



TO: Interested Parties
FR: Mark Riddle, President of Future Majority
Stephen Clermont, Director of Polling at Change Research
DT: March 6, 2023
RE: Dismantling DeSantis

Axios: “Scoop: Trump’s 5-part plan to attack DeSantis.”

So... will it work?

Future Majority and our polling partners at Change Research have just completed extensive research in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Nevada where we have recent voter opinions on Trump’s reported planned tactics against Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. This research builds on two years of analyzing voter opinion toward DeSantis and his years in Congress and as Governor.

Trump Attack #1: “DeSantis past support for changes to Social Security and Medicare, including votes as a U.S. Congressman to raise the eligibility for Medicare.”

- We find this attack could be potent. 50% of Republicans in Pennsylvania oppose Ron DeSantis’s predecessor Rick Scott’s plan to require that every law, including Medicare and Social Security, expire after five years and require Congress to pass again to continue. Only a third (34%) support it.

Trump Attack #2: “Disloyalty to Trump and likability”

- Republicans rate DeSantis more favorably than Trump (78% DeSantis, 73% Trump) overall and give him higher ‘very favorable’ ratings (54% DeSantis, 42% Trump).
- Republican voters don’t care about DeSantis being “disloyal” to Trump – 81% express no concern with this statement: “Ron DeSantis is disloyal to President Trump. DeSantis praised Trump in ads to win the Republican primary to become Governor in 2018. Now that he is likely to run for President, DeSantis has pulled down the ads praising Trump off of YouTube.”

Trump Attack #3: “Trump wants to cast DeSantis as a lackey of former House Speaker Paul Ryan.”

- This attack could work except that few Republicans (22%) across Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Nevada currently know that Ron DeSantis served in the U.S. House of Representatives and was one of the many alligators in the DC swamp. Nearly as many (19%) say he didn’t serve in the House while 59% are not sure whether he did or not. On the other hand, a majority (55%) know that Donald Trump endorsed DeSantis for Governor in 2018.

Trump Attack #4: “DeSantis response to Covid”

- Nine in 10 (90%) Republicans in Pennsylvania agree with DeSantis’s elimination of mask mandates and many of the restrictions other states imposed during COVID.



Trump Attack #5: DeSantis wishy washy on Ukraine

- Republican voters are split on Ukraine policy and DeSantis has time to keep his finger in the wind. A third (34%) oppose the United States cutting off all financial resources to aid Ukraine. A similar share (36%) supports the United States sending advanced weapons like long-range missiles, F-16 fighter jets, and more to help Ukraine.

Bottomline:

- 1) **While these attacks on DeSantis might be good for a general election electorate, Republican primary voters will likely view these attacks with a big yawn. Trump seems generally upset that his FOX News friends have moved on, but the data shows that not all of these may land as effectively as he anticipates.**
- 2) **Trump pointing toward DeSantis time in Congress is important. DeSantis has real vulnerabilities in his Congressional record and Democrats won 41 seats in the House with the Trump-DeSantis record as backdrop. Stay tuned for that research. 🏠**

Methodology: *Polling was conducted online from February 24-March 1, 2023. Using its Dynamic Online Sampling process to attain a sample reflective of the electorate in Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, Change Research polled 4356 voters (1838 in Ohio, 1475 in Pennsylvania, 1043 in Nevada). In addition, we report results of a poll 1,512 voters in Pennsylvania conducted from January 13-17, 2023. Post-stratification weights were made on age, gender, ethnicity, education, 2020 presidential vote, and political region to reflect the distribution of voters within each state. The final results have a margin of error of 1.7 percentage points.*