As the end of the 2015 approaches, multiple programs are up for renewal as the legislative calendar winds down. The Investment Tax Credit (ITC) and Production Tax Credit (PTC) are two of these programs, and are of vital interest to the renewable energy sector.

There is broad support for incentivizing the development and growth of renewable energy in Illinois. Voters see the value in a stable tax policy for renewables, and support continuing tax incentives for the industry.

New research that we have conducted on behalf of the Wind Energy Foundation suggests that support for renewable energy is strong with voters across the political spectrum.

During November of 2015, we conducted a live-interview telephone survey of 600 registered voters in Illinois. In this survey, we found that tax incentives for renewable energy enjoy strong support along with increasing development of renewable energy sources in the United States.

**VOTERS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPRESSION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY AND A MAJORITY OF ILLINOIS VOTERS BELIEVE INCREASED DEVELOPMENT WILL BRING JOBS TO THE STATE**

We asked Illinois voters: “Would you say you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar?” Overwhelmingly, voters said they were favorable, with 79% of voters overall saying they had a favorable impression, and 49% said they were strongly favorable. This included 67% of Republicans and 63% of very conservative voters saying their impression of renewable energy is favorable.
We then asked voters if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “We should accelerate the growth of renewable energy so American innovation can create economic growth and jobs at home.” A strong majority -- 87% -- of voters said they agree, and 66% said they strongly agree. Women are even stronger supporters of the idea, as 91% of women say they agree versus 82% of men surveyed.

Nearly six in ten voters in Illinois -- 59% -- said they believed that jobs would be created in Illinois if there was an increase in renewable energy sources. Seventy-one percent of voters between the ages of 18 and 29 agree, as do 69% of those between age 30 and 39.

**ILLINOIS VOTERS SUPPORT CONTINUING TAX INCENTIVES FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY, EVEN WHEN PRESENTED WITH CONTRASTING ARGUMENTS**

Supporting the acceleration of renewable energy is a winning message with Illinois voters, both in the abstract and on the policy specifics. When talking specifically about tax incentives for renewable energy, strong majorities of Illinois voters are receptive to continuing our existing programs.

- Illinois respondents were asked if, in general, they support or oppose continuing to provide tax incentives for renewable energy. Nearly three out of four (74%) said yes, including 60% of Republicans and 79% of Illinois Independents.

- Next, voters were read two statements about tax incentives for renewable energy: “Some people say that we should continue providing tax incentives that help make renewable energy like wind and solar cheaper and encourage investment in developing renewable energy sources. Other people say that we have other affordable energy sources like natural gas and coal, so we should not provide tax incentives for renewable energy.” Seventy four percent of Illinois voters said that we should continue providing tax incentives.

- We also found nine out of ten (92%) of voters between the ages of 18 and 29 support continuing tax incentives after the contrast messaging. A full 82% of Illinois voters between the ages of 30 and 39 agree.

- Furthermore, 59% of Republicans in Illinois felt we should continue providing tax incentives for renewable energy even after hearing an opposition argument, along with 75% of Independents and 82% of Democrats.
ILLINOIS VOTERS ARE GENERALLY MORE FAVORABLE TO LEADERS WHO SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY

The issue of renewable energy will no doubt be part of the national conversation over the next year. We asked voters in Illinois if they would be more favorable, less favorable, or if it would not make a difference if a leader in Illinois supported continuing tax credits for renewable energy producers.

Nearly half (48%) of Illinois voters said they would be more favorable to a leader who supported continuing tax credits for renewable energy producers. This included a strong majority (59%) of Democrats, just over half (53%) of Independents, and thirty percent of Republicans.

Only 12% of Illinois voters across the state said they would be less favorable to a leader who supported renewable energy production tax credits. Just over one third (35%) of Illinois voters said it would make no difference to them if a leader supported continuing tax credits for renewable energy producers. This includes 43% of Republicans, 37% of very conservative voters, and 53% of somewhat conservative Illinois voters.

ILLINOIS VOTERS RESPOND TO MESSAGING ABOUT ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND ENCOURAGING PRIVATE INVESTMENT

The most successful advocacy for renewable energy focuses on energy independence. We read Illinois voters a series of statements about renewable energy development, and asked them to tell us if they agree or disagree.

- “We should continue to encourage renewable energy development so that the United States can move toward energy independence.” -- 88% of voters, including 79% of Republicans, agree. 64% of Illinois voters strongly agree.

- “Renewable energy is beneficial to the United States economy and our environment, and encouraging private investment in this industry should be a priority.” -- 82% of voters, including 71% of Republicans, agree. 53% of Illinois voters strongly agree.

- “We should have a stable and predictable tax policy, because it makes it easier for the renewable energy industry to plan its investments and continue driving down costs.” -- 78% of voters, including 75% of Republicans, agree. 46% of Illinois voters strongly agree.
• “If we do not continue current tax incentives for renewable energy, the industry will lose significant momentum that has created jobs and important infrastructure.” -- 62% of voters, including 44% of Republicans, agree. 34% of Illinois voters strongly agree.

Voters in Illinois clearly value renewable energy’s ability to help the United States achieve energy independence. Strong majorities agreed with all of the tested messaging on renewable energy investment, though intensity was markedly higher for the message with the most tangible benefit.

We also asked Illinois voters if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “We shouldn’t give special treatment to renewable energy.” A strong majority, 62%, disagreed.

While three quarters of Democrats disagreed that we should not give special treatment to renewable energy, so did 63% of Independents. Republicans were split more evenly, with 45% agreeing and 47% disagreeing. Among very conservative Illinoisans, 33% said they disagreed, compared with 53% of those who are somewhat conservative.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

**Illinois voters see value in continuing tax incentives for renewable energy production and investment.** Support for renewable energy is broad and deep, cutting across party lines and finding strong support from key groups such as younger voters and Independents. When benefits, such as energy independence, are made clear, voters respond favorably. Even when presented with counter-arguments, Illinois voters still express broad support for the idea that we should continue incentivizing renewable energy investment and production.