

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: LORI WEIGEL, PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES
CHRIS KEATING, KEATING RESEARCH

DATE: NOVEMBER 25, 2013

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF COLORADO VOTERS REGARDING A PROPOSED CHANGE TO NET METERING FOR ROOFTOP SOLAR SYSTEMS

The bipartisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies and Keating Research recently completed a survey of 400 voters throughout Colorado regarding their perceptions of a proposed change to net metering for rooftop solar systems.¹ The survey finds strong and widespread support for the practice of net metering, and a rejection of the changes proposed by Xcel Energy. Opposition to the proposal is broad-based and widespread, but is particularly strong among Xcel’s own customers.

Specifically, the survey found:

- **Nearly four-in-five Colorado voters (78 percent) support the practice of net metering.** Survey respondents received a brief, neutral explanation of net metering in order to ensure all respondents had the same level of information on the topic:

Now, Colorado, along with 42 other states, has a law that allows homes, schools, and businesses to get full retail rate credit for the extra energy their solar panels produce. Under this law known as net metering, electric utilities buy the excess power that their customers with rooftop solar panels produce at the same rate that utilities charge consumers to buy electricity. The solar energy goes into the electricity grid for the utilities to sell.

¹ **Methodology:** Keating Research and Public Opinion Strategies conducted a telephone survey of N=400 voters throughout Colorado. The survey was conducted November 17-19, 2013 and has an overall margin of error of +4.9%. Sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. The sample is proportional throughout the state and demographically representative of the electorate. Interviews were conducted both on traditional land lines and cell phones.

Fully 78 percent of Colorado voters support the policy of net metering, with nearly half (45 percent) strongly in support of this practice. Only 11 percent of the state’s electorate indicate opposition to the policy, with a mere 5 percent strongly opposed, and another one-in-ten (11 percent) unsure of their views on this policy.

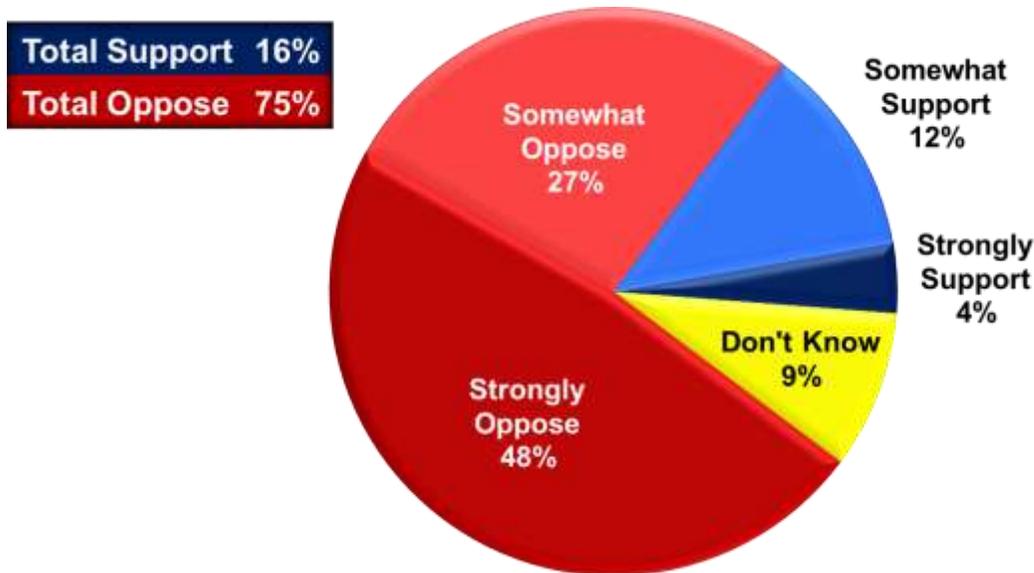
Support for net metering is just as strong among Xcel Energy customers (79 percent support). In fact, support exceeds 70 percent in every region of the state and exceeds 60 percent with every single key subgroup of voters we examined.

- **Conversely, voters expressed adamant opposition to Xcel Energy’s proposal to change net metering and reduce the credit it provides to rooftop solar energy producers.** Respondents were asked for their reaction to a proposal to change net metering:

As the following graph shows, three-quarters of state voters reject this change, while a mere 16 percent support it.

Views of Change to Net Metering Policy

“Xcel Energy, a major provider of electricity in Colorado, has proposed cutting, by more than half, the amount it credits solar customers for putting energy into the electricity grid, while still charging its customers the full retail rate for the electricity. Based on what you know about this, do you support or oppose Xcel Energy’s proposal to cut the amount it credits rooftop solar customers who put energy into the electricity grid?”



The intensity of rejection to this proposed change is also striking, as voters are more likely to be strongly opposed than strongly in support by a twelve-to-one margin.

- **Opposition to the proposed change to net metering is widespread and broad-based.** Majorities of all key subgroups of the electorate express this sentiment, including:
 - 80 percent of Xcel customers and 69 percent of residents who have a different provider;
 - 74 percent of women and 76 percent of men;
 - 78 percent of Democrats, 79 percent of independents, and 69 percent of GOP voters;
 - 77 percent of voters under age 35, 72 percent of 35-44 year olds, 82 percent of 45-64 year olds, and 62 percent of seniors;
 - 82 percent of Denver metro voters, 75 percent of Eastern Plains voters and 66 percent of Western Slope residents; and
 - 78 percent of city voters, 76 percent of suburbanites, 72 percent of small town residents and 71 percent of rural residents.

Notably, a plurality of state voters (47 percent) say they do not have rooftop solar but are interested in someday purchasing it. Among these respondents, 80 percent oppose Xcel’s proposal to change the net metering policy. However, even among the 46 percent of state residents who are not interested in obtaining rooftop solar, fully two-thirds (68 percent) oppose this proposed change to net metering.

- **In summary, Colorado voters espouse strong support for net metering and reject a change to the policy as proposed by Xcel Energy.** These views transcend party lines, geographic areas, and other demographic distinctions.