



To: Interested Parties
From: Mark Riddle, President of Future Majority
Hannah Simon, Director of Policy and Advocacy
Re: 2 weeks to go – key governing priorities
Date: October 21, 2020

With less than two weeks to go, the time is now to begin to focus on what a post-January 20th governing majority looks like – and what to do with it. Future Majority conducted a survey of 4,211 registered voters in 2018 red-to-blue congressional districts and 2020 flip opportunities across the country to answer these questions. We wanted to begin to understand now what issues resonate most with voters and what values are most important to them.

And we were surprised at some of the results.

Bottom line, in these tough areas of the country, poised on the knife edge in terms of partisan split (or more difficult), there is surprising consensus (65% or over support) for a range of progressive reforms. Not for some of the blockbusters, but enough to give Democrats strong footing as they look to control the White House and both Houses of Congress. Many, many voters know the system needs to be overhauled to create a functional economy and politics.

Toplines

The political landscape in the congressional battlegrounds tracks with trends seen in national polling and in the battleground states. Below is a snapshot of the lay of the land:

Direction of the country: 30% right direction / 62% wrong direction

Horseshoe: Biden leads 50% to 45%
Hispanic: Biden 50%; Trump 45%
Black: Biden 65%; Trump 32%
White: Biden 49%; Trump 46%
18-34: Biden 57%; Trump 30%

Congressional trial heat: Generic Democrat leads 50% to 46%

Favorability: Biden 46% fav / 49% unfav
Trump 45% fav / 53% unfav

Trump job approval: 47% approve / 53% disapprove (51% strongly disapprove)

Handling coronavirus:	Biden 51% / Trump 42%
Handling jobs & economy:	Biden 46% / Trump 47%
Cleaning up corruption:	Biden 42% / Trump 44%
Improving the U.S. healthcare system:	Biden 48% / Trump 41%
Leading a green energy transition:	Biden 57% / Trump 13%
Future/Past:	59% candidate who focuses on building new and different future / 30% candidate who focuses on making America what it was in past
Vote on Amy Coney Barrett before election:	44% right thing / 52% wrong thing

Underlying Economic Drivers and Values

In these competitive districts, we found a number of factors that make sense why Trump's pseudo-populist argument was successful – but encouragingly, the values these voters espouse align with and support outcomes many progressive reforms and proposals would achieve. Accordingly, Democrats must speak to deep-seated economic distress, unravel racial bias (e.g. class vs. race), and square up against a “freedom” propaganda machine on the right to ultimately reclaim ownership of those very-same words and ideas. Below is a look at the underlying economic drivers and values held in these tough districts:

- **96%** say the idea of economic freedom is important to them
- **10%** say their income is going up faster than the cost of living; **36%** say it's staying about even with the cost of living; **49%** say it's falling behind the cost of living; **5%** are not sure (based on an aggregate of polls in 2019-2020)
- **18%** say their income meets their needs, but they don't have enough for retirement; **18%** say their income covers costs, but don't have enough for emergencies; **4%** say their income does not cover costs; and **5%** say they do not feel secure at any level (45% less that “mostly secure”)
- **23%** are uncertain that they will be able to find a job if theirs disappears – another **24%** don't know
- **27%** of Americans say they do not have an emergency fund that would cover an expense of \$1,000 or more. Of those, 24% blame Republicans in the Senate for their challenges and 20% blame the President. When asked to rate their distress related to whoever they blamed for their economic situation, on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being “burn it down, we need a revolution”, a

shocking **26%** rated it a 10. Another 34% rated it a 7, 8, or 9. There are a lot of angry, dispossessed members of the electorate out there. A future majority ignores them at its peril.

- **44%** report they will maybe or not be out of debt or are not sure
- **52%** think their children will do better than they do
- **49%** are concerned about paying for healthcare bills; **40%** are concerned about paying for retirement costs; **37%** are concerned about paying for prescription drugs
- **51%** are concerned about their family's safety; **61%** are concerned about protecting themselves and their families from the coronavirus; **59%** are concerned about race relations; **55%** are concerned about the quality of schools
- **66%** are concerned that they or someone they know will lose their job or wages due to the coronavirus pandemic
- **99%** are concerned with corruption influencing decisions made in Washington, D.C. (86% 'very')
- **68%** say it is important that any federal support be designed to help people lift themselves up by their own bootstraps and by their creative (or entrepreneurial) efforts
- **85%** say it is important that federal support for workers leads to a situation where they don't need it anymore
- When asked to select one and only one value to place highest in a political party's governing and message, **35%** say freedom, **24%** say equality and **13%** say justice.
- When asked to select up to two most important for a candidate to value, **46%** say freedom and **42%** say justice
- **45%** believe Republicans have the most compelling vision of freedom vs. **40%** Democrats
- **45%** say Democrats are more interested in expanding freedoms vs. **49%** limiting them (for Republicans, it is 44% expanding vs. 49% limiting)
- **35%** say "freedom" best describes "freedom from: interference, government, regulation"; **29%** say "freedom in terms of able to do something: health care, make investments, safety net, job security"; and **23%** say "freedom for: hard work rewarded, greater social mobility, a meaningful job"
- **44%** believe Republicans have the most compelling vision of families vs. **41%** Democrats (12% neither; 3% not sure)
- **51%** believe Democrats are more interested in protecting family values, including earning a living wage, making childcare more affordable, and expanding affordable health care vs. **42%** Republicans
- **93%** would be more likely (76% much more likely) to support a candidate who advocates for a "for the people" agenda focused on cleaning up corruption in Washington, lowering health care and prescription drug costs, raising wages, and rebuilding our nation's infrastructure
- **74%** agree that "our government should be implementing more policies to value the dignity of work – the idea that hard work should pay off for every American, no matter who you are or what kind of work you do. But wages have been flat and the cost of everything, from rent to an education to health care is going up. When our work has dignity, Americans have the economic

security they need to start a family, pay for childcare and college, take time off when they are sick, and save for retirement.”

The Big Winner Issues

There are a number of policy priorities that are exceedingly popular among voters in swing Congressional districts. These are policies that Democrats have been fighting for – but Americans simply do not connect the issues themselves to Democrats and spread blame for why solutions have not been met fairly evenly among Democrats, Republicans and Trump. The key is connecting these issues to the underlying economic drivers and commonly held values that impact how voters see the world, and driving home Democratic ownership of those values.

Jobs/Economy

- **72%** support a federal program to help pay for retraining for jobs in advanced technology
- **79%** support a federal program to help pay for retraining in hands-on jobs like plumbing or carpentry
- **80%** support the federal government paying for college for young people who do two to four years of national service
- **88%** agree “It is important to implement economic policies that stop rewarding wealth over work, large corporations over small businesses, and even foreign investors over the American middle class.”
- **86%** agree “It is the patriotic duty of American corporations to pay their fair share in taxes and to keep good-paying jobs here in America.”
- **79%** agree “It is the patriotic duty of every working American citizen to pay their fair share in taxes for investments in a better, more resilient economy.”
- **69%** support reforming the tax code to end tax giveaways for corporations and people making over \$400,000 a year
- **90%** support imposing a tax penalty on corporations that ship jobs overseas to sell products back to America
- **84%** support requiring a true minimum tax on all foreign earnings of United States companies located overseas to end rewarding global tax havens
- **85%** support increasing investments in American research and development (R&D)
- **78%** support creating tax credits to help working families buy their first homes and build wealth
- **87%** support offering tax credits that help working families pay for the cost of caring for an aging loved one
- **76%** support equalizing tax benefits for retirement plans across the income scale

Coronavirus

- **57%** think America is doing worse than other countries with our response to the coronavirus pandemic
- **47%** believe the worst has yet to come for the coronavirus pandemic
- **57%** support a return to increased and stricter social distancing measures, and in an extreme case the lockdowns, if coronavirus begins to spread rapidly this fall and winter
- **58%** support a federal mask mandate
- **52%** are more likely to vote for a member of Congress who supports the HEROES Act (36% much more likely) – net 35% more likely
- **73%** support the HEROES Act (**60%** support the Senate Republicans coronavirus relief bill)
- On a list of 15 policies, the following three gained the most support: protections for essential workers; cash payments to taxpayers up to \$1,200 per individual; financial aid for individuals, families, and small businesses. Extending the evictions moratorium and providing state and local aid tied for 5th
- **73%** support increasing federal funding for state and local health departments to prepare for future pandemics
- **74%** support establishing a permanent economic relief fund that can be deployed in future crises when needed
- **70%** support paid family leave; **76%** support paid sick leave
- **85%** support increasing funding for research and development for testing, vaccine discovery, treatments and more

Democracy Reform

- **89%** say it is 8 out of 10 or higher level of importance to pass legislation to clean up the corruption in Washington and state governments (55% 10 out of 10 importance)
- **76%** support making Election Day a federal holiday
- **54%** support expanding voting access through automatic voter registration
- **65%** support expanding voting access through universal online voter registration
- **92%** support increasing penalties for voter intimidation
- **64%** support restoring voting rights for those who have completed their prison sentence
- **75%** support guaranteeing the availability of early voting in federal elections for at least 15 days
- **86%** support enhancing election security measures and prohibiting false information about elections online
- **92%** support strengthening government ethics by slowing the revolving door between lawmakers and lobbyists
- **93%** support banning members of Congress from serving on corporate boards while in office
- **75%** support establishing a code of ethics for the Supreme Court of the United States

- **90%** support preventing members of Congress from using taxpayer funds to settle employment discrimination claims
- **96%** support passing anti-corruption legislation to clean up Washington and reduce the influence of money in politics
- **92%** support requiring political organizations to disclose donors who contribute more than \$10,000

Healthcare

- **86%** support allowing Americans to buy into the same health insurance plan that government employees receive (This scored the best, better than a public option, Medicare buy in, and lowering Medicare eligibility age)
- **60%** support guaranteeing health care coverage as a right for all Americans
- **72%** support allowing people between the ages of 50 and 64 to buy insurance through the Medicare program
- **74%** support allowing people who don't get health insurance at work to buy health insurance through their state Medicaid program
- **68%** support establishing a public option that would compete with private health insurance plans and be available to all Americans.
- **82%** support increasing availability of community health centers and low-cost transportation for rural Americans to access health care
- **87%** support establishing state-level protections for pre-existing conditions
- **87%** support protecting people with health insurance from surprise medical bills
- **79%** support ensuring marginalized communities are not subject to increases in premiums solely due to their race, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity
- **92%** support making it easier for generic drugs to come to market; **94%** support expanding the supply of quality generics; **95%** support increasing the visibility of generics
- **84%** support allowing Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices; **79%** support allowing the government to negotiate prescription drug prices that would apply to both Medicare and private insurance
- **89%** support requiring pharmaceutical companies to include list prices in ads
- **93%** support allowing Americans to buy drugs imported from Canada and other countries if proven safe and effective
- **78%** support increasing taxes on pharmaceutical companies that refuse to negotiate the price of prescription drugs with Medicare

Infrastructure

- **86%** support spending more federal money to improve physical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, buildings and waterways
- **72%** support spending more federal money to modernize public schools
- **84%** support spending more federal money to rebuild our water infrastructure, including pipes, pumps and treatment plants to ensure safe, reliable water service for all Americans
- **89%** support removing lead from all schools and daycare center water systems and providing for testing of public school and daycare center water systems
- **80%** support allowing states and localities to raise funds together for new infrastructure projects through regional planning councils
- **82%** support increasing access to high-speed broadband internet by making investments and increasing competition
- **93%** support increasing access to vocational, technical and apprenticeship training programs in infrastructure-related jobs
- **89%** support ensuring that any federal funds spent on new infrastructure projects use materials produced or manufactured in the United States
- **91%** support revamping our power grid to increase its security
- **84%** support ensuring strong labor and health standards and protections for workers on infrastructure projects

Climate

- **72%** support reducing airlines emissions through new low-carbon technologies
- **83%** support increasing financial assistance to farmers to protect them from financial ruin due to natural disasters
- **88%** support reducing America's reliance on foreign energy and growing jobs by producing more American-made clean energy
- **85%** support fostering greater competition in the utility energy space to drive efficiency and lower costs for consumers
- **88%** support holding big polluters accountable that violate federal laws and use fines imposed toward job training and resources needed for environmental cleanup
- **89%** support setting maximum contaminant levels on harmful pollutants in drinking water systems

Technology

- **84%** believe the government should play a major role in addressing online foreign interference in U.S. elections
- **76%** support empowering federal regulators to apply existing anti-trust regulations to big technology companies

- **91%** support establishing a consumer data bill of rights to protect Americans from fraud, misuse and abuse of their private online data
- **73%** support establishing an online citizen portal that is a one-stop shop for all government services
- **88%** support investing more in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education in our school curricula
- **77%** support legislative action to hold social media and technology companies accountable for preventing and stopping the spread of misinformation and disinformation online

Foreign Policy

- **90%** support placing sanctions on Chinese officials responsible for human rights abuses
- **77%** support negotiating arms control agreements between the U.S. and China
- **76%** support prohibiting U.S. companies from selling sensitive high-tech products to China
- **71%** support working with China to tackle climate change
- **71%** support prohibiting Chinese technology companies from building communications networks in the United States
- **83%** support sanctions against Russia for interfering in elections in the United States

Unpopular Issues

Despite good news for the overall progressive agenda, there are several issues supported by some Democrats, or by no Democrats, but that Republicans have tried to pin on Democrats, that are less popular among these voters – and stand in stark contrast to the multitude of issues, more issues that could ever be legislated in a single session, that gain 65% or 70%+ support. The issues without majority support in these admittedly tough districts are as follows:

- **39%** oppose public financing for candidates through taxpayer dollars on a matching system (39% support)
- **47%** oppose making Washington, D.C. a state (42% support)
- **49%** oppose establishing a national health plan in which all Americans would get their insurance from a single government plan/Medicare for All (46% support, net -3% support)
- **53%** oppose allowing Medicare to put more restrictions on the use of certain drugs (25% support)
- **47%** oppose repealing the Hyde Amendment (45% support)
- **53%** oppose adding more justices to the Supreme Court to restore its balance (35% support)

Again, the big winners:

- **96%** say the idea of economic freedom is important to them
- **89%** say it is 8 out of 10 or higher level of importance to pass legislation to clean up the corruption in Washington and state governments (55% 10 out of 10 importance)

- **93%** would be more likely (76% much more likely) to support a candidate who advocates for a “for the people” agenda focused on cleaning up corruption in Washington, lowering health care and prescription drug costs, raising wages, and rebuilding our nation’s infrastructure
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It is clear that there is a great deal of economic insecurity within the progressive coalition, and that these voters’ concerns must be addressed. On the positive side, there is low hanging fruit — mostly centering around higher wages, lower health care costs, more rewarding work, cleaning up corruption, better energy policy and freedom — for a majority to implement, which will not cause the sort of backlash Democrats experienced in 2010, and which will further solidify the ability to do good for the American people.