

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoff Garin
DATE: January 3, 2017
RE: Survey of Voters in 2018 Senate Battleground States

This memorandum summarizes the key findings from a survey conducted by Hart Research Associates for the Center for American Progress Action Fund among 1,206 voters across 14 key battleground states in which Democrats will be defending U.S. Senate seats in 2018. The states included in the sample are: Florida, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Each state is represented equally in the sample, reflecting the allocation of seats in the Senate. The interviews were conducted by telephone from December 19 to 23 and on December 27. The self-reported presidential vote among respondents is 50% for Donald Trump, 41% for Hillary Clinton, and 5% for Gary Johnson or Jill Stein; 4% declined to say how they voted and could not be classified based on other responses. The nine-point gap between Trump and Clinton is reflective of the actual average vote across these 14 states.

Key Findings

1. Voters across the battleground states want Senate Democrats to serve as a check and balance on Donald Trump, even if this means opposing and trying to block his policies on many occasions.

We asked voters in the battleground states if they want Senate Democrats mainly to support Donald Trump's policies or to serve as an independent check and balance on Donald Trump. Half of the respondents were given this choice with a stated assumption that serving as a check and balance might mean **opposing** Trump's policies on many occasions, while the stated assumption for the other half was that serving as an independent check and balance might mean trying to **block** his policies on many occasions.

By 61% to 25%, voters in the battleground states want Senate Democrats to be an independent check and balance on Donald Trump, even if this means opposing Trump's policies on many occasions.

The demand for Senate Democrats to serve as a check and balance on Donald Trump is nearly as great even with the tougher stipulation that Democrats would try to block Trump's policies on many occasions—voters opt for Democrats to act as an independent check and balance by 56% to 30%.

In addition to asking what they want Senate Democrats as a group to do, we also asked voters what they want their own Democratic senator to do, mentioning in each state the name of the senator who will be up for reelection in 2018. Across all 14 states, 59% want their Democratic senator to be an independent check and balance on Donald Trump, compared with just 28% who want their senator to mainly support Donald Trump's policies. Even in the five states in which Trump won by an average margin of 27 points (IN, MO, MT, ND, and WV), voters say that they want their senator to be an independent check and balance on Trump by 52% to 33%.

2. The desire for Democrats to be a check and balance on Donald Trump reflects the fact that many of Trump's own voters are ambivalent and uncertain about him.

While 61% of those who voted for Donald Trump say they supported him strongly, a substantial minority (37%) say they supported him with mixed feelings.

Among all voters in the 14 states, only 39% say they have confidence that Donald Trump will do a good job as president. Nearly as many (37%) say they doubt that Trump will do a good job, while another 23% say they feel somewhere in between.

One-quarter of those who voted for Trump on Election Day are not confident that he will be a good president.

The ambivalent Trump voters will be an important swing group in the 2018 elections, and they have a decided preference for their senator acting as an independent check and balance on Trump.

3. Battleground state voters put a very high priority on cleaning up corruption and financial conflicts of interest in government, and most voters in these states believe that Donald Trump is not doing enough to avoid conflicts of interests between his business holdings and his role as president.

When asked to rate the importance of 13 potential priorities for the new president and Congress, voters in the Senate battleground states put an exceptionally high premium on "cleaning up corruption and financial conflicts of interest in the government"—rating it only slightly behind "protecting Medicare for senior citizens," the number-one item. On a scale from zero to 100, the average rating for cleaning up corruption is 87, with 78% rating it

as 80 or higher, including 47% who rate it as 100. The emphasis on cleaning up corruption and eliminating conflicts of interest cuts across party lines and demographic groups, and is more important than average among Trump voters.

In this context, it is significant to note that only 34% of voters say that Donald Trump is doing enough to avoid conflicts of interests between his business holdings and his role as president, while 52% say he should be doing more to avoid conflicts of interests. Nearly all (90%) of Hillary Clinton's voters say Trump should be doing more than he is to avoid conflicts of interests with his business holdings, but so do 69% of Johnson/Stein voters and 20% of Trump's own voters. White non-college-educated women, who according to this survey voted for Trump by a 19-point margin, say by 13 points that Trump is not doing enough to avoid conflicts of interest. There is an even larger swing among white non-college-educated men, who voted for Trump by a 40-point margin, but are evenly divided on whether he is doing enough to separate his business holdings from his role as president.

Voters may not be constitutional experts on the emoluments clause, but they believe that Donald Trump should not be allowed to receive payments from foreign governments through his business holdings while serving as president (71% agree, 18% disagree). Trump voters agree by 53% to 31%. Moreover, a 54% majority of all voters want Congress to take action to prevent Donald Trump from receiving payments from foreign governments while serving as president, while 17% say that President-elect Trump should not be allowed to accept foreign government payments, but do not think that congressional action is warranted at this time.

4. Two-thirds of voters in the Senate battleground states believe that Russia under Vladimir Putin poses a serious danger to the United States, and a majority of voters think it is important for Congress to conduct an independent investigation into Russia's efforts to interfere with the U.S. elections.

By contrast to the benign views of Vladimir Putin expressed by Donald Trump, Rex Tillerson, and other members of the Trump national security team, voters in the 2018 Senate battleground states believe that Russia under Putin represents a significant danger to the United States and our national interests. Fully 65% say that "Russia under Vladimir Putin poses a significant danger to America's national security and interests in the world," while just 27% say it does not. Democratic voters (80%) are the most likely to see Putin's Russia as a danger to the United States, but majorities of both

Republicans (by 56% to 36%) and independents (52% to 38%) do so as well.

A majority of voters in the battleground states believe that it is important for Congress to conduct an independent investigation into Russia's efforts to interfere with the U.S. elections by hacking into e-mails and computer systems. Across the 14 states, 54% say it is very or fairly important to have such an investigation, 18% say it is just somewhat important to do so, and only 27% say it is not that important or not important at all to have an independent investigation into Russia's actions during our election. Three in 10 Trump voters say it is very or fairly important for Congress to convene an independent investigation, joining 82% of Clinton voters and 51% of Johnson/Stein voters. Among Trump voters, those who want Democrats to serve as an independent check and balance on the incoming president are more likely than average to believe that it is important for Congress to independently investigate Russian interference.

5. The upcoming hearings on Donald Trump's nominees for his cabinet will provide a forum to address concerns that Trump is appointing people to his administration that are too conservative and too pro-business in their policies.

Voters in the battleground states were asked how much it concerned them that Trump is appointing people who are too conservative or too pro-business after hearing the following:

Some people have expressed concerns that Donald Trump has appointed people to his cabinet who are too conservative and too pro-business in their point of view—including an education secretary who favors taxpayer-funded vouchers for private and religious schools, a labor secretary who opposes the minimum wage, a health secretary who favors privatizing Medicare, and an environmental protection administrator who has tried to stop clean air and clean water regulations.

A majority (56%) of voters say that Trump's appointments give them significant concerns—including 41% who express a lot of concern and 15% who express some concern; 43% say either that they have just a little concern (12%) or no concern at all (31%) that Trump is appointing people who are too conservative or too pro-business in their approach. Sixty-one percent (61%) of independent voters in the battleground states say that Trump's appointments give them concerns.

- 6. The positions of Donald Trump and his appointees on healthcare issues are deeply at odds with the priorities of battleground state voters, and constitute the largest source of vulnerability for Trump and his Republican allies in Congress. This is the case especially on the question of Medicare privatization, but also applies to cuts in Medicaid spending, the decision to repeal the Affordable Care Act before presenting a replacement plan, and the effort to cut off funding for the healthcare services provided by Planned Parenthood.**

Healthcare issues are of crucial importance to voters in the battleground states. When asked to rate the importance of several potential priorities for the new president and Congress, battleground state voters give their highest scores to “protecting Medicare for senior citizens” (mean rating of 88 on a zero-to-100 scale, 78% ratings of 80 or higher, including 49% rating it as 100). Voters also give a high rating to “making sure all Americans have access to affordable health insurance” (mean rating of 81, 62% ratings of 80 or higher, including 42% rating it at 100). These issues are important to voters across party lines. Three-quarters of Republicans give a high rating to protecting Medicare for senior citizens, and half give a high rating to making sure that all Americans have access to affordable health insurance.

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When we ask battleground state voters for their reactions to more than a dozen positions advanced by Donald Trump or congressional Republicans on a variety of issues, the most fervent opposition occurs on healthcare-related issues:

Voters' Reactions to Trump/Republican Healthcare Policy Proposals					
	Very Favorable %	Somewhat Favorable %	Neutral %	Somewhat Unfavorable %	Very Unfavorable %
Replace Medicare with private insurance for seniors that costs two thousand dollars more per year on average	4	5	10	13	64
Cut funding for Medicaid, which states use to provide health coverage for low-income individuals and for nursing home care for seniors and the disabled	6	9	11	18	54
Turn Medicare into a voucher system under which seniors would get a fixed amount to pay for their healthcare—ending Medicare's guarantee of full health coverage	6	10	15	13	53
Cut off all federal funds for Planned Parenthood health centers that provide birth control, cancer screenings, and other preventive healthcare services to women	20	9	8	12	50
Repeal Obamacare BEFORE having any specific plan to replace it	20	12	6	15	44

While each of these policies is opposed by large majorities of battleground state voters, the items related to Medicare and Medicaid are notable because they are opposed by majorities of Trump voters. For example, 62% of battleground voters who supported Trump are unfavorable to the idea of

replacing Medicare with private insurance for seniors that would cost \$2,000 more per year on average. Fifty-three (53%) percent of Trump voters respond negatively to the idea of cutting the Medicaid funding that pays for health coverage for low-income individuals and for nursing home care for seniors and the disabled.

It also is notable that even in the group of states that voted most overwhelmingly for Trump (IN, MO, MT, ND, and WV), a majority of voters oppose each of the policies in the table above—including repealing Obamacare before having any specific plan to replace it and cutting off federal funding for Planned Parenthood's healthcare services.

Later in the survey, when we test several criticisms of Donald Trump's policies, the one that resonates the most with voters focuses on the issue of Medicare:

"Donald Trump promised that he would not touch Medicare if elected, but his choice for secretary of health and human services is the sponsor of a plan to privatize Medicare, and he is working with the Republicans in Congress on a proposal to turn Medicare into a voucher program that would cost seniors more and end Medicare's guarantee of full health coverage."

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of battleground state voters say that this statement gives them a high level of concern about Donald Trump (ratings of seven or higher on a zero-to-10 scale), including one-third of those who voted for Trump in November. While concern is highest among voters age 65 and older, significant majorities of voters in younger age brackets also are highly concerned. Even though white women without a college degree voted for Trump by a large margin, 62% of them express a high level of concern about him after hearing this statement on Medicare.

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7. **In addition to healthcare issues, President-elect Trump and his Republican allies are out of step with battleground state voters on a number of other key policies, including on policies that go to the heart of the Trump/Republican economic agenda. Policies that are at odds with Trump's populist campaign rhetoric are unpopular among the working-class white voters who were the key base of Trump's support in the election.**

Early in the survey, Trump voters most often cite economic issues as being most important to their decision to support Donald Trump in November. In many cases, however, the majority of battleground state voters react unfavorably to key elements of the Trump economic agenda, as indicated in the following table:

Voters' Reactions to Trump/Republican Economic Policy Proposals		
	Total Favorable %	Total Unfavorable %
Block any increase in the federal minimum wage from its current level of seven dollars and 25 cents per hour	26	58
Pass an across-the-board cut in federal income tax rates, which would result in very large tax cuts for millionaires and much smaller tax cuts for the middle class	28	57
Pass a large cut in the tax rate for corporations, which would reduce the amount of taxes most large corporations pay	30	55
Repeal most of the regulations on Wall Street and large banks that were passed after the 2008 financial crisis in order to prevent the bad conduct that helped cause the crisis	28	49

Non-college-educated white voters, the base of Trump's support in the battleground states, are hostile to his tax policies as well as his opposition to a minimum wage increase. When the new administration's economic policies run contrary to the populist tone of Trump's campaign, Democrats will have an important opportunity to drive a wedge between Trump and his campaign base. Indeed, a majority of working-class white voters in the battleground states say the following criticism of Trump gives them serious concerns about him:

Instead of focusing his tax proposals on providing relief to the middle class, Donald Trump's tax plans would give huge tax cuts to millionaires and billionaires. Wealthy investors get the vast majority of the benefit of his plan

to cut the capital gains tax, and only the top point two percent will benefit from his plan to eliminate the inheritance tax on estates worth more than five point three million dollars. And the vast majority of Trump's proposed income tax cuts would go the wealthiest Americans.

Working-class whites react nearly as strongly to a criticism of Trump that focuses on his positions, and those of his nominee for secretary of labor, regarding the minimum wage, overtime pay, and the ability of labor unions to negotiate for higher wages and benefits.

Substantial pluralities of battleground state voters oppose several other Trump/Republican policies, including:

- ✓ Repeal the Clean Water Plan proposed by the Obama administration that protects the waters of the United States, including the drinking water supply, from pollution (26% favorable, 57% unfavorable).
- ✓ End the legal protections currently available to some undocumented immigrant young people who were brought here by their parents, and make these young people subject to deportation (25% favorable, 55% unfavorable).
- ✓ Repeal the Clean Power Plan proposed by the Obama administration that sets the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from electric power plants (33% favorable, 50% unfavorable).

8. The array of unpopular Trump-Republican policies identified in the survey responses give substance to the call for Senate Democrats to be a check and balance on Donald Trump. Indeed, after hearing about the Trump/Republican agenda, there is a significant increase in voters' desire for Democrats to act as a check and balance, even if that means trying to block Trump's policies on many occasions.

After hearing the policies that Donald Trump and congressional Republicans might pursue in the coming year, fully 65% of respondents say that Democrats should be an independent check and balance on Donald Trump, even if that means trying to block his policies on many occasions—a nine-point increase from when voters were asked this question at the beginning of the survey. (There is a seven-point increase in the proportion who want Senate Democrats to be an independent check and balance on Trump, from 61% to 68%, among the half of the sample who were told that this would entail opposing Trump's policies on many occasions.)

Significant majorities share the desire for Senate Democrats to act as a check and balance on Trump, even if that means trying to block his policies, in each key grouping of battleground states:

- 63% in the states in which Trump won with very large majorities (IN, MO, MT, ND, WV)
- 65% in the Midwest battleground states (MI, MN, OH, PA, WI)
- 69% in the Atlantic coast battleground states (FL, ME, NJ, VA)

After hearing what policy proposals might be in store, 40% of those who voted for Trump say they want Senate Democrats to act as an independent check and balance—even if that means trying to block Trump’s policies on many occasions.