

TO: Interested Parties  
FROM: Andrew Baumann and Katie Drapcho, Global Strategy Group  
DATE: September 23, 2022  
RE: **North Carolina voters support moving the state towards clean energy and want Governor Cooper and policymakers to make sure Duke Energy meets its carbon reduction targets**

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North Carolina voters want to see state policymakers take action to encourage more clean energy, reduce carbon emissions, and combat climate change. While voters give Governor Cooper strong job ratings, they also believe that he should be doing more to reduce pollution and tackle climate change. And while Duke Energy is relatively popular, that doesn't mean voters want to see policymakers go easy on them. On the contrary, they **OVERWHELMINGLY** want to see North Carolina policymakers do more to make sure that Duke reduces its pollution. As such, voters want to see Governor Cooper and state policymakers push Duke Energy to submit a stronger plan that invests in clean energy and guarantees that Duke will meet the targets under the state's bipartisan climate and energy law.

#### KEY FINDINGS:

- **North Carolina voters want to see state policymakers take action to address climate change and promote clean energy.** Clean energy is almost universally popular in North Carolina (81% favorable/12% unfavorable) – with both solar energy (77% favorable/16% unfavorable) and wind energy (66% favorable/21% unfavorable) – and state policymakers have a mandate to promote clean energy: nearly three-quarters of voters (74%) agree that North Carolina policymakers should do more to encourage use of clean energy like wind and solar (including 77% of independents, 54% of Republicans and 75% of rural voters) and 71% agreeing we need more regulations to protect our air, water, and climate from pollution. As such, voters are favorable to policy interventions to promote clean energy and tackle climate change, with nearly two-thirds of voters favorable to regulations to reduce carbon emissions (64% favorable/28% unfavorable) and lawmakers who support strong action to reduce climate change (61% favorable/29% unfavorable).
- **Clean energy is popular because voters see it as a way to reduce costs and boost North Carolina's economy.** 72% of voters agree that using more clean energy like wind and solar would create quality jobs and strengthen North Carolina's economy and 67% agree that using more clean energy would save North Carolina families money. Even when paired against the opponents' messaging that regulations requiring more clean energy and emissions reductions would kill jobs and drive up costs, a solid majority of voters agree with advocates' arguments that clean energy will save consumers money and create new jobs (language included in appendix).
- **Governor Cooper has a strong job rating but voters are less approving of his handling of climate and they want to see him do more on the issue.** While Governor Cooper has a strong job approval rating (54% approve/38% disapprove), voters are less positive towards his handling of climate change (46% approve/37% disapprove), with approval lagging most among Democrats and those who agree North

Carolina policymakers should encourage clean energy use. Meanwhile, a 56% to 39% majority agree that Cooper needs to do more to combat climate change.

COOPER JOB APPROVAL							
	Overall support	Overall oppose	Overall	Dem.	Ind.	GOP	Agree NC should do more on clean energy
Do you approve or disapprove of the job Roy Cooper is doing as Governor?	54%	38%	+16	+61	+7	-24	+39
Do you approve or disapprove of the job Roy Cooper is doing dealing with climate change?	46%	37%	+9	+52	0	-27	+29

- Duke Energy is well-liked, but that doesn't mean voters don't want to see policymakers require Duke reduce pollution.** Duke Energy is viewed favorably by a majority of North Carolina voters (59% favorable/24% unfavorable), but voters also want to see policymakers hold Duke accountable – 74% agree that North Carolina policymakers need to do more to make sure that Duke Energy reduces pollution, 72% agree Governor Cooper needs to do more to protect low-income ratepayers from high electricity rates, and 71% agree policymakers need to do more to hold Duke Energy accountable.
- Voters support requiring Duke Energy to reduce carbon emissions and want to see state policymakers require Duke Energy to submit a robust plan that meets the target goals.** The new law to reduce emissions from power plants is very popular, with 73% of voters supporting it. And nearly two-thirds of voters support requiring Duke Energy to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2035 (69%) or 2050 (64%). Perhaps more important, after voters hear statements from Duke claiming that their plan includes an aggressive transition to clean energy that provides a path to meeting its targets and from advocates saying that Duke's plan relies too heavily on fossil fuels (language included in appendix), 67% of voters agree that North Carolina policymakers should require Duke to submit a stronger plan that makes sure Duke meets the targets of the new energy law – include 86% of registered Democrats and 68% of registered independents.
- Cooper would see a boost if he pushes Duke to submit a stronger plan.** By a more than two-to-one margin, voters say that if Governor Cooper pushes Duke Energy to submit a stronger plan that guarantees it will meet the targets required in the state's climate law, it would make them feel more favorable to Cooper (43% more favorable/20% less favorable). This includes a 61%/5% ratio among Democrats and a 39%/20% ratio among independents.

#### ABOUT THE POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 800 registered voters in North Carolina between September 15-20, 2022. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 3.5%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.

## APPENDIX

**Cost Debate**

*Which of the following two statements do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?*

Statement	% Agree
Moving to clean energy will save consumers money. The cost of wind and solar is already lower than coal and gas – and still dropping. In fact, Stanford University researcher say that moving to clean energy will end up saving the average North Carolina family hundreds of dollars a year.	55
Regulations forcing businesses and consumers to move away from less expensive energy sources like oil, coal, and natural gas and instead use more expensive clean energy will drive up energy costs for North Carolina families and businesses at a time they can least afford it.	37

**Jobs Debate**

*Which of the following two statements do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?*

Statement	% Agree
Requiring utility companies to reduce their pollution will end up creating new jobs by encouraging innovation and expanding new manufacturing.	54
Putting more regulations on utility companies will kill jobs by driving up electricity costs for small businesses and manufacturers.	38

**Duke Targets Debate**

*As you may know, North Carolina recently passed a bipartisan energy law that requires utility companies, including Duke Energy, to reduce carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050.*

*Duke has submitted a plan to reduce emissions which they say includes an aggressive transition to clean energy that provides a path to achieve the emissions reduction targets in the new law.*

*(SPLIT A) But experts say Duke’s plan relies too heavily on new fossil fuel power plants instead of investing in clean energy and won’t meet the targets required by the new law.*

*(SPLIT B) But experts say Duke’s plan risks significantly increased costs due to unnecessary investments in large new fossil gas plants and unproven technologies rather than low-cost clean energy resources like wind and solar.*

*Knowing this, do you agree or disagree with the following statement:*

*North Carolina policymakers should require Duke Energy to submit a stronger plan that does more to invest in clean energy and makes sure that Duke meets the targets as required by the new energy law.*