cynicism in the women's group seemed to be stoked in the discussion about pork projects and wasteful spending, but the overall level of support for the investment program remained higher than their support for the other programs -- both before and after any negative comments were heard. Additionally, while there was little support for the cap and trade proposal without an auction, including a provision to provide investment increased overall support for the regulations. This could be a powerful finding for advocates -- by including measures to invest in technologies perceived to lower dependence on foreign oil and achieve energy independence, there is potential to increase support for regulatory measures such as cap and trade.

Dealing with Pork Concerns

We anticipated that one of the major problems with an investment strategy would be concerns over pork and were prepared to have a detailed discussion about how to best overcome this concern. Both men and women were somewhat resigned about the potential for wasteful spending, with the women all noting that it was a big problem. The men were very concerned about "accountability," noting that "unfortunately there is a history of throwing money at a problem and no one know where it goes."

Interestingly, there were also some interesting observations about the effectiveness of governmental investment. There was a sense among the men that some of the most successful industries in American were born without government assistance. One man noted, "look at what Silicon Valley has done without any government involvement. That's very impressive." Others noted that only government can fund certain projects or help with high start up costs. "Nuclear energy," another man offered, "the start up costs are prohibitive for private industry, and they could use a nudge from the government." Note, however, that this group was also very supportive of the proposal to invest \$300 billion of taxpayer money into clean energy investment even after the proposal was attacked with a pork argument.

Structures to Overcome Pork Concerns

Again, anticipating pork concerns, we created three potential structures to take the decision making around particular projects out of the hands of politicians. We tested each of these with the groups and found a relative lack of enthusiasm for all of the alternatives.

While there wasn't a particular preference for any sort of structure, the participants wanted to know that there was some accountability, and that the decisions as to where the money would be spent would be made by experts. Addressing these concerns is much more important to these voters than the particular kind of structure used to implement any investment strategy.

First we tested the idea of a governmental agency like the National Institutes of Health in which experts employed by the government would make decisions about research priorities and investment. There was concern about growing the size of government, and the participants wanted to make sure that there was a panel of experts deciding how the money would be spent. One man noted that "we already have a Department of Energy and another government bureaucracy doesn't excite me." Another man noted that he would be supportive if it were made up of academics rather than bureaucrats.

Next we tested the idea of blue ribbon panel patterned after the Base Realignment and Closure Commission that would be appointed by the President and the Congress but would have leeway to make decisions without political interference. Both men and women were very concerned about who the commissioners would be accountable to, who would oversee them, and how they'd be appointed. There was skepticism of politicians being able to pick the people who would serve on the commission, and they wanted to know what limitations would be put on the commission. One man also wanted a time limit to force them to produce results.

Third, we tested the idea of an independent non-profit corporation like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting consisting of an independent board of directors who would oversee the corporation's core functions. The women were concerned about how to find experts who would work on the issue on a not-for-profit basis, and there was concern that industry experts would seek a seat on the board in order to serve their industries and to make a profit. The men were more open to this idea, and liked the idea of an independent board, but were not particularly enthusiastic.

In fact, in the end, one man noted "We already have a lot of this in place we have plenty of think tanks, plenty of academics, plenty of bureaucrats. I don't think any of these would be an improvement over what we have."

Naming the Investment Strategy

We next asked participants to imagine that they had created the \$300 billion investment strategy, and that they were required to name the overall effort to invest the money in renewable energy technologies. We provided five potential names and asked participants for their response.

First, we tested "*New Apollo Project*." There was some confusion about Apollo as a name, with one woman noting "Apollo means having to do with space, it has nothing to do with energy." Another asked, "Why are we stuck on Apollo? What do Greek Gods have to do with any of this?" One did note, however, that she thought it meant that America "does the impossible" in

reference to the moon landing. They did like the word “project” however. Less than half of the men liked the name.

Next we tested, “*American Power.*” All women were opposed to “American Power,” and only one man liked it. The women noted that it “sounds corporate” and one remarked “it will make the terrorists hate us more.” The one man who did like it noted that he liked that it sounded “imperialistic.”

Next we tested, “*Clean Energy Investment.*” There was broad but thin support for the name. The men all liked it, but when pressed they noted that they liked it because it was the best “so far.”

Next we tested, “*Energize America.*” Most of the women liked Energize America, but some thought it sounded “like a marathon or something physical.” Only one man liked it, however, and another noted that it “makes me think of Richard Simmons.”

Finally, we tested, “*Americans for Energy Independence.*” There was broad support among the women for this one and most men supported it as well. The women liked the literalness of it noting “it says who we are, and this is what we’ve been all been talking about – energy independence from other countries.”

Final Thoughts on Global Warming

We were able to get some final thoughts on global warming with the men, as they took less time on other parts of the discussion. This discussion was relatively free flowing with the moderator asking for clarification on particular points, but with the participants themselves guiding some of the conversation.

We asked the men what kinds of evidence caused them to believe that global warming was occurring. The men noted they were very moved by visual evidence. They noted seeing things on PBS and on National Geographic that have convinced them that it’s a problem. Animal extinctions, and clear visual evidence are important, but it must come from a trusted scientific source that does not “have an agenda.” Ultimately, as one participant noted, “seeing is believing.”

There was also a sense that America is already doing a good job on global warming, and that we “shouldn’t do anything while giving a pass to other countries.” One man noted, “we’re adding a billion people to the planet every 13 years. India and China want development, they want to drive cars around the streets like we do. Intuitively, you’ve got to know that these pollutants we’re putting into the atmosphere are doing something. For me, it’s about my kids the deficit and the planet. We’re like the AIDS virus killing our host. That’s a pretty dreadful legacy.” Another was resigned about the effects of global warming noting that he lived in the Arctic for a number of years and he’s seeing the villages where native peoples relied on traditional means of survival having a hard time. He noted, however, that the only thing we can do for them is to move them.

When asked to discuss the best approaches for global warming, the first item mentioned was to “find a credible spokesman - not Al Gore.” They wanted “concrete evidence” even though “the vast majority of Americans aren’t smart enough to understand it.” They wanted more work done by experts affiliated with “independent universities and think tanks” fighting the problem. One thought it best to “lump global warming in with other environmental problems,” and another said we needed to start working to mitigate the effects of global warming. There was resistance to government involvement with one participant noting that “it makes me think of that green bumper sticker: think globally but act locally. We keep saying the government should do things, but we need to have individuals taking action.” There was support for getting other countries involved, and working together to develop cleaner fuels. In terms of a governmental response, one participant noted the need for “tax credits and incentives,” and another noted that we can solve it through “tax credits and research grants” that could “create new technologies that we could market around the world.”