#  Round Up of State-Level Polling – January 2013



**MS:** [**Poll shows customer opposition to rate hikes via Kemper coal plant (Sierra Club)**](http://msbusiness.com/magnoliamarketplace/2013/01/30/sierra-club-poll-substantial-customer-opposition-to-rate-hikes-via-kemper-coal-plant/)

The Sierra Club was supposed to release last Thursday the results of a poll meant to gauge Mississippi Power Co. ratepayers’ attitudes toward the Kemper County coal plant.

The environmental group delayed the results because of a hearing in which the Mississippi Public Service Commission reached a rate case settlement with the utility.

The delay ended Wednesday morning. The poll, conducted by Fondren Strategies, surveyed by landline and mobile telephone 400 respondents that a press release says were certified to be Mississippi Power customers.

The results say 65 percent of those polled said the possibility of their electricity rates going up approximately 33 percent once the plant is finished erodes their support of the project. About 75 percent of respondents say cost overruns should be paid by utility shareholders.

Mississippi Power has already filed to recover $172 million in financing costs associated with the project. The filing came one day after last week’s settlement, which lowered the maximum cost recoverable via PSC ratemaking proceedings from $2.88 billion to $2.4 billion.

If the PSC grants the $172 million recovery request, Mississippi Power says rates will go up an average of 21 percent, starting in April and lasting through 2013, for customers who use an average of 1,000 kWh per month.

The project’s overall rate impact, the company said on an analyst call Friday, will hover around 25 percent.

The Sierra Club has opposed the plant since its inception in 2009, calling it an expensive and unnecessary environmental hazard. The club has called for the plant to be converted to a natural gas-fired facility, which it says is cleaner than the lignite coal the plant will eventually use.

The project is on time for a May 2014 completion, Mississippi Power said recently.

Full results can be found [here](http://www.scribd.com/doc/116691055/121312-NY-ISSUE-BP).

Sierra Club’s own press release can be found [here](http://content.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2013/01/new-poll-shows-ms-power-customers-strongly-oppose-rate-hikes-kemper-county).

*Fondren Strategies interviewed 400 voters in MS from Jan. 14 – 17; MoE is +/- 4.9% points at the 95% CI*

**NY:** [**NY voters evenly split on fracking for gas (Quinnipiac)**](http://www.13wham.com/news/local/story/new-york-gas-fracking-poll/1Khh7FBeKEueVUJPtdyWfQ.cspx)

A new poll shows New York voters evenly split on natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale region.

The Quinnipiac University poll released Thursday shows 43 percent support drilling because of the economic benefits and 42 oppose it because of environmental concerns surrounding high-volume hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. The technology frees natural gas from shale deep underground by injecting a well with chemically treated water and sand.

Support is stronger upstate, with 48 percent in favor of lifting the ban on fracking and 40 percent opposed.

Full results can be found [here](http://www.scribd.com/doc/116691055/121312-NY-ISSUE-BP).

*Quinnipiac interviewed 1,127 voters in NY from Jan. 23 – 28; MoE is +/- 2.9% points at the 95% CI*

**NY:** [**Poll shows shift on fracking among women (Siena)**](http://niagara-gazette.com/local/x1746080308/Poll-shows-shift-on-fracking-among-voters)

A new Siena poll shows that 51 percent of upstate voters now oppose the gas extraction process called hydrofracking.

With Gov. Andrew Cuomo set to make a decision on the controversial process by Feb. 27, the group Environmental Advocates of New York says the latest poll shows that the upstate residents with the most at stake haven't been given an opportunity to learn enough about the environmental, health or economic impacts of the plan — a process which at time, it says, has included secrecy.

The poll concludes upstate voters specifically are opposed to fracking, 51 to 38 percent, with 10 percent still undecided.

"Just 10 percent of people living upstate have not yet formed an opinion, so even in the very unlikely event that every one of them made their bed with the gas and oil industry, a majority would still oppose," said Katherine Nadeau, Water & Natural Resources Program Director for the advocacy group. "This is something Gov. Cuomo should take to heart."

Guidelines to mitigate potentially negative impacts of the so-called "fracking" industry were proposed in 2011, and in November, Cuomo extended the process by 90 days, including a 30 day public comment period that ended last Friday.

But officials with the advocacy group said secrecy has kept the results of a further health review from becoming public, and that 204,000 residents who expressed concerns during that period haven't yet had a chance to review all of the data still being compiled on the economics, health risks or other possible consequences of the practice.

"While public opinion polls have largely remained constant on fracking in recent years, Gov. Cuomo's statement that he expects to make a decision in just 40 days – despite a lack of accessible science – has caused a marked shift in public opinion and overall interest in this dangerous activity," Nadeau said in a statement on behalf of the group.

The group says it is in favor of allowing the current process to expire, thus delaying a decision until the expert review of the DEC's latest health study is released.

Full results can be found [here](http://www.siena.edu/uploadedfiles/home/sri/SNY%20January%202013%20Poll%20Release%20--%20FINAL.pdf).

*Siena interviewed 676 voters in NY from Jan. 10 – 15; MoE is +/- 3.8% points at the 95% CI*

**NY:** [**Despite eco-gains, Washington's pulling for coal (Elway Poll)**](http://crosscut.com/2013/01/30/coal-ports/112739/washington-supports-coal-wants-more-info/)

A Coal-export terminals at Bellingham and Longview are supported by half of Washingtonians. At least according to the[first comprehensive poll of public support for the controversial ports](http://crosscut.com/media/static_file/2013/01/30/Elway_Poll_0130_Coal_Ports.pdf), released Wednesday. More than 400 households were polled for the survey, with a significant number of those polled still looking for more details on the plans.

The Elway Poll announced similar though slightly less supportive results than polling in recent months by terminal supporters: Overall, 50 percent supported the export terminals, 32 percent were opposed and 19 percent undecided. Only 60 percent of responders knew about the proposals, and half of them knew no details.

The most surprising result of the Elway Poll was respondents' support for a regional — rather than just localized — review of coal ports' impacts. Forty-eight percent were in favor, with 43 percent against. That's up sharply from a [January poll](http://createnwjobs.com/news/new-poll-confirms-washington-voters-support-export-terminal-projects) for the pro-terminals group Alliance for Northwest Jobs & Exports, which found that 77 percent of Washingtonians opposed a regional review.

In the end, the decision on the scope of the terminals' review will be made by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in concert with Whatcom County (site of GPT), Cowlitz County (the site for Longview's proposed Millenium terminal) and the Washington Department of Ecology. Public testimony at [seven statewide hearings](http://crosscut.com/2012/12/17/coal-ports/112000/seattle-coal-port-china-exports-eis-gateway/) on the Gateway Pacific Terminal will help drive their considerations, as will legal precedents and political pressures.

**Breaking down his statistics,**Pollster Stuart Elway noted a gap of only 9 percent (52-43 percent in support) between the sides among those who “knew a lot” about the proposals; but among those who had “only heard” of the proposals, the gap was much larger (56-28 percent, a 2-1 margin). The difference would indicate that opposition increases as citizens learn more about the terminals.

“These findings suggest that proponents have the advantage in the early framing of the discussion," Elway observed. "Since the more casually held opinions favor the coal ports, opponents will have a heavier lift to persuade people with those opinions to change their minds, while the proponents’ easier task will be to reinforce already favorable inclinations.”

From its beginning two years ago, the coal port debate has shaped up as a classic “jobs vs. environment” battle. The messaging is clearly working. The opinions of poll respondents closely reflect the emphasis of the campaigns on both sides of the debate. Backers of the terminals have stressed jobs and tax revenues for state and county coffers; 67 percent of poll respondents cited jobs and 59 percent cited tax revenues as issues of high importance to them in their decision.

Fifty-three percent cited coal ships and 48 percent cited trains as critical considerations. The issue of global climate change has been targeted by opponents, but was not directly addressed by Elway; a “China/Electricity” question showed concern by 41 percent of respondents.

Elway was the first pollster to push very far beyond a yes-no response, at least in results available to this reporter. Gallitin Public Affairs, a regional polling firm, found 56.6 percent support to 26.8 percent opposition in September. Portland pollster Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall [reported](http://earthfix.kcts9.org/energy/article/survey-finds-support-for-coal-transport-through-nw/) a 55-27 percent split as early as July 2012.

**The overall shift in support** reveals gains on the part of opponents in the last several months; opposition was well below 30 percent until January, when it increased to 32 percent. In the same time period, support fell from about 56 percent to 50 percent. Both sides have ramped up public advocacy in the past several months, terminal supporters in a major broadcast advertising push and opponents in an intensive ground game under the umbrella of [Power Past Coal](http://www.powerpastcoal.org/).

Elway noted that the heaviest opposition came from responders along the rail line through western Washington: In Seattle, 49 percent were against the terminals; in North Puget Sound, 56 percent. Support was highest in areas off the rail lines: 59 percent of those who live in King County outside of Seattle favored the projects. Turnouts and intensity of comments at the statewide sessions were also greatest along the rail route.

“From the public’s point of view, this debate is just getting started,” Elway concluded. “While a substantial number have already staked out their positions, most Washington residents are not firmly committed to support or oppose the coal ports. While economic issues are currently more persuasive, the most desired information is about the environmental impacts, indicating an even more lively debate ahead.”

Full results can be found [here](http://crosscut.com/media/static_file/2013/01/30/Elway_Poll_0130_Coal_Ports.pdf).

*Elway interviewed 407 heads of households in WA from Jan. 24 – 27; MoE is +/- 5.0% points at the 95% CI*