Voters Support Permitting Reform

October 2024



Rainey Center



INTRODUCTION

Senators Joe Manchin and John Barrasso have reignited the conversation on permitting reform, a profound necessity for the United States to advance an all of the above energy strategy.

Rainey Center recently fielded national polling exploring voter attitudes towards a streamlined permitting process. We find that voters from both parties agree that there is too much red tape preventing the development of new infrastructure. Voters support new legislation, like the legislation from Senator Manchin and Barrasso, to streamline American energy infrastructure.



Key Findings

- **A majority of voters (57%) agree that there is too much red tape preventing new infrastructure development, with Democrats (54%) and Republicans showing agreement (67%). Voters want to see reform to make it easier to build in America.**

- **There is substantial bipartisan support (62% overall) for streamlining the permitting process for new infrastructure. Democrats (67%) show slightly higher support than Republicans (62%) and Independents (55%).**

- **A majority (53%) support legislation to streamline permitting for new energy development, with Democrats (63%) slightly more enthusiastic than Republicans (50%) and Independents (46%).**

- **While there's general agreement across party lines on these issues, the intensity of agreement varies. Republicans feel most strongly about reducing red tape (+51% net agreement), while Democrats are most enthusiastic about streamlining permitting (+54% net agreement) and the proposed energy development legislation (+48% net support).**

METHODOLOGY

Rainey Center fielded an online survey of 1,010 respondents over web panels from July 14-15, 2024 and weighted it to education, gender, race, and 2020 election results. The margin of error is +/- 4.0. Throughout this memo we cite "net agreement" or "net support." To calculate that, we take the percent in support and subtract from it the percent opposed.

Voters Agree There is Too Much Red Tape, Want to See Reform

Our poll began by asking voters whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about permitting reform. We find that voters agree that there is too much red tape and bureaucracy stopping permitting and that the United States doesn't build enough infrastructure. They agree that activists can too easily block the development of new permitting infrastructure and that we need to streamline permitting in the United States.

Government Regulations and Infrastructure Development

Fifty-six percent of voters agree with the statement that, "There are too many government regulations preventing the development of new infrastructure." Voters are broadly sympathetic to the idea that infrastructure projects are too difficult to build, this is a strong narrative point in favor of permitting reform advocates. Republicans show stronger agreement (67%) compared to Democrats (49%) and Independents (52%). Overall, net agreement with the statement was strong: +32% overall (+17% Democrats, +28% Independents, +52% Republicans).

Local Activism and Clean Energy Projects

Forty-one percent of voters agree with the statement that "local activists can too easily stop clean energy projects," while 31% disagree (28% are unsure). Advocates for permitting reform would benefit from showing voters the way that unsympathetic activists can stop development. Democrats show higher agreement (47%) compared to Republicans (43%) and Independents (33%). All groups showed net agreement with the statement: +11% overall (+18% Democrats, +2% Independents, +11% Republicans).

Insufficient Infrastructure Development

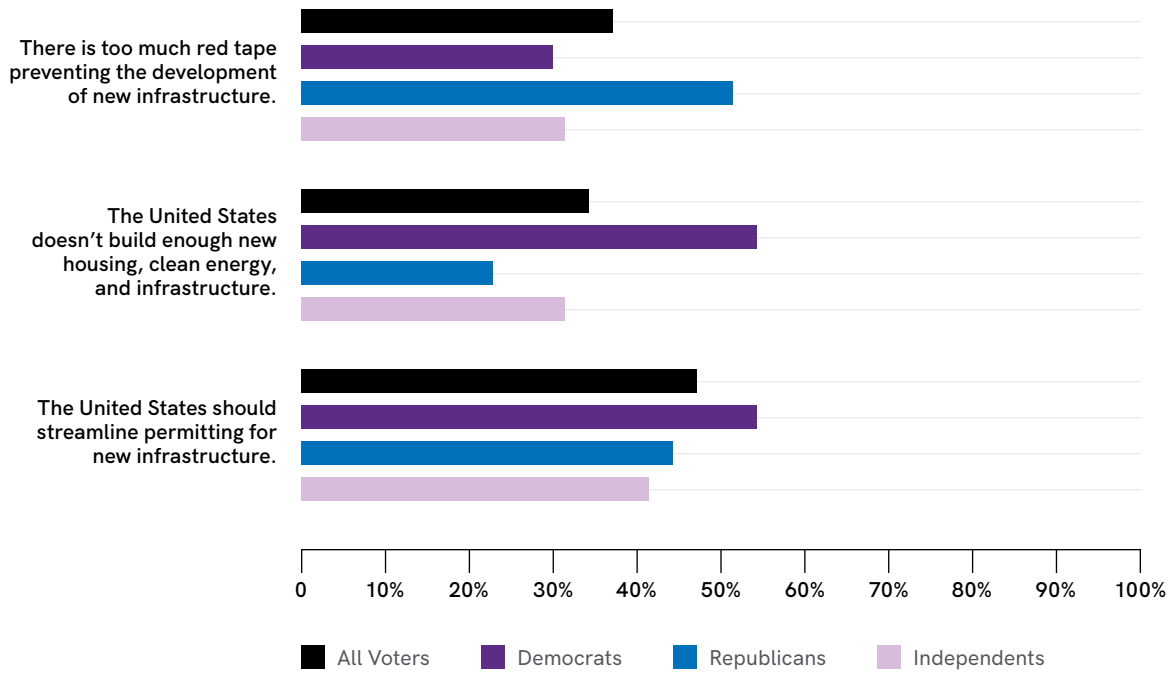
Sixty percent of voters agree with the statement that "the U.S. doesn't build enough new housing, clean energy, and infrastructure." Advocates for permitting

reform can use this statement with more liberal audiences, as Democrats show stronger agreement with this statement (71%) than to Republicans (52%) and Independents (55%). Voters of all partisan alignments agreed with this statement: +36% overall (+54% Democrats, +32% Independents, +22% Republicans).

Red Tape and Infrastructure Development

Fifty-seven percent of voters agree with the statement "there is too much red tape preventing new infrastructure development," with only 20 percent disagreeing. Republicans show stronger agreement (67%) compared to Democrats (54%) and Independents (51%), suggesting that advocates can use this talking point with conservative audiences. Net agreement with this statement was strong across groups: +38% overall (+30% Democrats, +32% Independents, +51% Republicans).

Voters Agree That We Need Permitting Reform



Note: chart shows net agreement (agree-disagree)



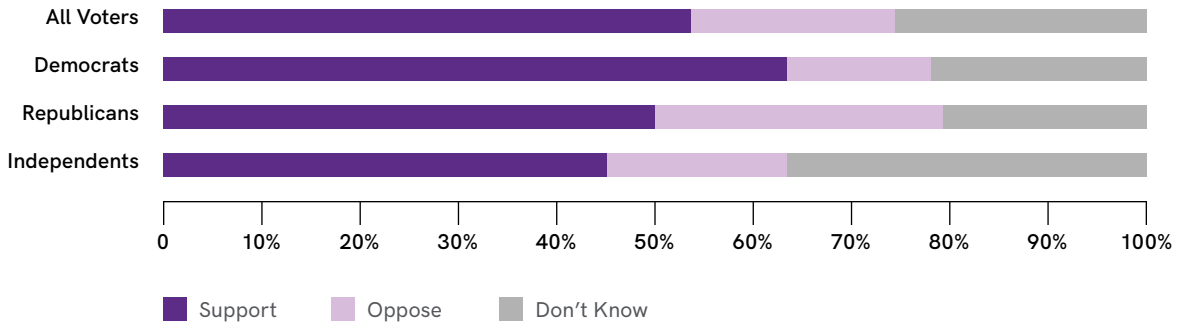
Streamlining Infrastructure Permitting

Sixty-two percent of voters agree with the statement “the United States should streamline permitting for new infrastructure,” while 14% disagree, a strong net agreement of +48%. Support is relatively consistent across parties: Democrats (67%), Republicans (62%) and Independents (55%). There is strong public desire for a comprehensive permitting reform package. Overall voters show strong net agreement with the statement: +48% overall (+54% Democrats, +43% Independents, +46% Republicans).

Voters Support Permitting Reform Legislation

When asked whether they supported permitting legislation in Congress, 53% of voters supported legislation to streamline energy development permitting and 20% opposed, with a net support of +33%. Net support is strong across parties, with majorities of Democrats, Republicans and a plurality of Independents supporting legislation (+48% Democrats, +28% Independents, +21% Republicans). Many voters do not yet have a strong opinion formed on permitting reform, with a quarter expressing uncertainty, suggesting that the next step is to inform voters about the permitting reform plans. Overall, the polling points to a strong start for permitting reform in the United States.

Voters Support Permitting Reform





Conclusion

There is broad recognition among voters that current regulations and arduous processes are hindering energy infrastructure development. While partisan differences exist, there's potential common ground for streamlining permitting processes. However, policymakers must balance the desire for expedited development with environmental protection concerns. Any reform efforts should be accompanied by public education to address the significant uncertainty voters express on these issues.





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