



To: Interested Parties
From: Neera Tanden, President and CEO of the Center for American Progress
Trevor Higgins, Senior Vice President for Energy and Environment
Date: May 18, 2026
Re: **How Americans Want to Make Electricity Less Expensive**

After more than a decade of electricity prices rising at the rate of inflation, in 2025 electricity prices rose at more than twice the rate of overall inflation in the past year and were one of the fastest drivers of inflation, outpacing other basic expenses including groceries, vehicles, and medicine. Today, roughly 1 in 6 households is behind on its bills, and low- and moderate-income households are spending up to 10% of their income on energy.

In Spring 2026, CAP and Blue Rose Research fielded a series of surveys investigating how Americans feel about the cost of electricity and policies that would make energy less expensive. We polled a broad range of landscape questions as well as specific ideas on how to lower costs, including (but not limited to) the CAP plan:

- Offering federal funding to finance grid investments in states that temporarily freeze or lower residential electricity rates
- Requiring data centers to pay their fair share
- Expanding supply by building a better, bigger power system

1. Rising utility costs are a top concern among Americans, forcing voters to change their behavior.

Concerns about utility costs are higher than nearly any other area: in a separate January 2026 survey, 65% of voters, including 63% of swing voters, cited these cost increases as one of their biggest concerns, second only to rising food and groceries costs. Since then, broader energy affordability concerns have only intensified amid rising gas prices and economic uncertainty stemming from the war in Iran. As a result, 70% of voters have changed their habits over the past year because of increasing utilities and energy costs, with a 39% majority stating they have changed how often they use air conditioning or electricity, and 36% stating they now lower their heat below comfortable levels because of cost.

2. Americans blame utility and other private sector actors as well as Republicans in Washington for rising utility rates and other energy cost increases.

“Utilities raising costs while raking in record profits” is seen as the top driver of rising utility costs overall, and by a 20-point margin Americans support pushing utility companies to increase energy production rather than allowing them to produce power as they see fit.



Americans also blame large firms in other industries for rising costs: Voters rank the oil and gas industry as the second most responsible behind utility companies, and rank the proliferation of AI data centers as 4th most responsible. More intangible causes—like global supply chain issues, climate change and extreme weather, and volatile natural gas prices—have most directly caused increases in energy costs yet are seen as relatively less responsible. And Trump’s tariffs, which are a significant liability for Republicans in other areas, are viewed as having a relatively muted effect on energy costs (although tariffs are ranked 3rd among Democratic voters).

Which of the following is more responsible for rising utility costs? <i>(Rank ordered voter preferences)</i>	2024 Vote Choice			
	Overall	Harris	Trump	Swing
Utilities raising costs while raking in record profits	1	2	1	1
The greed and corruption of the oil and gas industry	2	1	5	2
Aging infrastructure and an outdated electric grid	3	4	2	3
Increased demand on the electrical grid from AI data centers	4	6	3	4
Increased demand on the electrical grid from population growth	5	7	4	5
Tariffs increasing prices on utility equipment	6	3	11	6
Changes in environmental regulations impacting power plant operation	7	9	6	7
Reduced supply of energy from renewable projects being cancelled	8	5	9	8
Increased demand on the electrical grid from electric vehicles	9	11	7	9
Global supply chain issues	10	10	10	10
Government investments in solar and wind projects	11	13	8	12
Climate change and extreme weather	12	8	13	11
Volatile natural gas prices	13	12	12	13

Americans also believe that President Trump and Republicans in Congress are more responsible for increasing energy costs than Democrats. They blame Republican-cued policy decisions over Democratic-cued policy decisions for utility hikes by a margin of 6 points—though a quarter of respondents aren’t sure. This suggests that rising energy costs present a vulnerability for lawmakers, while creating a political opportunity for those willing to push responsive policies.

3. Americans want policies that will make electricity cheaper in the immediate term.

By a 24-point margin, Americans back CAP’s plan for a federally backed rate freeze over Republicans’ plan to drill for more oil and gas while rolling back funding for renewables. That support holds across all demographic lines —including support from 36% of Republicans. And,



even when tested as a partisan proposal, the CAP plan is supported by 57% of voters—more popular than 72% of Democratic policies polled by Blue Rose.

Even so, all forms of immediate relief are not created equal. By 11 points, swing voters prefer the rate freeze proposal over a proposal to invest in clean energy and improve the grid. And freezing utility rates to give Americans immediate relief proved to be a highly persuasive message: two different versions of this message performed better than 81% and 82% of other messages tested by Blue Rose.

4. Voters are worried about data centers’ excessive energy consumption, and the best-performing policy on data centers is mandatory fair share, not voluntary commitments or moratoriums.

70% of voters, including a whopping 82% of swing voters, support AI companies being *required* to pay for the full costs of their power needs for their data centers. This is one of the most popular ideas that Blue Rose has ever tested, polling better than 99% of other policies.

Blue Rose polling also finds strong support (61%) for holding data center developers accountable through binding community benefit agreements (CBAs), with Congress requiring companies to deliver local hiring, infrastructure investments, and environmental protections.

Policy	Topline Support	Topline Percentile	2024 Vote Choice Harris Support	Swing 2020 X 2024 Swing Support	2024 Vote Choice Trump Support
Mandatory Fair Share	70%	99%	97%	82%	42%
CBA	61%	85%	95%	71%	25%
Moratorium	58%	75%	95%	66%	22%
Voluntary Fair Share	56%	70%	17%	64%	93%

These numbers reflect broader concerns about the general impacts of data centers. In [prior research](#) for Climate Power conducted in February 2026, Blue Rose found that utility costs and excessive energy consumption are voters’ top concerns.¹ Voters flagged soaring utility costs 64% of the time and excessive energy consumption overloading the electrical grid and leading to power outages 59% of the time. Furthermore, nearly six in ten voters expect their energy bills to rise as the rise of AI leads to more data centers.

Blue Rose’s polling for Climate Power² found that voters care strongly about the ways that data centers are powered. Voters *oppose* the construction of data centers by a 16-point margin if

¹ Blue Rose Research and Climate Power, “Research on AI Data Centers, Costs, & Pollution,” February 18, 2026, available at <https://climatepower.us/research-polling/research-on-ai-data-centers-costs-pollution/>.

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powered by coal and gas but *support* the construction of data centers by a 25-point margin if powered by clean energy. This support for data centers powered by clean energy remains true even among a majority of Trump voters. This indicates that public support for data centers is contingent upon their energy source, favoring clean energy over polluting sources like coal and gas.

If an AI data center were built near your community and powered primarily by [energy source] would you support or oppose it?	Response	2024 Vote Choice			
		Overall	Harris	Trump	Swing
Clean energy source like wind or solar	Support	53%	56%	53%	50%
	Oppose	28%	25%	29%	31%
	Net	25%	31%	24%	19%
Fossil fuels like coal or natural gas	Support	31%	21%	33%	41%
	Oppose	47%	59%	45%	34%
	Net	-16%	-39%	-11%	7%

Conclusion

Under current policies, nationwide average residential electricity rates are projected to continue increasing, with increases likely to worsen if the war in Iran proceeds on its current trajectory and fuel prices remain elevated globally.

The American people overwhelmingly need, and support, immediate action to lower electricity costs, including a federally-funded rate freeze tied to grid upgrades and requiring AI companies to pay their fair share. Voters want to hold utility companies accountable, mandating those firms to make cost-effective improvements and curbing their power to pass expenses on to customers. CAP’s plan, which does all these things, is effective, feasible, salient, and politically sustainable.

Appendix: Full Policy Support Poll

Policy	Policy Text	Party	Support	Percentile
Mandatory Fair Share	Require AI companies to pay for the full costs of their power needs for their data centers. Under this policy, data centers that are built would not raise electricity prices for Americans.	Dem	70%	99%
Utility Junk Fees	Ban utility companies from adding lobbying, public communications, and trade association fees to the rates	Dem	62%	88%

	consumers pay. Under this policy, Americans would have more protections and pay lower utility bills.			
Fuel Surcharges	Prevent utilities from adding fuel surcharges to the rates consumers pay when natural gas prices rise. Under this policy, Americans would have more protections and avoid expensive rate spikes.	Dem	61%	82%
LNG Restrictions	Reduce the amount of natural gas that is exported from North America. This proposal would increase domestic availability of natural gas, which helps keep electricity costs low for families.	Dem	60%	80%
Grid Investments	Offer new tax credits for investment in grid infrastructure to lower costs and improve resilience. By providing public support, families alone will not need to shoulder the full cost of necessary grid improvements.	Dem	59%	79%
Grid Enhancing Technologies	Require utilities to use the most cost-effective new technologies when building grid infrastructure, which saves money by avoiding unnecessarily expensive approaches. Under this policy, Americans would pay lower household energy bills and experience less power outages.	Dem	59%	79%
Data Center Moratorium	Put a mandatory pause on building new AI data centers. Under this policy, no new AI data centers would be built until their impacts on electricity prices, the environment, jobs, and society can be addressed.	Dem	58%	77%
Rate Freeze	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing a program that would provide public funding to improve our electric grid for states that freeze or lower electricity rates for families. This policy would block utility companies from an expected \$125 billion increase in electricity bills over four years, while still delivering investments that will build a	Dem	57%	72%

	system that costs less for the future.			
Voluntary Fair Share	AI companies voluntarily build power stations to supply all of their power needs for their data centers. Under this policy, AI companies that comply would build data centers without raising electricity prices for Americans.	Rep	56%	70%
Clean Energy Investments	Restore the clean energy investment tax incentives that President Trump repealed. Under this policy, we would invest in all types of clean energy, like wind, solar, batteries, nuclear, geothermal, and hydropower. This would lower the cost of building new sources of power, which helps lower electricity bills over time.	Dem	56%	66%
Natural Gas Investments	Provide public funding to keep retiring coal and natural gas power plants in operation, speed up the manufacturing of turbines for new natural gas power plants, and build more natural gas pipelines. Under this policy, we would increase the energy supply to keep utility costs lower for Americans.	Rep	53%	56%
Clean Firm Investments	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing a bipartisan plan to support emerging technologies, like batteries and advanced nuclear power, that can provide power around the clock without any air pollution. Driving down the costs of innovative new technologies would lower the cost of power, which would be passed along to consumers.	Dem	54%	55%
Permitting Reform	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing reforms to speed up permit reviews for new power and transmission projects, and allowing interstate power lines to get permits from the federal government instead of the states, so that infrastructure can be built with fewer delays, thereby lowering costs.	Dem	52%	44%

<p>Energy and Home Weatherization Assistance</p>	<p>Expand programs like the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and the Weatherization Assistance Program. Under this policy, households would receive help to cover household energy costs and reduce utility bills through energy efficiency upgrades.</p>	<p>Dem</p>	<p>52%</p>	<p>42%</p>
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