

**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** GBAO, GSG, Hart Research, Workbench Strategy  
**DATE:** February 26, 2026  
**RE:** The State of Play on Energy Costs and Energy Affordability

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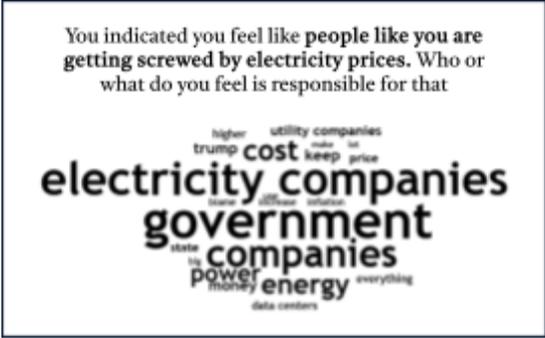
## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Electricity bills have joined groceries, housing, and health care as a top tier issue in the affordability crisis.
- Voters broadly support clean energy and view it as one of the few solutions to help lower energy costs.
- There is both a need *and* an opportunity for Democrats to engage on energy costs.
- Voters, including many Republicans, strongly oppose Trump and MAGA Republicans taking affordable clean energy off the grid and believe their utility bills will increase as a result.
- Democrats need to make it clear that Republicans are the only party trying to ban energy sources, as energy demand is surging by the rise of AI data centers.
- Democrats' message resonates better when they show they're willing to side with consumers and stand up to monopoly utilities that are making huge profits while driving up rates.

## **RISING ELECTRICITY BILLS HAVE BECOME A MAJOR PRESSURE POINT IN THE BROADER COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS. VOTERS ARE BLAMING UTILITY COMPANIES AND RISING DEMAND (INCLUDING FROM DATA CENTERS).**

Voters raise the issue of energy costs unprompted as a top household concern. Eighty-four percent (84%) are concerned about the cost of electricity, on par with concern about the cost of housing, and only a few points below groceries and healthcare. Among swing voters, the concern is intense, with 42% VERY concerned about electricity costs. Voters place much of the blame for rising prices on increasing demand (including from data centers) and utilities seeking to maximize their own profits.

**42% of swing voters are very concerned about electricity costs.**



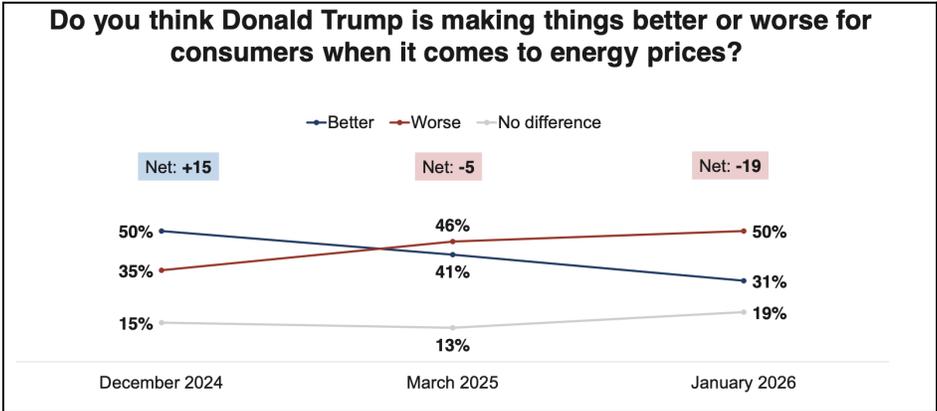
Meanwhile, 76% of voters agree that “when it comes to electricity prices, people like me are getting screwed,” and they blame utility companies and, increasingly, the Trump administration.

**VOTERS BELIEVE THAT TRUMP AND REPUBLICANS’ CLEAN ENERGY BAN HAS MADE ENERGY PRICES WORSE.**

**THIS IS A BIG OPPORTUNITY FOR DEMOCRATS—CANDIDATES SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOYED THIS PLAYBOOK IN GUBERNATORIAL RACES IN 2025.**

**BUT DEMOCRATS HAVE THEIR OWN VULNERABILITIES TO ADDRESS; IF DEMOCRATS DON’T OWN THE ISSUE, REPUBLICANS WILL SEIZE ON IT.**

Over the past year, voters have done a 180 on their view of how Donald Trump is performing when it comes to energy prices, now believing he has made energy prices worse by a 19-point margin (50% worse vs. 31% better). Moreover, Trump and MAGA’s actions to cancel hundreds of wind and solar projects (even those which were over 80% complete) are deeply unpopular – not only with Democrats and swing voters, but with their own base as well.



**But Republicans’ loss is not automatically Democrats’ gain.** While Democrats now have a small lead on “keeping electricity prices lower,” many voters don’t trust either party and also say that Democrats are making energy costs worse. Moreover, while voters believe Democrats are better on standing up to utilities to prevent them from unfairly raising rates, they are also more likely to say that Democrats “want to ban the use of certain sources of energy.” However, those perceptions change dramatically after voters are exposed to messaging that contrasts Democrats’ commitment to more energy with Trump and his allies’ profoundly unpopular actions to ban clean energy.

<b>NET DESCRIBES DEMOCRATS BETTER THAN REPUBLICANS</b>			
<i>BLUE IS IN DEMOCRATS’ FAVOR</i>			
	<b>INITIAL</b>	<b>FINAL (AFTER MESSAGING)</b>	<b>CHANGE</b>
Want to ban the use of certain sources of energy	+18	-11	29 pt
Will fight to prevent utility companies from unfairly raising rates	+14	+30	16 pt
Are focused on keeping electricity prices lower	+7	+16	9 pt

**VOTERS BROADLY SUPPORT CLEAN ENERGY AND BELIEVE MORE OF IT WILL HELP LOWER ELECTRICITY COSTS. TO MAXIMIZE SUPPORT, IT IS CRITICAL TO HIGHLIGHT THAT NEW CLEAN ENERGY COMES ONLINE FASTER THAN OTHER ENERGY SOURCES.**

Voters prefer building *new* clean energy projects over building *new* gas plants by a 62% to 34% margin. Importantly, a majority (52%) say using more clean energy will make electricity more affordable in the next year or two (just 20% say less affordable), and voters say that *new* clean energy projects would do a better job than *new* gas plants at keeping electricity bills lower by a 53% to 33% margin. However, they have some concerns about whether it can bring electricity online quickly. Messaging on how much more quickly and cheaply new clean energy can bring electricity online erases these concerns and further cements the belief that expanding clean energy will help reduce prices.

**POSITIVE MESSAGING SHOULD MEET VOTERS’ DESIRE FOR MORE ENERGY MORE QUICKLY, COMBAT PERCEPTIONS THAT DEMOCRATS WANT TO BAN CERTAIN SOURCES, AND FOCUS ON THE NEXUS OF AFFORDABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY. EMPHASIZING CLEAN ENERGY IS AN ASSET ON ALL THREE FRONTS.**

As the table above shows, such messaging not only completely reverses the perception that Democrats want to ban certain energy sources, but it also extends Democrats’ lead on utility accountability and keeping prices lower. That means educating voters that clean energy is the cheapest and quickest way to bring new electricity online. It also means proactively messaging about a desire to maximize all existing energy sources.

Unsurprisingly, Democrats, will be in the strongest place if they bring their narrative back to how they are focused on lowering costs for regular people by:

- Educating voters that **new wind and solar projects cost significantly less than new gas plants and take much less time to build**. Voters like clean energy and want more of it, but they incorrectly assume that new clean energy projects are more expensive to build. Simple education on this and about Republican moves to ban clean energy strengthens our position.
- And how **investing in cheaper wind and solar energy will give families more control over their bills than financing volatile oil and gas**. Voters are frustrated by unpredictable bills and feel they have no control over costs. Cheaper, more stable clean energy offers the stability and peace of mind they're looking for.
- **Focusing on holding monopoly utility companies accountable for excessive rate hikes**. Utilities overcharging customers stands out as the most intuitive and immediate villain in voters' minds, especially for less engaged voters. Voters want to see Democrats stand with them against price gouging and corporate greed.
- **Highlighting how they will prevent regular people from footing the bill for data centers**. Requiring data centers to pay for their own electricity and infrastructure is popular (80% support, 58% strong support). Data from Blue Rose also shows that Americans are significantly **more likely to support the construction of a data center if it's powered by clean energy (+25pp in favor)** as opposed to fossil fuels (-16pp underwater).

Democratic messaging can and should also seek to tie affordability on energy back to a broader affordability agenda.

*Our number one priority is to make life affordable for people again. That means lowering the cost of housing, groceries, childcare, and electricity.*

*We can bring down electricity bills by maximizing all existing energy sources and building new wind and solar projects, which are the fastest way to bring new electricity online and cost 30% to 60% less than new gas plants to produce the same amount of electricity.*

*And we need to increase accountability to prevent monopoly utility companies from padding their profits and executive bonuses by overcharging consumers - and make sure data centers are powered by clean energy and pay for it.*

**THE STRONGEST MESSAGING AGAINST TRUMP AND MAGA REPUBLICANS WILL FOCUS ON HOW THEIR ENERGY POLICY HAS DRIVEN UP THE PRICE OF ELECTRICITY.**

While there are several strong messages against Republicans, the strongest directly tie Republicans to higher electricity costs (including the fact that electricity bills are up 13% under

their watch). That starts with their efforts to cancel hundreds of clean energy projects, even projects that were over 80% complete. And it continues with how Trump and Republicans are forcing states to keep outdated coal plants open past their retirement dates, even when utilities don't want them because they are so much more expensive to operate – which is costing consumers hundreds of millions of dollars.

*After a year of full Republican control in Washington, electricity bills have gone up 13%—more than four times the rate of inflation.*

*With energy prices rising, we need to bring more energy online as quickly as possible. Yet, Trump and MAGA Republicans have canceled hundreds of clean energy projects that would have helped lower energy bills, even projects that were over 80% complete. They are forcing states to keep outdated and inefficient coal plants, even when utilities don't want them because they are so much more expensive to operate. (And their order to keep one Michigan coal plant open past its planned retirement has already cost consumers more than \$100 million in just a few months.)*

**TRUMP AND MAGA REPUBLICANS HAVE OVERSEEN A MASSIVE INCREASE IN UTILITY COSTS – EMPHASIZING THAT THEY ARE SIDING WITH UTILITY COMPANIES AND AI COMPANIES' DATA CENTERS AT THE EXPENSE OF AMERICAN FAMILIES RESONATES WITH VOTERS.**

Voters believe – with incredible intensity – that utilities are unfairly raising rates to pad their own profits. Our focus groups and national data show that a focus on those companies' massive profits, exorbitant executive compensation and frequent demand for ever higher rates resonate with voters. In each state, it is critical to be specific with those profit and compensation figures as we highlight how these monopolistic utilities write big checks to Republican politicians who do nothing to rein them in and hold them accountable.

Voters also increasingly blame the rapid expansion of data centers for adding fuel to the rising utility costs. The idea that regular consumers should have to pay for data centers' electricity demand is beyond the pale for voters. It is imperative to transfer this anger to Republicans by highlighting their unwillingness to hold the monopoly utility companies and AI companies (who have contributed millions to their campaigns) accountable. Voters also [do not trust Trump to protect them against rising electricity prices due to data centers](#) — his promises ring hollow.

*Monopoly utility companies are giving massive bonuses to their executives while overcharging consumers. Meanwhile, AI data centers are causing electricity demand to skyrocket, and utility companies are raising rates on regular consumers to pay for the energy that data centers need.*

## APPENDIX

For more detailed analysis and recommendations, including methodology for each project, please see the following:

Hart and Workbench [memo](#) and [deck](#) for LCV and Climate Power: [Utility Bills, Clean Energy and Electoral Opportunity in 2026](#).

GSG polling deck for EDF Action and the Utility Action Alliance: [A Unified Energy Agenda and Message](#).

GBAO memo for the Utility Action Alliance on Utility Accountability: [Holding Utility Companies Accountable Starts With Calling Out Their Excessive Greed](#).