



February 2, 2011

In U.S., Alternative Energy Bill Does Best Among Eight Proposals

Two-thirds favor expanded drilling and exploration for oil and gas

by Jeffrey M. Jones

PRINCETON, NJ -- Of eight actions Congress could take this year, Americans most favor an energy bill that provides incentives for using alternative energy (83%), an overhaul of the federal tax code (76%), and speeding up withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan (72%).

Next, I'm going to read a list of actions Congress could take this year. Please say whether you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose Congress doing each of the following this year. How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

	Total % favor	Total % oppose
Pass an energy bill that provides incentives for using solar and other alternative energy sources	83	15
Pass a bill to overhaul the federal tax code	76	14
Speed up the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan	72	25
Pass an energy bill that expands drilling and exploration for oil and gas	65	33
Approve a free-trade agreement with South Korea	53	35
Pass stronger gun control laws	49	50
Take steps to deny automatic citizenship to children born in the U.S. whose parents are illegal immigrants	44	54
Pass a bill to give some illegal immigrants living in the U.S. a path to legal status	43	55

USA Today/Gallup, Jan. 14-16, 2011



A smaller percentage of Americans, but still a solid majority at 65%, favor an energy bill that expands drilling and exploration for oil and gas.

The two least popular proposals tested address the illegal immigration issue, with one seeking to expand the rights of illegal immigrants and the other to roll them back. By 55% to 43%, Americans oppose Congress' passing legislation that would give some illegal immigrants living in the U.S. a path to legal status. By a similar

margin (54% to 44%), Americans also oppose taking steps to deny automatic citizenship to children born in the U.S. whose parents are illegal immigrants.

Americans are about equally divided in their support for (49%) and opposition to (50%) passing stronger gun control laws.

The proposals tested in the Jan. 14-16 *USA Today*/Gallup poll include some of the actions the new Congress could take, but do not amount to a comprehensive list. The results can be viewed as Americans' support for or opposition to the basic idea of each policy, and not necessarily their backing of particular legislation Congress may pursue. For example, should Congress actually draft legislation to overhaul the federal tax code, Americans could be less supportive than this poll suggests if the specific bill eliminated popular tax deductions.

Of the eight proposals, the alternative energy bill and tax code overhaul ideas show the greatest bipartisan agreement, with 74% or more of each party group favoring these. Majorities of all three party groups also favor faster withdrawal from Afghanistan and expanded exploration for oil and gas, though with less widespread party consensus: Republicans are much less likely to back a speedier withdrawal from Afghanistan and Democrats less likely to endorse increased oil and gas exploration. Slim majorities of all three party groups favor passage of a free-trade agreement with South Korea.

Support for Possible Congressional Actions, by Political Party

Figures represent total % in favor

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%
Pass alternative energy bill	93	82	75
Overhaul federal tax code	74	77	77
Speed up withdrawal from Afghanistan	86	72	61
Pass energy bill to expand oil and gas exploration	52	62	83
Approve a free-trade agreement with South Korea	53	55	50
Pass stronger gun control laws	68	47	30
Deny automatic citizenship to children of illegal immigrants	36	44	51
Give some illegal immigrants living in the U.S. a path to legal status	64	39	27

USA Today/Gallup, Jan. 14-16, 2011

The party groups show the most disagreement on stronger gun control laws and a path to legal status for some illegal immigrants, both of which are favored by most Democrats but opposed by most Republicans.

None of the party groups shows solid support for taking steps to deny automatic citizenship to children of illegal immigrants, with Republicans most supportive at 51%.

Implications

With Republicans in control of the House of Representatives and Democrats in control of the Senate, it would appear the proposals with the best chances of passing are those that generate strong bipartisan support. That is clearly the case for a bill that would provide incentives for increased use of alternative energy.

While there is strong bipartisan sentiment for overhauling the federal tax code, Republicans and Democrats would likely have very different ideas on how to handle an overhaul, making the odds of passing such legislation unclear.

Though there is less bipartisan agreement on increased oil and gas exploration or a speedier withdrawal from Afghanistan, there may be enough that Congress could pass legislation on these issues if it decides to pursue them.

Survey Methods

Results for this *USA Today*/Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted Jan. 14-16, 2011, with a random sample of 1,032 adults, aged 18 and older, living in the continental U.S., selected using random-digit-dial sampling.

For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones (for respondents with a landline telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell phone-only). Each sample includes a minimum quota of 150 cell phone-only respondents and 850 landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas among landline respondents for gender within region. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday.

Samples are weighted by gender, age, race, education, region, and phone lines. Demographic weighting targets are based on the March 2010 Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older non-institutionalized population living in continental U.S. telephone households. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting and sample design.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

[View methodology, full question results, and trend data.](#)

For more details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit www.gallup.com.