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## Public Support for Ethanol National Survey Results

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research  
Public Opinion Strategies

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The on-going campaign to force the nation to revisit and reduce its commitment to ethanol has failed to move most American voters. A recent bi-partisan survey of 1,200 registered voters shows that by a 2:1 margin, the public supports increased use of ethanol in our nation's fuel supply. This majority crosses party lines, capturing conservatives and environmentalists alike. Voters largely blame the rising cost of food on fuel prices; less than one in ten blame the expanded use of ethanol.

Between June 23 and July 1, the Democratic polling firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and the Republican polling firm Public Opinion Strategies conducted a survey of 1,200 registered voters, including oversamples of environmentalists and "opinion formers."<sup>1</sup> The overall margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.83. This survey was commissioned by the Renewable Fuels Association.

### The pro-ethanol majority is big...and broad.

Asked if they favor or oppose continuing to increase use of ethanol, an impressive 59 percent come out in favor, while just 30 percent oppose. Support is even higher (63 percent) among environmentalists. Men and women, older voters and younger voters, high school educated and college graduates, and voters from all regions in the country support this alternative fuel. Most impressive, though, at a time when Democrats and Republicans cannot seem to agree on anything, they agree on the increased use of ethanol.

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<sup>1</sup> Environmentalists are defined for the purpose of this survey as voters who either belong or contribute to an environmental organization; opinion formers are voters who are college educated or better, interested in national issues and consumers of national news.

■ **Figure 1:** Public support for increased use of ethanol

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<b>Total support</b>	59	63	58
<b>Total oppose</b>	30	24	35
<i>Do you favor or oppose continuing to increase the use of ethanol, a renewable source of energy, in our nation's fuel supply?</i>			

**Voters blame oil, not ethanol, for the high price of food.**

By a 71 to 17 percent margin, voters believe the rising cost of oil and gas is the primary reason food prices have been going up, rather than blaming the rising use of corn-based ethanol. Asked from a list what is most to blame for the rising cost of food, less than one in ten pick ethanol, compared to 49 percent who blame rising oil prices.

■ **Figure 2:** Blame for rising cost of food

	<b>Total</b>
<b>Increased cost of gasoline and fuel</b>	49
<b>Increased commodities speculation</b>	11
<b>Increased use of grain for ethanol</b>	8
<b>Corporate takeover of food production</b>	8
<b>Increased demand in China and India</b>	7
<b>Severe weather</b>	7
<i>Which of the following do you blame the most for the rising cost of food in this country?</i>	

**National candidates are advantaged by supporting ethanol.**

A 50 percent majority of voters describe themselves as more likely to support a candidate for president who supports increasing the use of ethanol. Just 20 percent are

less likely and 22 percent argue it would make no difference. This advantage extends to both Obama voters and McCain voters.

■ **Figure 3:** Impact of candidate for president supporting ethanol

	Total	Obama voters	McCain voters
<b>More likely</b>	50	58	45
<b>Less likely</b>	20	14	25
<b>No difference</b>	22	19	22

*Would you be more or less likely to support a candidate for president who supports increasing the use of ethanol, a renewable energy source, in our nation's fuel supply?*

### Many voters have heard the recent debate and its impact has been mixed.

At least 65 percent of voters have heard something recently in the news about ethanol in the last two or three weeks, and 28 percent have heard a lot about the issue. Generally speaking, this debate has not changed voters' minds about the ethanol (43 percent say what they have heard has not made a difference in their opinion one way or the other), but the rest split somewhat evenly on whether this debate has made them feel more favorably toward ethanol (30 percent) or less favorable (23 percent).

We see some evidence about the doubts planted about this fuel in voters' reactions to a paired set of statements, though arguably these responses also reflect some confusion as well. Here a plurality agree that ethanol reduces global warming.

■ **Figure 4:** Forced choice statements on ethanol

	Total	
	Total first statement	Total second statement
Ethanol burns cleaner than oil, which helps to prevent global warming caused by greenhouse gases. OR Ethanol does not reduce global warming because it takes more energy to produce it than it delivers when used as fuel.	44	33
<i>Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right.</i>		

Among environmentalists, 47 percent believe ethanol helps prevent global warming, while 36 percent believe it does not reduce global warming.

### Conclusion

The recent barrage of stories about ethanol has failed to move the country. Voters of all partisan and ideological stripes support *increased* use of this important, home-grown energy alternative and do not blame ethanol for the rising cost of food. The steadfast support of environmentalists is particularly telling, in that much of the campaign against ethanol has been waged in the environmental community.