

To: Interested Parties
Fr: Mark Riddle
Date: September 2, 2020
Re: Minnesota and Wisconsin

As we head into the home stretch of the 2020 election Future Majority/America's Future Majority Fund and Unite the Country conducted a survey of 2,469 voters in Minnesota and 3,127 voters in Wisconsin. Change Research surveyed these voters from August 27-August 30 (on the final day of the RNC and three days after). Below is a snapshot of the lay of the land, the issues driving the electorate, and strategic recommendations.

Minnesota & Wisconsin: Neighbors and mirrors, but some important nuance.

MN: Biden leads 48% to 45% (Clinton 46.44% to Trump 44.92%)

WI: Biden leads 49% to 44% (Clinton 46.45% to Trump 47.22%)

Note: Public polling shows Biden a couple points stronger, but both states are far from being put away. We take a conservative approach to our research.

Both states: Trump's Job Approval: 46% approve. 53% disapprove.

Favorable Ratings:

MN: Biden 45% fav / 50% unfav
Trump 43% fav / 53% unfav

WI: Biden 46% fav / 50% unfav
Trump 44% fav / 53% unfav

Jobs & Economy:

MN: Biden 45% / Trump 48% (This is good news)

WI: Biden 45% / Trump 47% (This is good news)

Handling of Coronavirus:

MN: Biden 49% / Trump 41%

WI: Biden 49% / Trump 39%

Cares about people like me:

MN: Biden 44% / Trump 44%

WI: Biden 46% / Trump 42% (Small nuance)

Keeping you and family safe:

MN: Biden 43% / Trump 43%

WI: Biden 43% / Trump 41%

Honest:

MN: Biden 44% / Trump 37%

WI: Biden 46% / Trump 36%

Corrupt: MN: Biden 40% / Trump 48% (Keep pounding)
WI: Biden 39% / Trump 49% (Keep pounding)

Empathetic: MN: Biden 49% / Trump 34%
WI: Biden 51% / Trump 32%

Strong Leader: MN: Biden 42% / Trump 46%
WI: Biden 42% / Trump 45%

Minnesota:

Candidate who focuses on building a new and different future: 61%
Candidate who focuses on making America what it was in the past: 29%

Wisconsin:

Candidate who focuses on building a new and different future: 60%
Candidate who focuses on making America what it was in the past: 28%

What qualities are most important for a candidate to possess? (choose up to two):

Ethics / Non-Corrupt (52% MN / 51% WI), Strong Leader (51% MN / 49% WI), Correct Policies (26% MN / 27% WI), Trusts science (23% MN / 24% WI), Reliability (17% MN / 18% WI), Empathy (15% MN / 16% WI), Humility (6% MN / 5% WI)

When asked to pick two of, “which do you think is the most important for a candidate to value”, Justice, Freedom, Equality Family, Faith, scores were as follows:

- Justice (55% in MN / 53% in WI)
- Freedom (50% in MN / 48% in WI)
- Equality (47% in MN / 49% in WI)
- Family (15% in MN / 14% in WI)
- Faith (11% in MN / 10% in WI)
- None of these (3% in MN / 3% in WI)
- Freedom rated highest by GOP at 82% in MN and 81% in WI. (Appears the GOP threw in the faith towel) Among independents, it was split with Justice and Equality (50% in MN and 48% in WI).

MN & WI: What is driving the electorate?

It’s all about Trump: In WI, 92% of Biden voters are very excited to vote against Trump. 80% of Trump voters are very excited to vote for Trump. In Minnesota, it’s the same trend. And among double-haters, Biden has a 21-point edge in MN (with 22% undecided) and a 26-point edge in WI (with 16% undecided).

Direction of country: Voters are not happy with the direction of the country. Nearly two-thirds of voters in both states say things are headed in the wrong direction in the country. Young voters are about 20 points more negative on the direction of the country than voters overall while suburban women are trending around the average in Minnesota and more negative in Wisconsin.

Economy: Despite record unemployment, voters slightly disapprove of the national economy (41-49 in MN; 43-49 in WI). As shown above, Trump continues to edge Biden on handling of the economy (by 3 in MN and by 2 in WI). However, Biden has closed the gap on the economic message but need to continue to press the case. Independents favor Trump on the economy by significant margins, but the margin is 2x in MN (26 in MN and 13 in WI).

Your State: Wisconsin voters have been deeply impacted by the events in Kenosha and the Coronavirus. Only 16% of voters say the state is going in the right direction vs. 68% wrong direction (-52). Across all segments, there is intense disapproval. In Minnesota, 30% of voters say the state is moving in the right direction compared to 55% wrong direction (-25). Democrats and college-educated women, as well as women 65+, think the state is headed in the right direction. Overall, voters are favorable toward Gov. Tim Walz in MN (net +1) and are unfavorable towards Gov. Tony Evers in WI (net -6), largely driven by Republicans (-91).

Personal finances: Voters are happy with their personal finances – especially in MN, where 62% say their finances are going in the right direction (21% wrong direction). In WI, the split is 59% right direction to 25% wrong direction. Interestingly, Wisconsin has a slightly lower unemployment rate of 6.9% in July compared to 7.7% in Minnesota. There is a partisan and gender skew in both states, with Republicans and men being more satisfied with their personal finances.

People feel less safe since the protests began; however, so far, do not blame that feeling on Biden. Blame is spread out among everyone:

- In MN: Voters are split on blaming Trump and Antifa and anarchist groups for protests and violence. Police rank third in blame. Urban voters, who bear the brunt of the unrest in cities, disproportionately blame police. Trump's blame is about even across urban, suburban and rural areas.
- In WI: As in MN, voters are split on blaming Trump and Antifa. Wisconsin voters are more likely to blame the media than police. Urban voters blame the police for protests and Trump for violence. Suburban voters are just as likely (30%) to blame violence in cities on Trump as are urban voters. Older women are even more likely to blame Trump (40%).
- In MN: 63% are worried that continued protests could lead to more violence in their community. 56% believe the protests have gone too far and need to end. 56% agree with Trump to bring in the National Guard. 54% feel personally less safe. 51% believe the protestors are wrong. 50% believe we need police reform (34% believe we need to be tougher on protestors).
- In WI: 60% are worried that continued protests could lead to more violence in their community. 53% believe protests have gone too far and need to end. 53% agree with Trump's bringing in the National Guard. 50% feel personally less safe. 48% believe protestors are wrong. 51% believe we need police reform (31% believe we need to be tougher on protestors).
 - Do you support or oppose the decision by the Milwaukee Bucks and Brewers to boycott playing their games this week to protest the situation in Kenosha? 49% support. 45% oppose.

Playing offense: While Trump wants everyone to chase him down 1,000 rabbit holes, we should remember that we have some very good issues to run on:

Social Security: 60% of voters in WI and 58% in MN oppose Trump's proposal to cut Social Security to pay down the federal debt (25% and 26% say he did not propose this, respectively). 53% of voters in WI and 52% in MN oppose changes to the postal service that might delay the delivery of Social Security checks. Recent national polling shows that 96% of Americans think Social Security is an important program.

Affordable Care Act: Voters disapprove of Trump's efforts to repeal the ACA – by 11 points in WI and 8 points in MN. This disapproval is especially strong among women (59% in MN, 65% in WI), college-educated women (74% in MN, 75% in WI), and double-haters (69% in MN, 59% in WI). WI voters think Biden is best equipped to improve the healthcare system (47-38) and so do MN voters (46-40).

Corruption: 85% of WI voters and 82% of MN voters are very concerned with corruption influencing decisions made in Washington DC, and 13% and 15% are somewhat concerned (98% and 97% overall). On scale of 1 to 10, how important is it for Congress to pass legislation to clean up corruption? 45% in WI rank it as a 10, 22% as a 9, and 18% as an 8. In MN, 43% rank it as a 10, 24% as a 9, and 18% as an 8. 95% of voters support passing anti-corruption legislation to clean up Washington and reduce the influence of money in politics. While voters support the landmark anti-corruption bill HR 1 passed by House Democrats in 2019 (54-19 in WI and 54-17 in MN) they are still virtually split on who is to blame for corruption (44 Democrats - 48 McConnell in WI and 44 Democrats - 47 McConnell in MN). There is clearly a communication issue since Democrats have passed the very type of legislation voters overwhelmingly support. Moreover, voters narrowly trust Trump over Biden to clean up corruption – by a point in WI and by 3 points in MN (among independents the gap is 7 points). Biden and the Democrats should forcefully back HR1 and attack McConnell and Trump for not willing to pass the legislation that would go a long way in cleaning up the “swamp”.

Clean Water: Clean water is an incredibly popular issue. Democrats should lean into it, especially in the Great Lakes region. 93% of Wisconsin voters support protecting water from lead and other chemicals, like PFAS. Support is 80%+ across every voter segment. Two-thirds of Wisconsin voters are concerned that the Trump Administration has weakened the clean water and clean air protections that allow polluters to dump chemicals into streams and rivers. The trends are similar in Minnesota, although the intensity of support for clean water protections is weaker. 62% of MN voters are concerned about Trump's dismantling of clean air and clean water protections.

Freedom: Democrats should fight to recapture this central American ideal. Per the scores above, voters ranked only justice above freedom. Biden has leaned heavily into all key words, justice, equality, family, faith, but has left out freedom. Ceding this word to Republicans is dangerous, as Biden is trying to win over some Republicans and independents. Democrats have been ceding this word to Republicans for decades and it has not helped at all (Trump leads Biden by 3 points and by 7 among independents on protecting American freedoms. Republicans edge Democrats by 2 points on expanding vs. limiting freedoms, though there are sizeable unsure levels among Democratic voters). Biden has already been hit with limiting freedom. He has to respond. The virus itself limits freedom for cooped up and frustrated Americans so this dovetails with his messaging.

Strategic Recommendations:

- 1) **Biden Strong.** Democrats want to see Biden punching Trump in the mouth. Voters want to know if Biden is strong enough to unite the country, lead us out of the pandemic, get the economy moving for everyone, and build a future.
- 2) **Corrupt Trump.** Voters believe Trump is corrupt. Drill it home. It is a list of hundreds of instances, and the latest major storyline of corruption is that Trump knows he is losing and does not want people to vote. Democrats have a good counter-story with the passage of the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.
- 3) **Fight for Every Vote.** As one peels back the onion of the electorate, there are some areas to earn votes. Below is a look at the delta between people who do not like the President – which is 53% of the electorate – and the Biden vote around 46%, rural women, under 35 years old, and the conversation on “law and order.” *Note: All numbers below are from WI since there is very little difference with the same voters in MN.*

Fighting for Every Vote:**Hate Trump / Do Not Support Biden: (Obama can be very helpful)**

- Not engaged in the race. 21% rate their enthusiasm at a ‘10’, 29% rate it at ‘1’
- Largely undecided (42%) or voting Jorgensen (35%). As many support Hawkins (13%) as Trump (11%)
- Obama and Sanders are more popular than Biden with these voters and will be key surrogates.
- Most likely to believe Biden won’t embarrass the county (49% believe) and Biden will lead with empathy and decency (43%)
- Ethics is the top quality these voters look for in a candidate by more than a 2-1 margin (69% versus 26% for strong leader) but by a 75% to 20% margin they believe Biden will continue corruption in Washington DC
- More likely to believe that Biden will abandon workers by not standing up to China (53% believable-36% not versus 48%-50% overall)
- Believe their personal financial situation is getting worse (34%) and not better (19%)
- Believe that both Trump and Biden have business deals in China (61%) and Russia (45%)
- Place much greater trust in Tony Evers than Trump in handling the coronavirus (+33 Evers)
- Believe Democrats are more likely to limit freedoms (58%) than expand them (20%) (Again, a nagging and unsolved issue)
- Two-thirds (65%) are concerned about clean air and water
- Do not blame Trump for the protests (4%) and the violence (11%). More likely to blame the media (24% protests, 21% violence), police (22% protests, 19% violence), and Antifa/left-wing groups (21% protests, 25% violence).
- Strongly prefer reforming police (63%) over getting tougher on protesters (17%)
- Concerned about Joe Biden taking guns (53% concerned, 42% not concerned)
- Oppose ACA repeal (56%)
- More likely to strongly support paid family leave (57%) than voters overall (48%)

- Most likely to get news and information through the internet and social media than any other form of communication
- Largely young (70% under 50), male (56%), and don't identify with a party (79%)
- Only 19% voted for Trump in 2016. The rest either voted Hillary (30%), Johnson (20%), Stein (7%), or didn't vote (25%).

Rural Women: There is an opening for Democrats to split households, therefore blocking Trump's strategy of running up the score in red districts.

- Highly engaged in the race. 80% rate their enthusiasm at a 10
- Support Biden 54% to 42% while rural men support Trump 62% to 31%. Only 1% support Jorgensen and 3% are undecided
- More likely to believe Biden will manage the coronavirus response competently and get the economy back open (55%) than voters overall (50%)
- 55% say they are exhausted by Trump
- Split on the direction of their personal finances (25% getting better, 25% getting worse, 49% not sure)
- Are more likely to strongly agree that Trump is deliberately slowing down the mail (50% strongly agree vs 42% overall) and strongly disapprove of the changes at the post office (50% strongly disapprove vs 44% overall). 64% oppose privatizing the post office
- Oppose opening colleges and universities (42% support-52% oppose) and oppose restarting youth and high school sports (43% support-54% oppose)
- Believe that Democrats are more interested in expanding freedom (51%) than limiting it (44%).
- Are most likely to blame Trump for the protests and the violence than Antifa and left-wing groups, the media, or the police. 54% prefer reforming the police over cracking down on protesters (29%)
- Trust Biden (49%) more than Trump (38%) to keep them safe
- More likely to strongly support paid family leave (57%) and paid sick leave (59%) than voters overall (48% paid family leave, 52% paid sick leave)

18-34-Year-Old Voters:

- Less engaged than voters overall. 54% rate their enthusiasm at a '10' compared to 76% overall
- Oppose ACA repeal (35% support-58% oppose)
- Support Biden 49% to 38% with Jorgensen at 8%, Hawkins at 2%, and undecided at 3%. Biden should have a specific total plan for youth that is as catching as Bernie's overall loan forgiveness plan (63% support reliving Americans of student loan debt, 48% strongly)
- Negative towards Biden (39% favorable-54% unfavorable) and Trump (38% favorable-59% unfavorable). Positive towards Obama (53% favorable-39% unfavorable) and Bernie (45% favorable-40% unfavorable) more than AOC (41% favorable-42% unfavorable)
- More favorable towards Black Lives Matter (50% favorable-42% unfavorable) than voters overall (43% favorable-47% unfavorable)
- More skeptical than voters overall on Biden's ability to negotiate better trade deals that contain China (36% believable Biden will vs. 55% not believable, 42%-52% overall)

- As likely to say Democrats in Congress have not kept their promises (59%) as Republicans in Congress (57%)
- Oppose opening colleges and universities (45% support-51% oppose) and oppose restarting youth and high school sports (39% support-57% oppose)
- 55% strongly oppose overturning Roe v. Wade
- More likely to blame the police for protests (30%) compared to 21% for the media, 13% Antifa/left-wing groups, 12% Black Lives Matter, 8% President Trump. They split between police (22%) and Antifa/left-wing groups (20%) for the most blame for the violence
- 61% prioritize police reform over cracking down on protesters
- Support shifting police resources to community policing, mental health, and drug treatment (54% support-41% oppose) more than voters overall (43%-53%). Also, they are more likely to support demilitarizing local police (57%-39%) than voters overall (45%-51%).
- More likely to believe the protests are justified and need to continue (53%) than have gone too far and need to end (40%) than voters overall (41% justified/continue-53% gone too far and need to end)
- Are more likely to strongly support paid family leave (62% strongly support) and paid sick leave (63% strongly support) than voters overall (48% paid family leave, 52% paid sick leave)
- By a more than 2 to 1 margin, young voters support relieving student debt (63%-32% compared to 53%-43% overall)
- More likely to strongly support creating a cabinet official to address climate change (65% support, 51% strongly) than voters overall (57% support, 44% strongly)
- More likely to get news and information from the internet and social media than any other source

Safety: For this question, we separated out the people who said they feel their family is less safe since the protests began after the death of George Floyd and separated by party. Reported below are differences between Democrats and Independents who feel as if they are less safe versus those who do not believe their family's safety has changes. Little difference exists among Republicans who feel differently about their family's safety.

- Democrats who believe there hasn't been a change in their safety support Biden at 99% versus 91% of Democrats who feel less safe. The remaining split between Trump (3%), Jorgensen (3%), Hawkins (1%), and undecided (3%). Pure Independents, those who don't lean towards a party, who feel less safe support Trump at 43% followed by Jorgensen (23%), Biden (21%), Hawkins (1%), and undecided (13%). Independents who don't feel a change support Biden (50%) followed by Jorgensen (16%), Trump (10%), Hawkins (8%), and undecided (16%).
- No difference exists on Biden favorability among Democrats. Independents who feel less safe are negative towards Biden (21% favorable-66% unfavorable), Obama (29%-55%), and Bernie (19%-64%). They are lukewarm towards Trump (48%-40%). Among Independents who don't feel a change, Obama (61%-29%) and Bernie (45%-35%) are viewed more favorably than Biden (40%-47%). They don't like Trump (13%-84%). Independents who feel less safe are hostile to Democrats overall and likely would not be reachable if George Floyd was left alone by the police on that day.

- Independents who don't feel less safe value equality (62%) and justice (56%) more than those who feel less safe (29% equality, 43% justice). These scared voters place a much greater emphasis on freedom (64% vs. 35%). There we go again. Independents overall are net -6 on Biden interested in your individual freedoms with 31% saying neither or unsure – there is room to grow.
- Democrats who feel no change are more likely to blame police for the protests (30%) than Democrats who feel less safe (20%). About equal shares blame Trump (47% no change, 50% less safe) and few other either group blame Antifa (2% no change, 6% less safe). Independents who feel less safe blame the media (34%), Antifa (32%), and Black Lives Matter (13%) while those who feel no change blame no one (30%), the police (30%), Trump (17%), and the media (14%).
- Independents who feel less safe prioritize getting tougher on protesters (42%) over reforming the police (25%) while those who feel no change want police reform (66%) while few want tougher action with protesters (12%).
- Independents who feel no change support redirecting money away from police to alternative uses (51%) and demilitarizing the police (65%). Those who feel less safe oppose those ideas (20% redirect, 26% demilitarize). Majorities of Democrats support both policies but those who don't feel a change support them slightly more (79% vs. 68% for redirecting money, 81% vs. 67% for demilitarizing police).
- 86% of Democrats who feel no change believe Biden will keep their family safe while 0% believe Trump will. Democrats who feel less safe also believe Biden will keep their family safe while 4% believe Trump will and 13% believe neither will. Independents who feel less safe choose Trump (47%) over Biden (13%) on safety while 32% say neither will keep them safe. Just 7% Independents who feel no change choose Trump while 29% choose Biden and 50% say neither
- Independents who feel less safe are slightly more conservative (27%) than those who feel no change (13%). A majority of each group identify as moderates (55% less safe, 48% no change). Those who feel no change are slightly more liberal (29% vs. 11%). The differences in Independents on this question are more attitudinal and their feeling at the moment than either ideological or demographic. The thing that really differentiates them is hostility to all Democratic politicians.
- Independents who feel less safe are more likely to own a gun (45%) than those who feel no change (30%). Republicans who feel less safe are less likely to own a gun (49%) than those who feel no change (60%).
- Bottom line: Voters who are feeling unsafe seem to be the Fox News echo chamber. However, we are not seeing this issue bleed into other voting blocs or taking vote share away from Biden.

Conclusion

Biden is in a strong position, but he needs to put his foot on the gas with only two months to go. The numbers out of the key states of Wisconsin, where Trump narrowly won in 2016 and is hoping for a repeat, and Minnesota, where Trump is hoping for a surprise but in-reach victory, point to two clear trends. First, Biden must embrace a positive freedom message. Freedom is something Americans are sorely missing right now – energizing voters on a strong freedom message (freedom to live, to breathe clean air and drink clean water, freedom to earn a living wage, freedom to get the healthcare you need) cuts across all voter segments and appeals to Republicans, independents, and Democrats alike. Democrats need to be reminded that freedom is foundational to the party's platform. Freedom can unite the country.

Second, Biden needs to forcefully engage on fighting corruption in Washington DC and beyond with a positive anti-corruption message. As the numbers indicate, Biden has room to grow here. He is up against arguably the most corrupt president and administration in American history, but voters are buying what Trump is selling. Biden needs to use his credibility as someone who never owned stocks while in office and as Vice President during one of the most ethical administrations in modern history and attack Trump on everything he has done (or not done) in failing to “drain the swamp”, then offer a powerful and specific anti-corruption message that shows how rooting out corruption will build a better future for all Americans. Doing so has the potential to move independent voters who will decide the election.