

**AARP SURVEY:
OPINIONS OF LIKELY AND REGISTERED VOTERS IN IOWA
ON ADVANCE RATEMAKING LEGISLATION**



MAY 2011

AARP's Iowa State office commissioned Selzer & Company, Inc. to explore the views likely voters ages 50 and older views about House File 561, a bill that would allow utility companies to raise customer rates for a nuclear power plant in the state *before* it is built. These results are based on a phone survey fielded May 23 - 25, 2011. The sample of registered voters was adjusted by age and sex to reflect a cross-section of active registered voters ages 50 and over in the Iowa Secretary of State's Voter Registration database. A subsample of 400 voters likely to vote in the 2012 general election was identified from this larger sample. This summary is based on the responses of likely voters only. The subsample of likely voters ages 50+ yielded a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent. Annotated survey is attached.

SURVEY-IN-BRIEF

- ❖ **Most (72%) likely voters ages 50+ in Iowa oppose, with over half (52%) saying they *strongly oppose*, the current legislation to allow energy companies to raise rates and collect from customers in advance of building a new nuclear power plant in the state.**
- ❖ **Nearly six in ten (57%) likely voters ages 50+ in Iowa say they would be less likely to vote for a candidate for state office that supported this legislation.**
- ❖ **Three-quarters or more of likely voters ages 50+ in Iowa indicate that House File 561 could be improved if it:**
 - **allowed customers refunds if the project were cancelled or not finished (*a lot better: 40%; a little better: 39%*);**
 - **required cost-comparisons of electric options for increasing energy service before building a nuclear power plant (*a lot better: 25%; a little better: 50%*);**
 - **set a limit on how much the utility could charge customers (*a lot better: 21%; a little better: 53%*)**

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a membership that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 35.1 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's millions of members and Americans 50+; AARP VIVA, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

For more information about this survey, please contact Anthony Carroll, Associate State Director for Advocacy, 515.697.1015, acarroll@aarp.org

ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE

**AARP SURVEY OF LIKELY VOTERS IN IOWA AGES 50+
 N=400; MARGIN OF ERROR: ± 4.9 PERCENTAGE POINTS**

[Ask for name on list.]

Hello, my name is _____, calling from Selzer & Company, a national research firm here in Iowa. We're conducting a short survey tonight about some current topics. This is a brief survey and I'm not selling anything.

S1. First, are you a resident of the state of Iowa?

- 100** Yes
- No
- Not sure

S2. Are you currently registered to vote in this state?

- 100** Yes
- No
- Not sure

S3. How likely is it you will vote in the November 2012 general election for president and other offices—will you definitely vote, probably vote, might or might not vote, or probably not vote?

- 100** Definitely vote
- Probably vote
- Might or might not vote
- Probably not vote
- Refused/not sure

1. I'm going to mention some common household expenses. For each, please tell me if this is something you have concerns will be increasing in the next few years—tell me if you are extremely concerned, very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned about increasing costs. If this does not apply to you, just say so. **(Rotate list.)**

	Extremely Concerned	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not very Concerned	Not at all Concerned	Does not Apply	Not Sure
A. The cost of your mortgage or the rent you pay for housing	5	9	6	11	23	46	-
B. The cost of food	19	40	30	8	2	1	-
C. The cost of energy such as electricity and natural gas	22	43	26	4	3	1	1

2. Are you currently a customer of MidAmerican Energy, Alliant Energy, a rural electric cooperative, some other energy company, or do you not pay energy bills directly yourself? **(Mark all that apply. Multiple answers accepted, so totals may exceed 100%.)**

- 48** MidAmerican Energy
- 32** Alliant Energy
- 14** Rural electric cooperative
- 9** Some other energy company
- 3** Do not pay bills directly
- 2** Not sure

3. Many organizations are involved in decisions affecting what consumers pay for home energy service. Which of the following do you think should have the most say in setting prices for consumers?

- 11 The energy companies themselves
- 14 The Iowa state legislature
- 56 The Iowa Utilities Board
- 19 Not sure

"The Iowa legislature is considering a proposal that could require utility customers, called 'ratepayers,' to pay upfront for a potential nuclear power plant in Iowa. It would allow energy companies to increase customers' rates to pay for the planning, construction, and profit before the new plant is built. This is called 'advance ratemaking.' I'm going to mention some reasons to support this proposal and some reasons to oppose this proposal."

(Rotate Q.4 and Q.5 every other interview.)

4. Here are two reasons given by supporters of advance ratemaking. For each, please tell me if this makes you a lot more likely to support the proposal, a little more likely to support the proposal, or whether it does not make a difference to you. **(Rotate list.)**

	<u>A lot More</u>	<u>A Little More</u>	<u>No Difference</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
A. This proposal is needed to finance new nuclear power in Iowa to meet the state's energy needs	13	30	47	10
B. This proposal allows the utilities to pay for a potential nuclear plant by raising customer rates in increments before the plant is built, rather than impose higher rates after the plant is built	10	28	50	12

5. Here are two reasons given by opponents of advance ratemaking. For each, please tell me if this makes you a lot more likely to oppose the proposal, a little more likely to oppose the proposal, or whether it does not make a difference to you. **(Rotate list.)**

	<u>A lot More</u>	<u>A little More</u>	<u>No Difference</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
A. This proposal does not specify a limit on how much consumers can be charged upfront for building a new plant that would take several years to build	68	16	13	3
B. Under this proposal customers would not be refunded the money they paid into the project if the project is canceled or if the plant is never finished	76	10	12	2

6. Again, the proposal is called "advance ratemaking" because it allows energy companies to raise rates to collect in advance from customers the cost of a potential nuclear power plant in Iowa. Having heard some reasons on both sides, do you favor or oppose this proposal? **(Follow with:)** Do you [FAVOR/OPPOSE] strongly, or [FAVOR/OPPOSE] somewhat?

- 4 Strongly favor
- 14 Somewhat favor
- 20 Somewhat oppose
- 52 Strongly oppose
- 10 Not sure

7. If a candidate for state office in Iowa supported this legislation allowing advance ratemaking, would you be more likely to vote for that candidate, less likely, or would it make no difference?

- 7 More likely
- 57 Less likely
- 28 No difference
- 8 Not sure

"Now I'm going to read three possible ways to address some concerns people have about this proposal. The first would be to..." [Rotate Q.8, Q.9, and Q.10].

"Another way to address concerns would be to..." [Continue with next rotated question]

"One last way to address concerns would be to..." [Continue with next rotated question]

8. ...set a limit on how much the utility could charge consumers. Do you think including a limit makes the proposal a lot better, a little better, a little worse, or a lot worse?

- 21 A lot better
- 53 A little better
- 8 A little worse
- 12 A lot worse
- 6 Not sure

9. ...require a cost comparison of electricity options for increasing energy service in Iowa before moving forward with a nuclear plant. Do you think requiring a cost comparison makes the proposal a lot better, a little better, a little worse, or a lot worse?

- 25 A lot better
- 50 A little better
- 6 A little worse
- 9 A lot worse
- 10 Not sure

10. ...allow refunds to customers if the project were canceled. Refunds are expressly prohibited under the proposed legislation. Do you think allowing refunds would make the proposal a lot better, a little better, a little worse, or a lot worse?

- 40 A lot better
- 39 A little better
- 7 A little worse
- 11 A lot worse
- 3 Not sure

These final questions are asked just to see what cross-section of Iowans we are interviewing.

100a. [Code actual age from list. Also put in groups.)

b. (CODE PROPER CATEGORY :)

- 18 Age 50 to 54
- 19 Age 55 to 59
- 18 Age 60 to 64
- 13 Age 65 to 69
- 10 Age 70 to 74
- 22 Age 75 and over
- Refused/not sure

c. **(RECORD IF :)** Senior Age = 65+

101. In politics as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?
- 28 Republican
 - 33 Democrat
 - 34 Independent
 - 1 Other [VOL]
 - 4 Refused/not sure
102. Do you consider yourself conservative, moderate, or liberal?
- 48 Conservative
 - 33 Moderate
 - 15 Liberal
 - None of these (VOL)
 - 4 Refused/not sure
103. What is the last grade of school you completed? **(Read list.)**
- 2 Did not graduate from high school
 - 37 High school graduate or the equivalent
 - 13 Some college
 - 15 2-year college degree
 - 16 4-year college degree
 - 6 Some post-graduate work
 - 10 Post graduate or professional degree
 - 1 Refused/not sure
104. We realize income is a private matter and so rather than ask anything specific about your income, I'd like to ask you to please stop me when I get to the category that includes your annual household income before taxes in 2010. Was it **[READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]**?
- 3 Less than \$10,000
 - 8 \$10,000 but less than \$20,000
 - 12 \$20,000 but less than \$30,000
 - 14 \$30,000 but less than \$40,000
 - 10 \$40,000 but less than \$50,000
 - 18 \$50,000 but less than \$75,000
 - 20 \$75,000 or more
 - 15 Refused/not sure (VOL)
105. What is your five-digit zip code?
106. Sex
- 47 Male
 - 53 Female

That's all the questions I have. Thank you for your time.