

TO: Interested Parties  
 FROM: Global Strategy Group  
 DATE: January 14, 2016  
 RE: **Waukegan voters strongly support lakefront transition plan to retire coal plant**

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Voters in Waukegan overwhelmingly support the development of a transition plan for the Waukegan coal power plant that commits to a date within the next several years to retire the plant and creates a committee to come up with a plan to redevelop polluted sites along the lakefront. Support is found across all key demographic groups, and reflects voters’ broader preference for renewable energy, like solar, over coal-generated electricity. Furthermore, support remains strong after voters hear arguments from both sides, including strong opposition messages.

Key findings from Global Strategy Group’s recent poll of 300 registered voters citywide are as follows:

- **Waukegan voters strongly prefer an expansion of solar power and a reduction in the use of coal.** Nearly eight in ten voters in the city want their part of Illinois to start producing more electricity from solar energy, including 57% who want to produce “much more” of it. Conversely, most voters want their area to produce less electricity from coal.

Should your part of Illinois produce more, less, or the same amount of its electricity from this source?



- **Voters overwhelmingly support a transition plan to retire the Waukegan coal power plant.** By an overwhelming margin (70% support/19% oppose), voters support a plan that would set a date within the next several years to retire Waukegan’s coal-burning power plant and consider clean energy alternatives, transition the plant’s workers to retirement or new jobs, and create a local committee to plan the redevelopment of polluted sites along the lakefront. Support is both broad and deep, with two in five voters (40%) supporting the plan “strongly.”

As you may know, some people in Waukegan have proposed that the city develop a transition plan for retiring the Waukegan coal power plant on the lakefront. The transition plan would:

- Commit to a date within the next several years to retire the Waukegan coal-burning power plant and consider clean energy alternatives.
- Create a process to transition the plant's workers to retirement or new jobs.
- Create a committee of local citizens and leaders to come up with a plan for redeveloping polluted sites along the lakefront.

Do you support or oppose this transition plan to retire the Waukegan coal power plant?

**Support**



- **A simulated debate on the issue only serves to strengthen support for the transition plan – despite an opposition message claiming possible job losses and electricity rate hikes.** After voters are exposed to arguments for and against the plan, support rises to nearly three-fourths (73% support/23% oppose). Support for the plan also solidifies after this balanced debate, with the percentage of voters supporting it “strongly” growing from 40% to 46%.

**Supporters** say that more than one in three children in our area have asthma - largely because the 50-year old Waukegan coal plant is a major source of toxic pollution. Scientists estimate that retiring the plant would prevent 330 asthma attacks and 31 heart attacks in our community every year. Even more, it would mean we can develop a long-term strategy to replace the plant with new solar installations that will create good-paying jobs and finally revitalize the lakefront to attract more visitors, residents, businesses and tax revenue.

**Opponents** say that the Waukegan plant was recently upgraded with new technology that vastly reduces pollution. Not only does it supply affordable and reliable electricity to our community, but it also provides jobs for one hundred fifty local workers as well a reliable source of tax revenue to the city. NRG, which owns the plant, is also very supportive of our local community, partnering with the city and encouraging its employees to engage in community service. Prematurely shuttering the plant could end all of these benefits.



**NET SUPPORT: 73% (+3)**

- **Support for the coal plant transition plan spans the major partisan and demographic groups of the electorate – with strong support from the city’s Latino voters.** After the simulated debate, 81% of the city’s Latino voters support the transition plan (while just 16% oppose it).

GROUP	INITIAL SUPPORT	INFORMED SUPPORT
Dem	77	81
Ind/GOP <small>*Small n-sizes require these groups to be analyzed together</small>	58	60
White	64	62
Latino	73	81
Black	78	80
North*	64	72
Central*	76	69
South*	72	77

\*Regional definitions are as follows:

- North: Wards 5, 7, 8
- Central: Wards 3, 4, 6
- South: Wards 1, 2, 9

- **Supporting the coal plant transition plan can only benefit Mayor Wayne Motley, particularly with Latino voters.** If Mayor Motley were to support the transition plan to retire Waukegan’s coal plant, Waukegan voters are far more likely to say that they would feel more favorable toward the Mayor than less favorable (26% more favorable/8% less favorable). Latino voters are particularly enthusiastic, with 31% saying they would feel more favorable towards Mayor Motley if he were to support the plan, compared to 3% who would feel less favorable.

#### ABOUT THESE DATA

Global Strategy Group recently conducted a 300-interview survey of registered voters in Waukegan between December 11<sup>th</sup> and December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 5.7 percentage points. Care has been taken to ensure that the partisan, geographic, and demographic divisions of the citywide electorate are properly represented by the survey’s respondents.