

TO: Interested Parties
FR: Future Majority
DT: July 21, 2025
RE: In Their Words: Open-Ended Responses from Swing State & District Voters

Future Majority's June 2025 survey of voters in swing congressional districts (n=1,637) and statewide in Georgia (n=974) and Michigan (n=1,037) featured a range of open-ended questions to uncover voters' views on the American Dream, cost of living, media trust, the rule of law, perceptions of the Democratic Party. This memo analyzes 8,955 open-ended responses (accompanied by direct quotes attributed by gender, race, age, & party) and offers strategic observations and recommendations.

Strategic Observations:

Voters' words echo our strongest (91% in swing districts) message: *"Expanding financial freedom is essential to building our future. That means fewer hurdles for small businesses and entrepreneurs, putting more money in workers' pockets, protecting savings from hidden fees and middlemen, and increasing access to opportunities and retirement security. When Americans have financial freedom, innovation thrives, families prosper, and our communities grow stronger."*

- **Address the Cost of Living:** Voters across the spectrum are anxious about the cost of living and believe the "American Dream" is slipping out of reach for average families. Democrats should prioritize pocketbook issues showcasing plans to lower costs (from groceries to gas to healthcare), raise wages, and tackle income inequality. Emphasize policies that rein in corporate greed and level the playing field for the middle and working class, since many blame corporate profiteering and wealthy elites for their struggles. This is the defining issue for what we call "Cost of Living Independents," which will likely be a key voter bloc in the 2026 Midterms. Contrast against Trump's ongoing tariffs and trade wars, which Independents are likely to say raises costs and causes unneeded chaos
- **Listening Matters:** A recurring sentiment is that politicians (including Democrats) are out of touch with everyday people's lives. It is crucial for Democrats to visibly listen to constituents' concerns (especially in swing and rural areas) and show that they care about people like them. This means continuing grassroots engagement, town halls, and authentic storytelling about constituent struggles. Voters need to feel heard and seen
- **Restore Trust and Integrity:** There is a deep distrust in institutions and media, and voters want leaders who are honest, accountable, and transparent. However, Democrats need to quit defining their arguments by quoting institutional data and "experts." Voters do not trust them. Speak in plain terms. Democrats' emphasis needs to be cleaning up the "People's House" and tackling corruption. Data shows that Democrats have an opening to make these promises and keep them
- **Champion the Rule of Law and Due Process:** Many respondents stressed that "no one is above the law" and that fairness and accountability are core values. Democrats should continue to affirm the rule of law, whether in holding powerful figures accountable or ensuring a fair shot in communities. Position Democrats as the defender of democratic norms and enabling a fair shot for all, contrasting with opponents who flout rules. This can appeal to voters who are concerned about chaos or corruption in politics

- **Refresh Leadership and Messaging:** Feedback indicates a desire for new leadership and bold action. Voters (including younger Democrats and Independents) are frustrated with “politics as usual” and an aging status quo. Democrats should uplift new voices and ideas, project energy and innovation, and fight more aggressively for democratic values. This includes being unafraid to call out Republican extremism, while also avoiding getting bogged down in niche ideological battles that don’t resonate broadly. A balanced approach - firm on core principles but focused on widely-shared needs - will reconnect and motivate key voter groups

Achievability of the American Dream

Question: Do you believe the American Dream is still achievable for you and your family? Why or why not?

Key Themes: Respondents show a range of opinions about where the American Dream stands today.

- **Widespread pessimism:** Most express deep pessimism about the American Dream today. A significant number say “no, it’s no longer achievable”
- **American Dream is Unaffordable:** Voters blame high cost of living, stagnant wages, and systems rigged in favor of the wealthy and well-connected
- **Generational divide:** Younger respondents’ view is bleak – “there is no future here,” while some older respondents offer a more positive attitude
- **Perceptions of political failure:** Blame given to government and political parties not supporting average families
- **Some sprinkles of optimism:** Citing the belief that with hard work and personal effort, you can achieve the American Dream, but this is mostly said by conservatives, which suggests partisan perceptions

Respondent Voices:

- “Absolutely, it has always been here. If you work hard, get skills that are useful and are willing to be flexible, anyone can achieve the American dream.” (**Female, White, 50-64, Republican**)
- “No. Our dream was to have financial stability, have a house big enough for us to have 4 children, for me to be a stay-at-home mom to homeschool our kids.... We are in this house longer than we planned because we cannot afford to move... We cannot afford more than one vehicle. All while my husband has worked in public safety for the last 6 years... we STILL couldn't afford "the American Dream". Groceries are ridiculously expensive, and we can't afford as much as we used to be able to. We would love to have one more child, but with the cost of everything now, we can't afford to have another child.” (**Female, Black, 18-34, Independent**)
- “Not at all. The younger you are the more screwed you are. There is no future here much less a dream.” (**Male, White 18-34, Democrat**)
- “No. Only the ultra-rich have any ability to make money. The rest of us are just trying to get by.” (**Female, White, 65+, Democrat**)
- “Rich people in charge of the government are ruining our country for their own benefit.” (**Female, Hispanic, 35-49, Democrat**)

Cost of Living & "Why is Everything So Expensive?"

Question: What are the main reasons things are so expensive in America today?

Key Themes: The economic pressure of costs is the real driving force behind most anxieties

- **Corporate greed:** Respondents quoted this most frequently for the reason why everything is expensive
- **Partisan blame split driving responses:** Democrats/Independents blame Trump tariffs/trade wars and corporate exploitation. Republicans continued to cite Biden's energy, border, and spending policies for why costs are high
- **Pandemic aftershocks:** The pandemic still looms large in respondents' minds, particularly supply chain disruptions and inflation, and they have not been able to recover
- **Voter pain is real:** The emotions of anger, frustration, and fatigue were the dominant tone throughout the responses

Respondent Voices:

- "Corporate Greed." (*Female, AAPI, Independent 18-34*)
- "Corporate greed. Tariffs are present, imports are stunted, we don't have the supplies in our country to make what is needed, and companies/corporations still need to maintain the pay of their executives... The main reason things are so expensive is corporate greed." (*Female, White, 35-49, Democrat*)
- "Not regulating corporate greed, and accepting kickbacks, incompetent, self-interest, representing the corporations before the people" (*Male, Black, 50-64, Independent*)
- "Certain companies have priced in tariffs that haven't even taken place. If something is too expensive (eggs) stop buying them. There's always alternatives... I don't feel sorry for anyone going through this. Deal with it." (*Male, White, 65+, Republican*)
- "Biden Administration policies, open borders, gas and oil restrictions. His policies were awful for our economy." (*Female, White 50-64, Republican*)

Democrats have a clear opening to champion the fight against corporate price-gouging and monopolies. Many voters, including some Republicans, blame greed for rising prices, making policies like antitrust enforcement, anti-price-gouging, and tax reform highly popular.

Distrust in the News Media

Question: What has made you distrust the news media?

Key Themes: Trust in this core institution is at an all-time low. Voters are seeking information from less traditional sources.

- **Bipartisan distrust:** Both sides of the political spectrum share broad and intense distrust of news media. Respondents describe the media as "biased," "one-sided," or engaging in "fake news propaganda." There is also a strong sense that media outlets mislead without accountability in pursuit of ratings/advertising dollars over truth
- **Cultural disconnect:** Respondents see the media portrayed as out-of-touch, even harmful. A few respondents referenced high-profile events (like January 6, 2021) as points where what they saw with their own eyes differed from what the media reported, fueling conspiracy perceptions

- **Need for trusted messengers:** They are looking to other messengers, beyond traditional press. The sentiment is that “true journalism” has died and that media can no longer be trusted to deliver unbiased facts

Respondent Voices:

- “The amount of misinformation and disinformation. The way politicians freely lie with no accountability. We’ve impeached a president for lying about an affair in his personal life. Now we don’t care if a president lies daily to instill fear and hatred towards other groups. Each side feels that the other is completely brainwashed and it’s hard for the average American to know what’s true.” **(Female, Hispanic, 18-34, Democrat)**
- “They are all bought and paid for. They are all extremely biased with no journalistic integrity. They are more interested in views and advertising income than honesty. They sensationalize and divide America. I have watched family members be brainwashed by the nonsense on OAN and Fox and want no part of it.” **(Female, White, 35-49, Democrat)**
- “Biased reporting, bordering on propaganda.” **(Male, White, 35-49, Independent)**
- “We have caught them lying to us on a daily basis.” **(Male, Hispanic, 35-49, Republican)**
- “One-sided reporting and outright lying.” **(Female, Black, 65+, Democrat)**

To persuade in a low-trust media environment, Democrats must become the trusted source: transparent, fact-based, and directly connected to communities.

“Protecting the Rule of Law” – What Does it Mean?

Question: Briefly, what do you think “protecting the rule of law” means?

Key Themes: Respondents converged on the core principle: “No one is above the law.”

- **Unifying core theme:** “No one is above the law” was the core theme among many respondents. Protecting the rule of law, in their view, means that laws should apply equally to everyone, powerful or not, and that leaders and citizens alike must be held accountable under the law
- **Bipartisan agreement:** Respondents view fairness, constitutional adherence as the pillars upholding the foundations of our rule of law
- **Concerns range:** From corrupt elites, the current administration’s authoritarian tendencies, to selective enforcement of the law, voters have a wide range of concerns about corruption in government
- **Mixed emphasis from both sides of the aisle:** Conservatives: limited government, strong borders. Liberals: equal justice, institutional integrity

Respondent Voices:

- “Actually enforcing laws for everyone, no matter their income level. NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW.” **(Male, White, 35-49, Independent)**
- “Ensuring that laws are enforced equally so that no one, including the president, or wealthy people, are above the law.” **(Female, Black, 50-64, Democrat)**
- “Following the US Constitution and Bill of Rights is of utmost importance... We are not a monarchy, and I don’t want to live under authoritarian rule by rich tech guys and a bunch of rich oligarchs. And the police need to actually ‘protect and serve’ all of the people, not just the white ones or the rich ones.” **(Female, White, 50-64, Independent)**

- “Protecting constitutional rights, issuing the dollar, and protecting our borders are the only [things] the federal government should be doing.” (**Male, White, 35-49, Republican**)
- “Protecting constitutional rights for the American people and those attempting to become American citizens. The best way to do this is to ensure strong checks and balances across all branches of government.” (**Female, White, 18-34, Democrat**)
- “Protect our democracy & equal branches of government. Teach Civics in high school & colleges. Equal justice under the law. No one is above the law.” (**Female, Hispanic, 65+, Democrat**)

By reclaiming the “rule of law,” Democrats can project strength and order, soften GOP attacks, and appeal to moderates who value stability, equal justice, and protecting freedom.

How Can Democrats Show They Care About People Like You?

Question: What would Democrats need to do to convince you that they care about people like you?

Key Themes: This question directly probed what the Democratic Party is missing in the eyes of these swing-district voters self-identifying as Democrats and Independents. The most prevalent theme is “focus on the basics that affect my life.”

- **Tackle cost of living issues:** Inflation, wages, healthcare, housing are the key issues that voters are struggling to address
- **Speak plainly:** Respondents want Democrats to “speak plainly” and lay out concrete, achievable plans rather than lofty rhetoric
- **Refresh leadership:** Several respondents brought up the need for new leadership or change in approach; comments like “get rid of the old guys” were common, implying that younger or more dynamic leadership could convey that Democrats are in touch
- **Prove action:** There is also a thread of frustration with excessive partisanship or inaction; Democrats being perceived as all talk, no action
- **Fight back:** Respondents want Democrats to show some backbone and fight against extremism, while maintaining broad appeal and not pandering to their own extremes.
- **Showing up matters:** Respondents want Democrats to “show us, don’t just tell us”, through effective policies, visible engagement, and possibly a refresh in messengers

Respondent Voices:

- “Get an economic plan to stop inflation... Groceries are [sold] in smaller amounts, weigh less, plus are more expensive... Today we need 2 incomes to pay one car lease, pay taxes, insurance on house, cars, utility bills, groceries.” (**Female, White, 65+, Democrat**)
- “Show that they listen. That’s why Kamala lost. She wouldn’t listen or act on the things her voters felt were important. These people [politicians] act the same – just one side does it behind closed doors, and one says it out loud. Two wings of one bird.” (**Female, White, 18-34, Independent**)
- “We need strong messages; we need less tolerance. We need swift action and justice for the take down of democracy that is currently taking place. Heads need to literally roll for what is happening from the GOP and we need this message to be heard loud and clear.” (**Male, White, 35-49, Democrat**)
- “Democrats must do the work to show that they are about delivering change. Fight for the people, the rights of the people, democracy and make the USA and the world a better place.” (**Female, Black, 50-64, Democrat**)

- “Drop the culture war shit. Become pro worker. Stop pandering to the fringe extremes. Have a solid plan for improving material conditions for the American worker.” (**Male, White, 18-34, Independent**)
- “Fight vigorously for policies that help the people.” (**Male, Black, 35-49, Democrat**)

The singular mission can be “Make Life Better.” Align with what voters feel, not just what Democrats say. By uniting around a vision to make life better by restoring financial freedom, creating wealth for families, supporting the dignity of work, and taking on the corruption, Democrats can restore their credibility with voters. While unable to pass sweeping legislation, Democrats can unite around a vision of America’s Promise. Democrats must fight for lower costs and deliver government that works for people - with fresh, relatable leadership and values-focused outreach to show voters they are heard and respected.

Strategic Messaging Recommendations

Voters in swing districts and states are not asking for the impossible, they want a government that is responsive, competent, and attuned to their daily realities. Together, these strategic shifts aim to convince skeptical swing district and state voters that Democrats both understand their problems and have actionable solutions.

- **Lead Every Message with Financial Freedom:** Cost of living is the top concern among voters, and “financial freedom” is the highest-testing frame across all geographies and voter types. Every message - whether on healthcare, housing, or taxes - should answer: *How does this expand your path to financial freedom?* The Trump-backed “Big Beautiful Bill” must be framed as a corrupt giveaway that drives up debt and cuts vital services
- **Own the Anti-Corruption Fight as Democrats’ Contrast Advantage:** Swing voters now trust Democrats more than Republicans to clean up corruption - a 9.5-point swing since March. Voters overwhelmingly support reforms like banning congressional stock trading and exposing lobbyist influence. Embed these contrasts and reinforce that Democrats will hold anyone accountable - no matter the party - because no one is above the law. Champion common-sense reforms that nearly every American supports
- **Hammer the Debt, Highlight the Human Costs:** Voters are alarmed by the Trump bill’s \$2.4 trillion deficit impact and threats to rural hospitals, food assistance, and healthcare coverage. Speak plainly: This bill bankrupts your community to pad billionaires’ pockets. Use phrases like “bankrupting hospitals isn’t conservative” and emphasize that GOP chaos and corruption are driving prices higher, not solving problems
- **Frame Democrats as Fighting for Workers and Common Sense:** Voters want Democrats to “Make Life Better” by lowering costs and protecting freedom. Spotlight real efforts - town halls, blocking bad bills, backing small business and first-time homebuyer aid. Keep the tone urgent but hopeful. Emphasize that workers are the heroes, not institutions. Always link policy to real impact
- **Speak Plainly:** Voters distrust elites and both parties. Use language that reflects this skepticism: “You’ve heard the spin. Here are the facts.” Avoid jargon or defending institutions. Ground truth in personal stakes and plain talk. When countering lies or bad-faith attacks, don’t delay - go direct, go local, and go now