



# PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

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TO: Interested Parties

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DATE: March 13, 2015

RE: Findings of an Illinois Statewide Survey on Energy Issues

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A recent statewide survey in Illinois<sup>1</sup> finds **widespread enthusiasm for increased use of renewable energy and energy efficiency in Illinois**, with broad majorities in support of expanding both. Most believe renewable energy will create jobs, reduce or keep costs steady, and improve air quality and energy independence. Eight in ten, including majorities across party lines, favor state-based action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in compliance with the EPA's new restrictions on coal-fired power plant emissions. Illinoisans are particularly supportive of the elements of such a plan that rely on renewables and energy in efficiency. In contrast, Illinoisans are significantly less positive about increasing the use of coal and nuclear power.

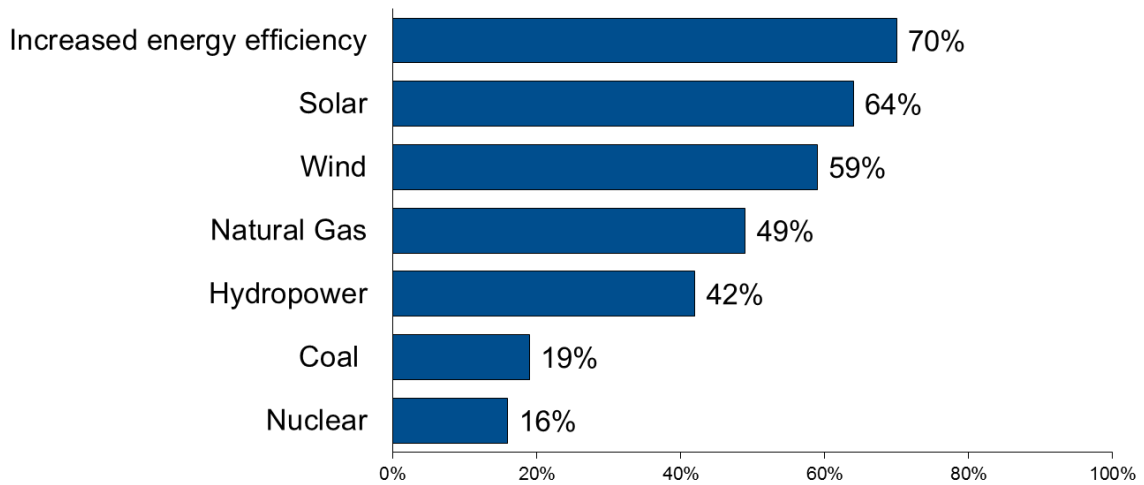
Key specific findings of the research include the following:

- **Illinoisans are enthusiastic about the state increasing its use of energy efficiency and clean energy sources.** Figure 1 on the following page shows the proportion of voters that “strongly support” increased use of a variety of energy sources in Illinois. Seven in ten strongly favor *increased energy efficiency* as a way to meet Illinois's future needs, and majorities back increased use of a number of renewable sources, including *solar* and *wind*. In contrast, fewer than one in five strongly back increasing the use of *coal* and *nuclear* power.

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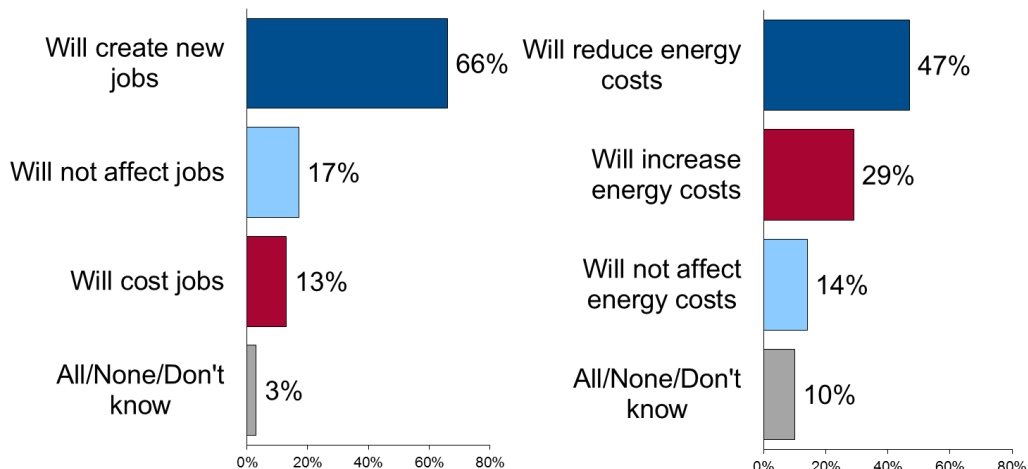
<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** The bipartisan team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3 - D) and Public Opinion Strategies (POS - R) conducted a survey of 402 registered voters in Illinois via landline and cell phone from February 8-15, 2015. The margin of sampling error for the full study is +/- 4.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups will be higher. Due to rounding, some percentages may not sum to 100%.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**“Strong Support” for Increasing Use of Various Energy Sources in Illinois**



- **Majorities believe clean energy will create jobs and will not increase costs for consumers.** Nearly two-thirds say that increasing the use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power in Illinois *will create jobs* (66%), while only 13 percent say it *will cost jobs*. Equally importantly, most do not believe these benefits come with a financial cost. Only 29 percent say increasing the use of clean, renewable energy sources will *increase energy costs*, compared to 47 percent who say it will *decrease energy costs*. These attitudes are illustrated in **Figure 2**, below.

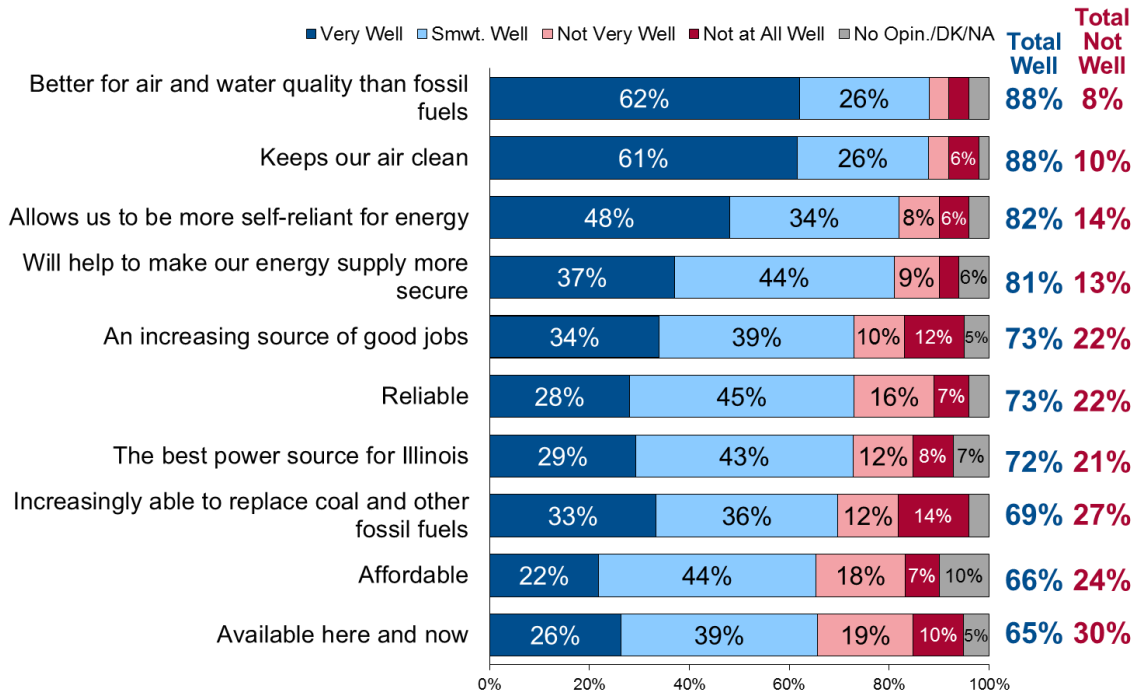
**FIGURE 2:**  
**Perceived Impacts of Increasing Illinois’s Use of Clean, Renewable Energy**



- **Majorities perceive a wide range of other benefits as well.** In particular, Illinoisans are likely to see renewable energy as *better for air and water quality than fossil fuels* (88% say this describes renewable energy “well”) and to say that it *keeps our air clean* (88%). Over

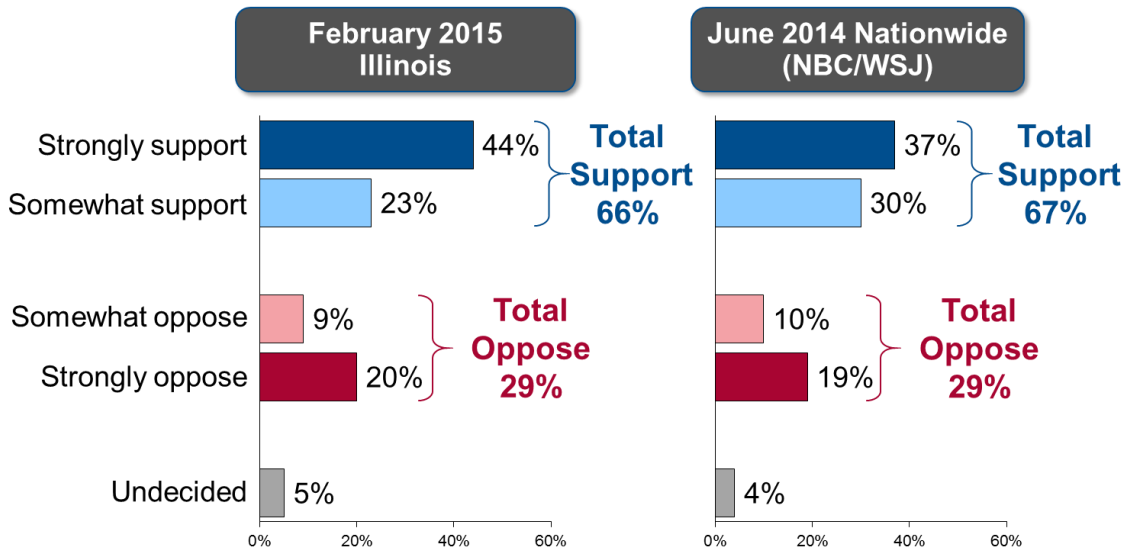
eight in ten also say that it *allows us to be more self-reliant for energy* (82%) and that it *will help to make our energy supply more secure* (81%). As shown in **Figure 3**, below, majorities also view renewable energy as a source of jobs; as reliable; as affordable; and as available “here and now.”

**FIGURE 3:**  
**Perceived Qualities of Renewable Energy**



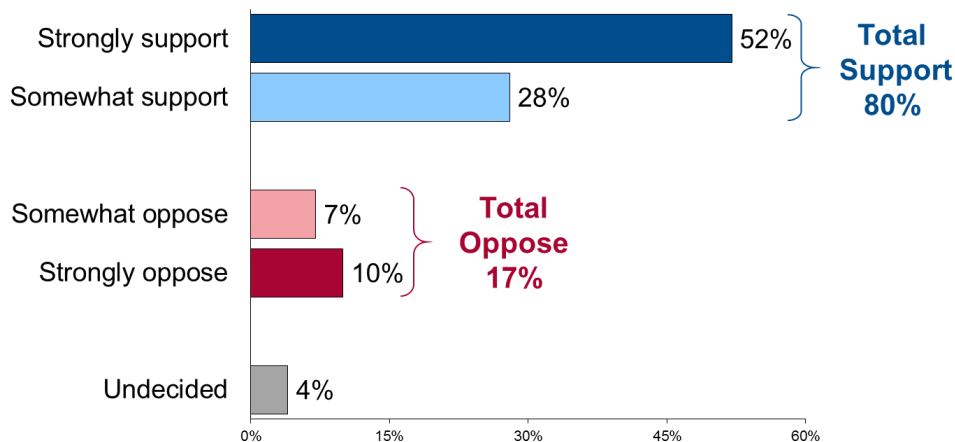
- Nearly two-thirds support the Clean Power Plan to limit emissions from coal-fired power plants.** After hearing that *President Obama has directed the Environmental Protection Agency, known as the E-P-A for short, to set strict carbon dioxide emission limits on existing coal-fired power plants with a goal to reduce emissions significantly by the year 2030*, 66 percent “support” the plan, including 44 percent who “strongly” support it, as shown in **Figure 4** on the next page. Opposition stands at 29 percent (20% “strongly”). This closely matches national results from the June 2014 *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* poll, which found 67 percent support compared to 29 percent opposition.

**FIGURE 4:  
Support for Clean Power Plan**



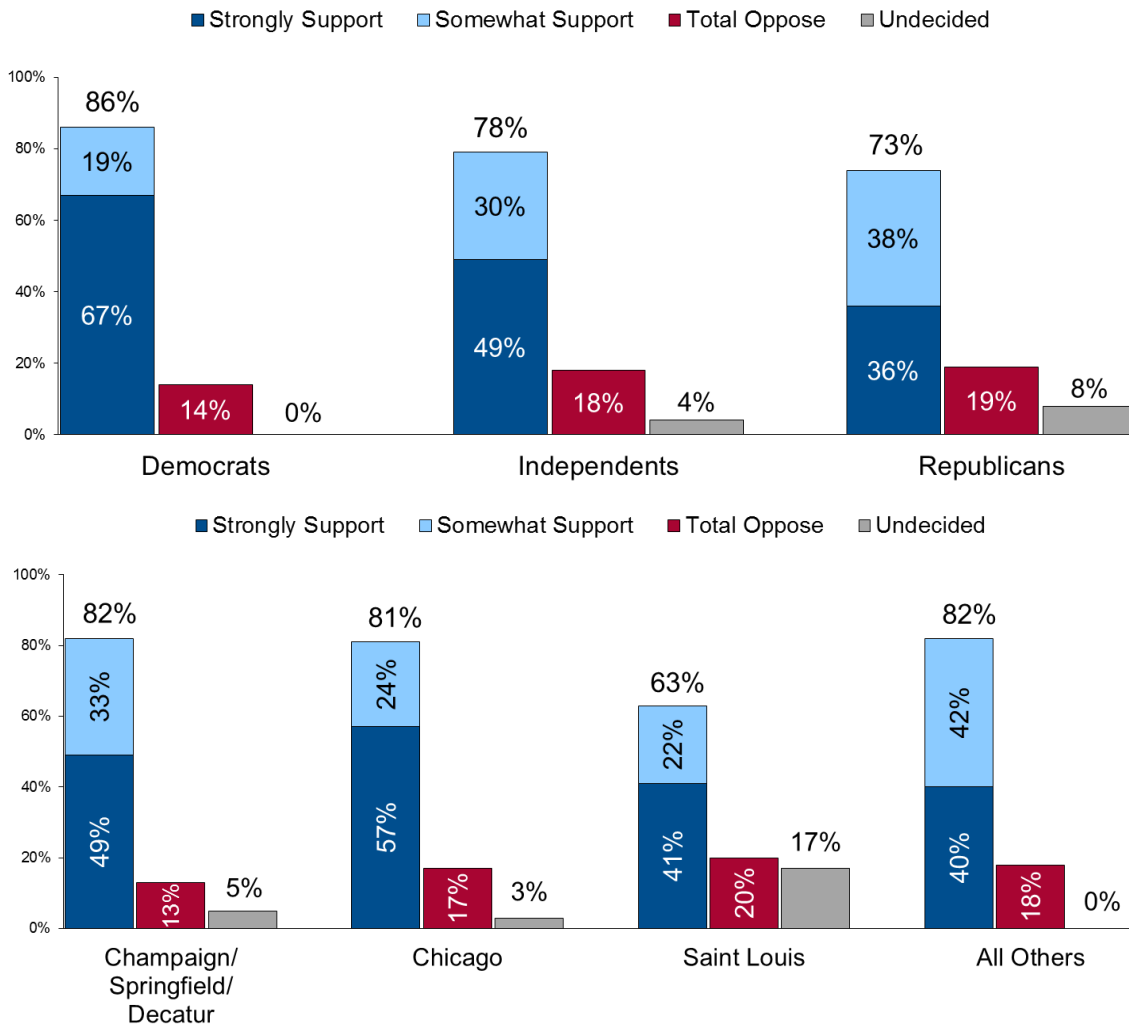
- **An Illinois-specific clean energy and pollution reduction plan is even more popular, with support crossing party lines.** As shown in **Figure 5**, eight in ten (80%) support *Illinois developing its own state plan to reduce carbon pollution and increase the use of clean energy and energy efficiency*, after hearing that the *new federal rules will require Illinois to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 33 percent by 2030*.

**FIGURE 5:  
Support for a Illinois Carbon Reduction Plan**



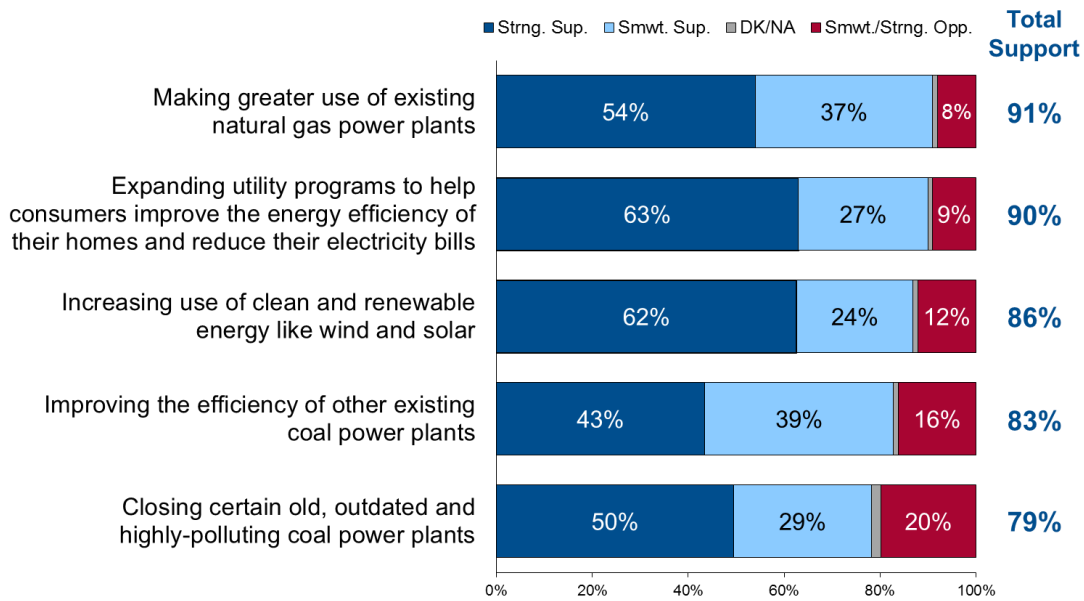
In addition, as shown in **Figure 6** on the following page, support is impressively non-partisan. Broad majorities of Democrats (86%), Republicans (73%) and independents (78%) support developing a state-level plan, along with majorities in every media market in the state.

**FIGURE 6:**  
**Support for Illinois Carbon Reduction Plan by Party and Media Market**



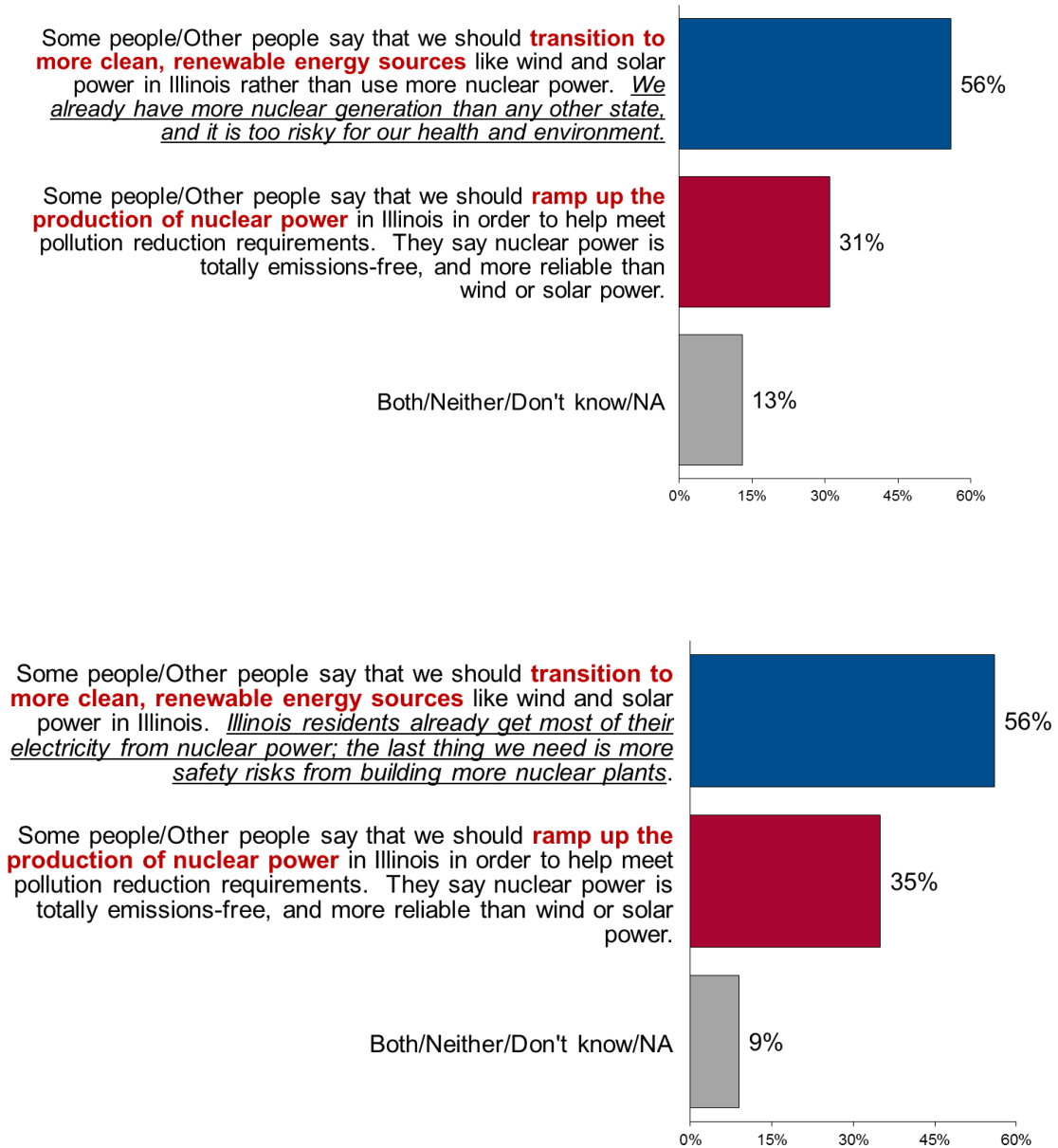
- All elements of a potential plan, especially greater efficiency and clean energy, are popular in Illinois.** Illinoisans support all elements of a potential state energy plan for Illinois presented in the survey, and show especially “strong” support for components that focus on clean energy and energy efficiency (as shown in **Figure 7**). For example, 90 percent support *expanding utility programs to help consumers improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce their electricity bills*, (63% “strongly”) and 86 percent support *increasing use of clean and renewable energy like wind and solar* (62% “strongly”). Broad majorities also favor components of the plan focused on coal-fired plants, including closing some plants and improving the efficiency of others.

**FIGURE 7:**  
**Support for Components of a Potential Illinois Emissions Reduction Plan**



- Most choose renewables over nuclear power when safety and environmental risks are raised.** As shown in **Figure 8**, when asked to choose between two statements, a majority (56%) indicates that *we should transition to clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power in Illinois rather than use more nuclear power. We already have more nuclear generation than any other state and it is too risky for our health and environment.* Only three in ten (31%) say *we should ramp up the production of nuclear power in Illinois in order to help meet pollution reduction requirements...nuclear power is totally emissions free and more reliable than wind or solar power.* A split-sample experiment that varied the first statement slightly, to focus on safety risks, produces similar results (as shown in **Figure 8**).

**FIGURE 8**  
**Choice of Statements about Renewables and Nuclear Power**



Overall, the survey results show strong support for increasing the use of renewable energy and improving energy efficiency in Illinois, while coal and nuclear power are comparatively less popular. Illinoisans see a wide range of benefits to renewable energy, and are enthusiastic about proposals to increase wind and solar power in their state, whether as part of implementation of the Clean Power Plan or through other venues.