



# VOTER ANGER WITH GOVERNMENT AND THE 2016 ELECTION



**A survey of American voters  
Conducted by the Program for Public Consultation,  
School of Public Policy, University of Maryland**

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## INTRODUCTION

The 2016 election was stunningly unique. During the primary two very unlikely candidates—one a businessman with no government experience and the other an avowed socialist—gained a remarkably high level of support espousing strong and angry critiques of government. These critiques were not only of the policies of the opposing party, but of the government itself and the entire process of government decision-making.

In the summer of 2016, while the primaries were still underway, the Program for Public Consultation undertook a study to try to find out more about the nature of this dissatisfaction with government that voters seemed to be resonating with. We sought to answer:

- How widespread is this dissatisfaction with government and how often does it become actual anger at government?
- Is this dissatisfaction simply frustration that one's own party's agenda is not being fully realized, or is there a more fundamental dissatisfaction with the government itself and the way government makes decisions?
- If it is about government per se, what is it about government decision-making that is particularly objectionable?
- Are there any reforms that Americans find attractive?

PPC actually began studying public dissatisfaction with government in 1999 and tracking it over the years. We found that dissatisfaction was high and remarkably stable irrespective of which party was dominant. Majorities of both Democrats and Republicans continued to express dissatisfaction even when their party's agenda was on the rise. Thus we went into this study with the hypothesis

that public dissatisfaction was about something more fundamental than whether voters felt they were getting their policy preferences realized.

Nonetheless, the design of the study started with a series of open-ended questions that asked respondents why they were dissatisfied with government. Indeed, they expressed frustrations both with government decision-making processes and with policy outcomes. All of these were included in the subsequent large-scale survey that was fielded in early July.

We conducted analysis of the data in the subsequent months, but decided early on to not release the findings until after the election.

The upset victory of Donald Trump immediately raised a new question: how it was that he succeeded, despite his iconoclastic style, numerous scandalous revelations, and the fact that so many leading members of his own party—including all past presidential candidates—refused to support him? Also, what was it that drew in many traditionally-Democratic voters?

We noted that throughout the campaign both Trump (and also Sanders) consistently made statements that corresponded to the critiques of government that we had found in the open-ended questions and had tested. (See page xx for some examples).

Thus the analysis of the data was deepened to look more closely at Trump supporters, and in particular Trump supporters who said they were angry at government, to discern what critiques of government they found particularly compelling.

An analysis of Sanders supporters is also contained in an appendix.



## Design of the Study

### *Preliminary Survey*

This study began with a preliminary survey of a national sample of 263 registered voters, conducted online. These respondents were presented longstanding trend-line questions on views of government. Most importantly, they were asked what about the federal government was unsatisfactory to them and given space to provide three open-ended responses in their own words.

All respondents were asked to write one response to an open-ended question on what they felt was most needed to improve government.

Next, they evaluated a series of statements or critiques that were being put forward by candidates of both parties, as well as ones that PPC had previously heard in focus groups on views of government. Some of the statements were about **how** the government makes decisions. Other statements were about the **outcomes** of the decisions government makes.

### *Final Survey*

To develop the questionnaire for the final survey, a list of 49 widespread critiques of the government were distilled from two sources:

- the open-ended responses to the preliminary survey
- the responses to the forced-choice critiques offered in the preliminary survey.

The intent was to include all of the major critiques of both the government decision-making process and policy outcomes.

The final survey also included:

- a number of trend-line questions on views of government

- additional questions elaborating some of the themes in the more popular critiques
- a limited list of remedies, some based on suggestions respondents made in the preliminary survey.

The survey was fielded June 30-July 5 with a probability-based national representative sample of 2,411 registered voters, providing a margin of error for the full sample of plus or minus 2 percentage points. The sample was recruited from the larger panel of Nielsen-Scarborough, which is recruited by telephone and mail. The survey itself was conducted online.

The sample was subsequently weighted by age, income, gender, education, race and geographic region with benchmarks from the Census' 2014 Current Population Survey of Registered Voters.

### **Response to Trendline Questions on Views of Government**

Four different trend line questions found high levels of dissatisfaction with government. These included questions about whether the federal government can be trusted to do the right thing; whether respondents approved of Congress; whether the country was on the right track, and whether respondents felt angry, dissatisfied, satisfied, or enthusiastic about the government.

However these results were not substantially different from the distributions that had been in place for some time. This suggests that the phenomenon observed in the 2016 election was not so much a surge in anger at government as a result of candidates effectively eliciting incipient feelings among voters.

The one exception was a trendline question, discussed below, that did show a substantial increase in negative views from a very large majority to over nine in ten. In this case it presented a well-articulated argument about what



was wrong with the way the federal government operates —one that was being made very strongly by Trump and also by Sanders. Thus it appears that anger per se was not on the upswing, but a particular critique of the government was consolidating in the public, partly in response to the campaign discourse.

### Who is Angry?

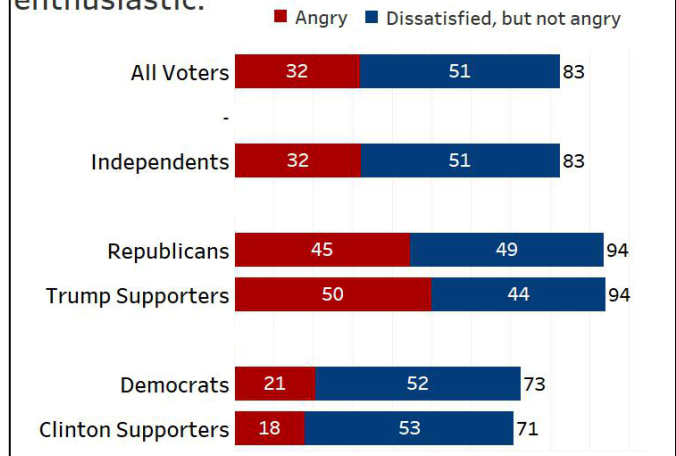
One may get the impression from news reports that the country is filled with angry voters. In fact 83% of respondents said that they were at least dissatisfied with the way the federal government works, but only 32% said they were not just dissatisfied but angry.

Contrary to widespread assumptions, this anger is not more widespread in lower income levels or lower education levels. In fact, there was no significant variation by these variables.

However, there were variations by other demographic variables. Whites were more likely to be angry at government (37%) than blacks (11%) or Hispanics (23%). Men were more angry (38%) than women (27%). And older people were substantially more angry (41% among 65 and over) than younger people (18% among 18-24 year olds).

Political variables showed substantial variation. As is shown below, Republicans were far more likely to be angry (45%) than Democrats (21%). Trump supporters were far more likely to be angry (50%) than Clinton supporters (18%).\* Indeed, Trump supporters constituted six in ten of all angry voters.

Please select which phrase best describes how you feel about the way the federal government works: angry; dissatisfied, but not angry; satisfied, but not enthusiastic; or enthusiastic.



In the subsequent analysis we will differentiate not only Trump supporters, but the half of them that also said they were angry, on the basis that they were a significant factor setting the tone of the Trump campaign.

Angry Clinton supporters are also identified, though they constitute a substantially smaller group. Four in ten angry Clinton supporters said that, at the level of the primary race, they would prefer Sanders over Clinton.

\*Note: Although at the time of the survey fielding the party nominees were not yet officially determined, Trump and Clinton were well ahead in the polls. Thus respondents were asked who they would be likely to vote for were these two candidates nominated. All references to Trump and Clinton supporters are based on responses to this question.

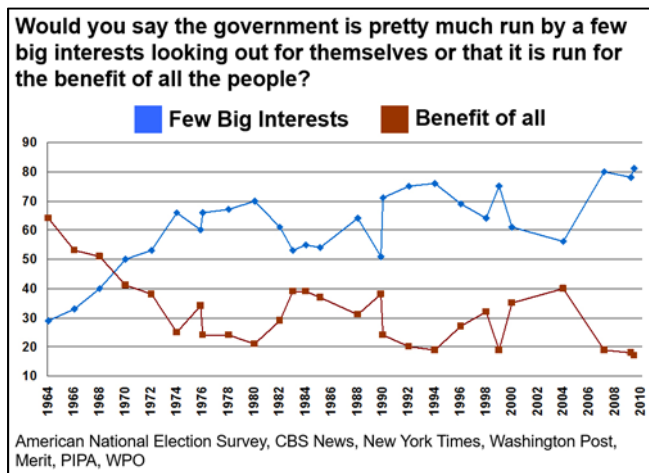




## ***Roots of Anger and Dissatisfaction*** **Most Fundamental Source of Anger and Dissatisfaction: Government Seen as Ignoring the People in Favor of Special Interests, Campaign Donors, and Political Parties**

Perhaps the most salient indicator of the roots of the anger and dissatisfaction at government is the extraordinary response to a trendline question, indicating that voters of all stripes perceive the government as ignoring the people's interests in favor of large organized interest groups—a view that has leapt to historic highs.

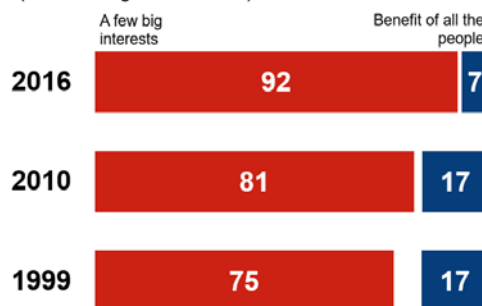
Respondents were asked whether they think “the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people.” While in the 1960s a majority said that the government is run for the benefit of all the people, for some time now a large majority has said that the government is run for the benefit of big interests.



In the current poll this number has leapt up to an unprecedented 92% of voters saying that the government serves big interests. Registered voters tend to take this position slightly more, but a trendline of registered voters shows how this represents a major increase.

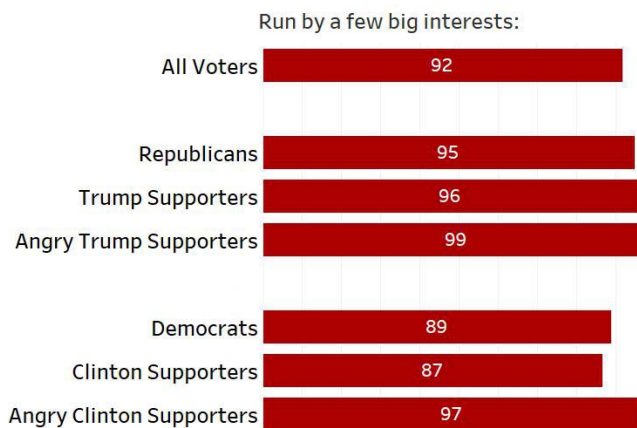
### **Big Interests vs. Benefitting All People**

Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people? (asked to registered voters)



While all categories have overwhelming majorities taking this view, it approaches unanimity among Republicans, Trump supporters, and angry Clinton supporters. Among angry Trump supporters it reaches an extraordinary 99%. Such unanimity is extremely rare in survey research.

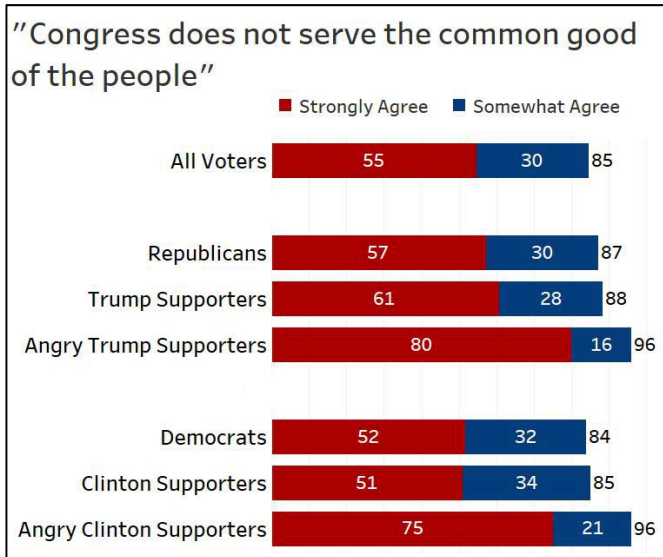
**Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?**



The theme that Congress does not serve the people was very present in response to the open-ended questions, and when presented as a critique, very large bipartisan majorities agreed with them. Among all voters, 85% agreed that “Congress does not serve the common good of the people.” Fifty-five percent agreed strongly, rising to 61% among Trump supporters and 80% among



angry Trump supporters. Clinton supporters overall were not quite as emphatic, but among angry Clinton supporters 75% agreed strongly.



## Quotes from Donald Trump

*We are fighting for every citizen that believes that government should serve the people, not the donors and not special interests.*

*The only special interest I am beholden to is the American people.*

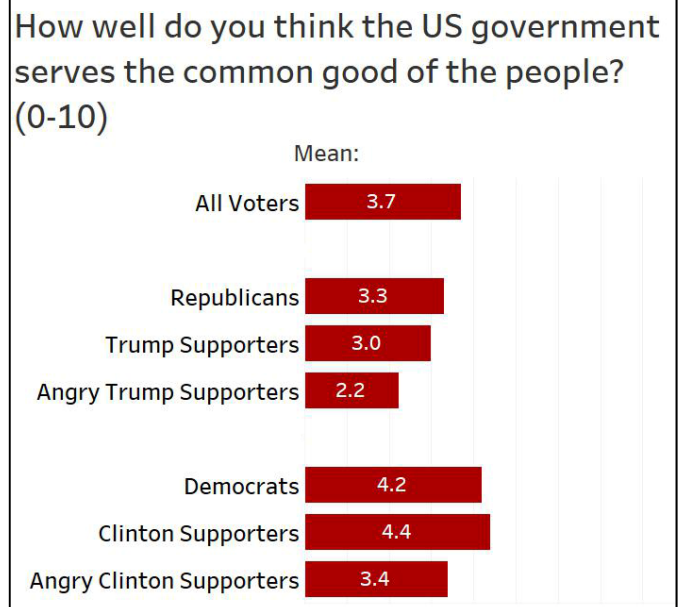
*I am self-funding my campaign and therefore I will not be controlled by the donors, special interest and lobbyists who have corrupted our politics and politicians for too long.*

*My pledge reads: "I'M WITH YOU – THE AMERICAN PEOPLE."*

*Aren't you tired of arrogant leaders who look down on you, instead of serving and protecting you?*

*Every day I wake up determined to deliver for the people I have met all across this nation that have been neglected, ignored, and abandoned.*

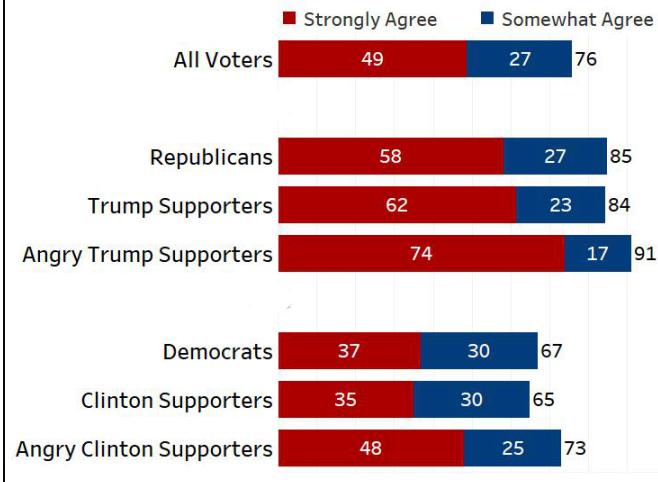
Similarly, asked how well the US government serves the common good of the people on a scale of 0 to 10, the mean response was 3.7. Trump supporters had a mean of 3 and angry Trump supporters were the lowest at 2.2.



A related critique is that "The leaders of both of the political parties have abandoned the middle class." This critique is endorsed by three quarters overall, with half agreeing strongly. Trump supporters were substantially higher with 62% agreeing strongly, rising to three quarters of angry Trump supporters. Democrats agreed, but even among angry Clinton supporters only half agreed strongly. Apparently Clinton supporters are more likely to feel that their party's leaders do consider the middle class, while this is an example of how Trump supporters, especially angry ones, are ready to turn their anger against their party's leadership.



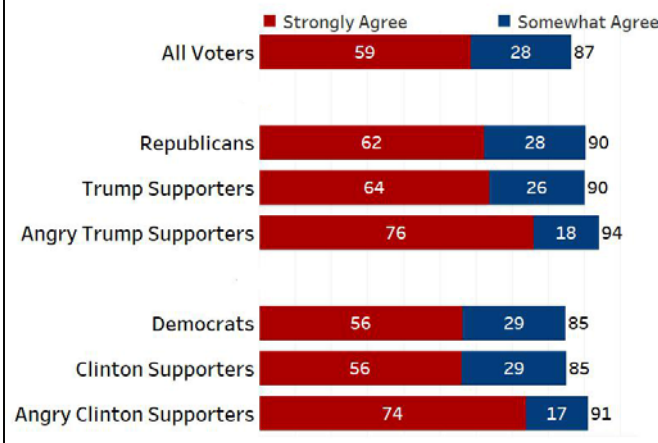
### "The leaders of both of the political parties have abandoned the middle class"



### **Special Interests Seen as Having Too Much Influence**

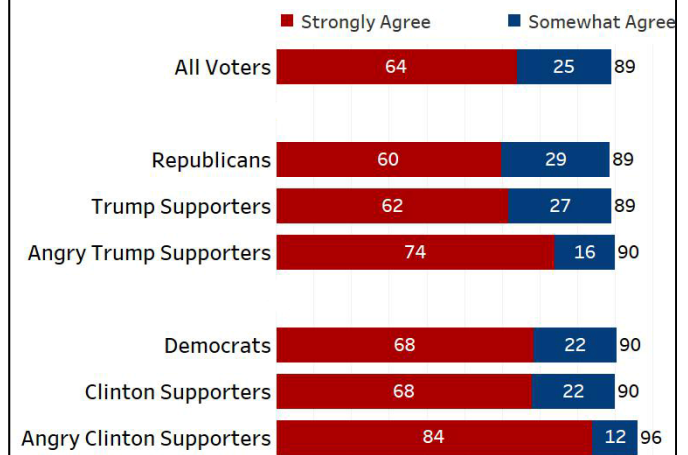
The flip side of the criticism that government does not serve the people is that government *does* serve various special interests. Nearly nine in ten agreed that "Organized interest groups and their lobbyists have too much influence," with six in ten agreeing strongly. Among Trump supporters 64% agreed strongly, rising to 76% among angry Trump supporters. In this case angry Clinton supporters were nearly as high, with 74% agreeing strongly.

### "Organized interest groups and their lobbyists have too much influence"



Bipartisan agreement was even higher—indeed one of the highest of all critiques—when corporations were specifically mentioned. Nine in ten agreed, 64% strongly, that "Corporations and their lobbyists have too much influence." In this case, perhaps because of the mention of 'corporations' specifically, Republican and Trump supporters were slightly below the overall number when it came to agreeing strongly. But among angry Trump supporters, despite Trump's links to the corporate world, three quarters agreed strongly. Democrats and especially angry Clinton supporters were higher.

### "Corporations and their lobbyists have too much influence"

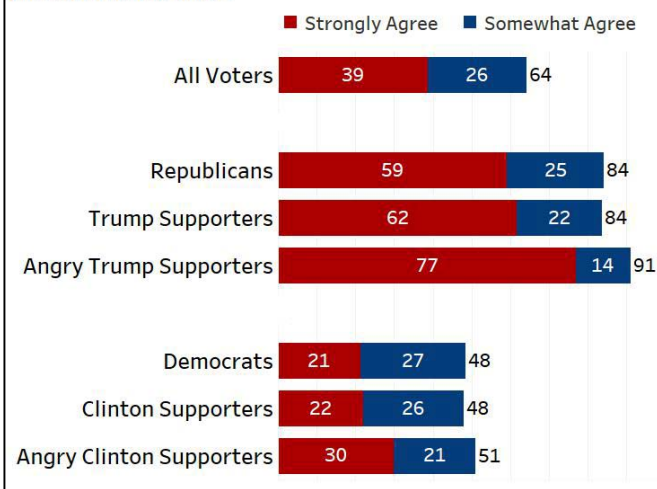


There were two areas where there were substantial partisan distinctions. Most salient, Trump supporters overwhelmingly agreed that labor unions have too much influence, with six in ten agreeing strongly, rising to 77% among angry Trump supporters. Among Democrats and Clinton supporters only half and only one in five agreed strongly, though angry Clinton supporters were slightly higher.



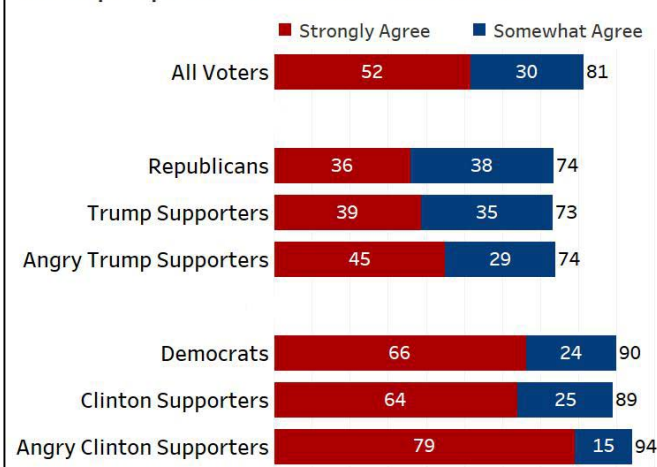


### "Labor unions and their lobbyists have too much influence"



On the influence of "rich people" there was a reversal to some extent, though a large majority of Republicans still agreed that "rich people have too much influence." Nine in ten Democrats agreed, two thirds strongly, rising to 8 in 10 among angry Clinton supporters. Three quarters of Republicans agreed, but only four in ten Trump supporters agreed strongly, though 45% of angry Trump supporters agreed strongly.

### "Rich people have too much influence"

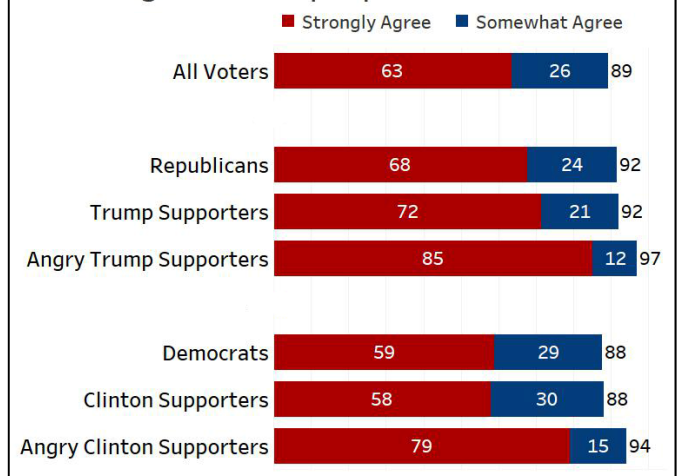


### *Elected Officials Seen as Serving Campaign Donors Over the People*

Another central critique is that campaign donors are served over the people. Clearly this overlaps with the idea that special interests are served, as special interests largely gain influence as campaign donors.

Nine in ten voters agreed that "Elected officials think more about the interests of their campaign donors than the common good of the people," with 63% agreeing strongly. Among Trump supporters, 72% agreed strongly, and among angry Trump supporters 85% agreed strongly. Clinton supporters were a bit lower.

### "Elected officials think more about the interests of their campaign donors than the common good of the people"

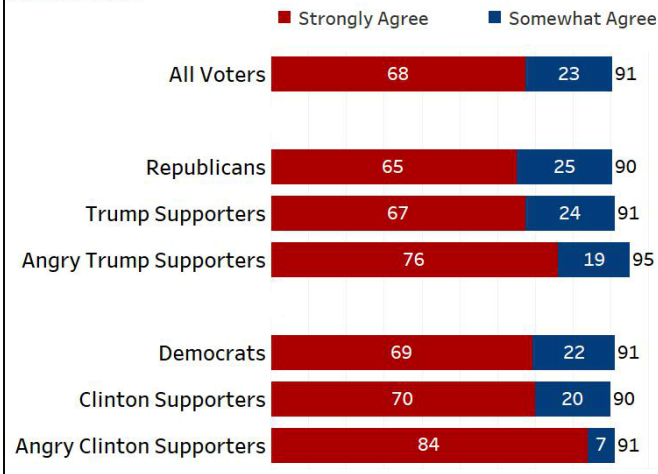


Equally overwhelming numbers agreed that "Big campaign donors have too much influence" and that "There is too much money flowing into campaigns." In both cases, though, Clinton supporters were in greater agreement than Trump supporters.

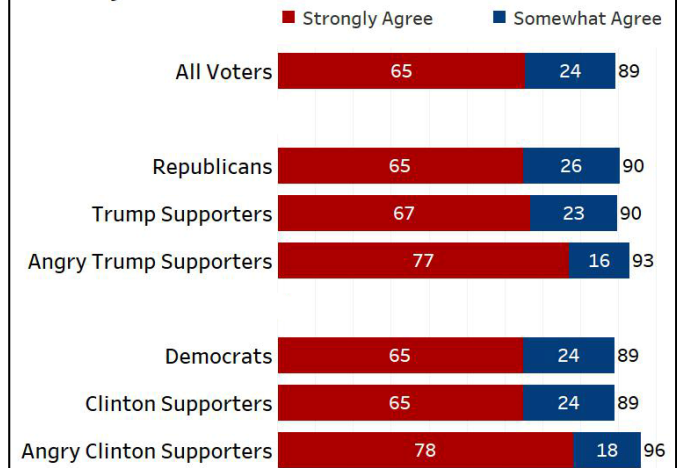




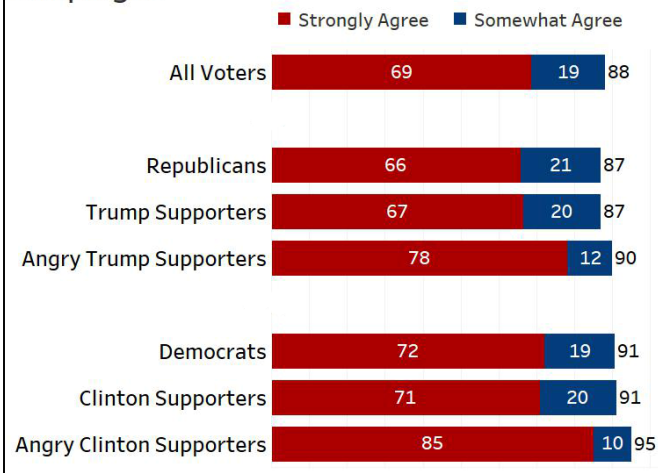
### "Big campaign donors have too much influence"



### "Members of Congress think mostly about their party, not about what is good for the country"



### "There is too much money flowing into campaigns"

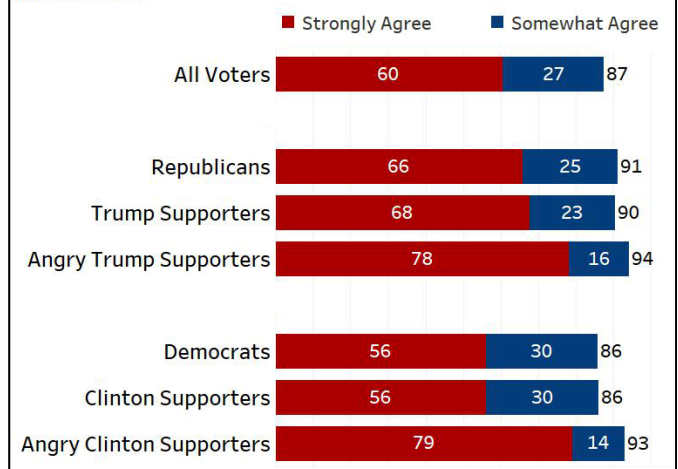


This is highly related to the critique, discussed above, that elected officials serve special interests that make campaign contributions, because a large portion of campaign donations are made through the parties, arguably creating party obligations to the donors. Nearly nine in ten voters agreed that "Political parties are too beholden to special interests." Six in ten agreed strongly, rising to 68% among Trump supporters and eight in ten among angry Trump supporters. Clinton supporters were a bit more moderate, but angry Clinton supporters reached the same heights as angry Trump supporters.

### ***Members of Congress Seen as Serving Their Parties, Which Serve Various Special Interests, Leading to Gridlock and Dysfunction***

Coming from another angle, overwhelming numbers of voters—nine in ten--agreed that Members of Congress give a higher priority to serving the interests of their party than those of the people. Two thirds of both parties agreed strongly, rising to 77-78% among angry supporters of both candidates.

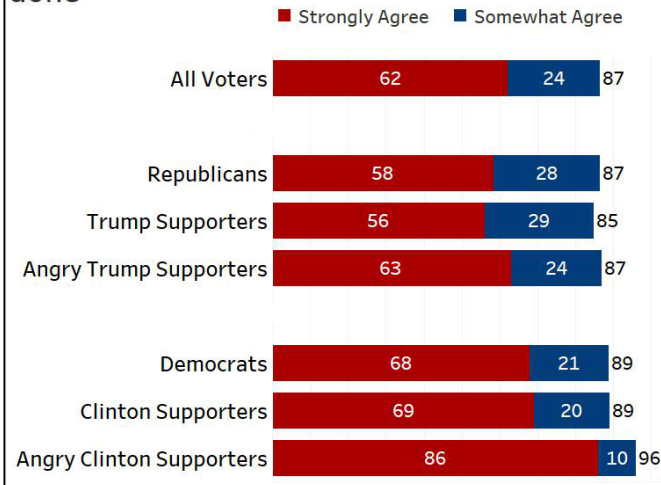
### "Political parties are too beholden to special interests"





As the parties often take campaign donations from competing interests to whom they are then beholden, this makes it more difficult to negotiate legislation. Overwhelming majorities complain that elected officials are so averse to compromise that it makes government dysfunctional. Though Trump hardly emphasized the theme of compromise, 85% of his supporters agreed, with 56% agreeing strongly. Clinton supporters were more robust in their agreement (69%), strongly rising to 86% among angry Clinton supporters.

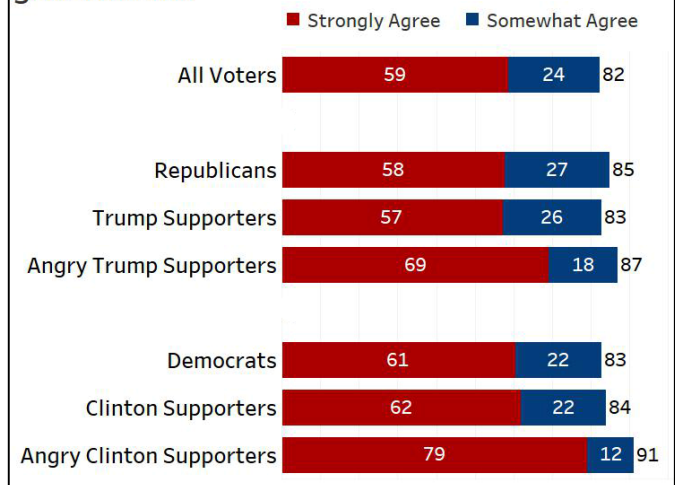
"Politicians have forgotten how to compromise, so they can't get anything done"



The net effect is that similar numbers complain that elected officials are simply too partisan.



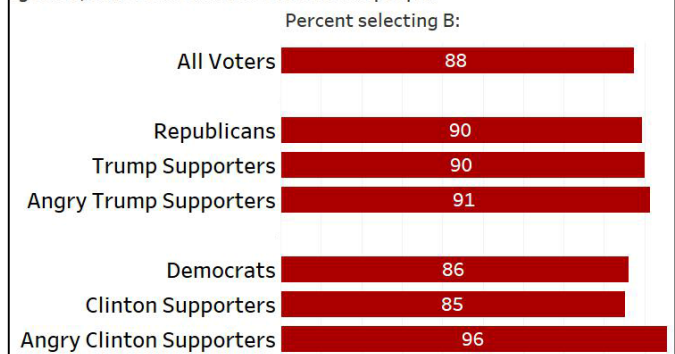
"There is too much partisanship in government"



At a more conceptual level, even when presented the argument that this partisan competition is a natural democratic process, nine in ten voters from both parties opted instead for the argument that such partisanship leads Congress to ignore the people and their interests. In this case the angry Clinton supporters stood out, with 96% taking this position.

When different political parties compete for influence in a democracy, which do you think most often happens?

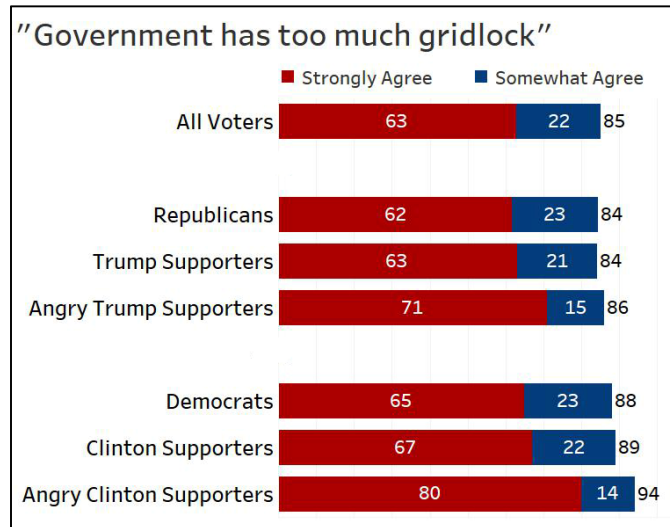
- A) The competition of ideas creates a vibrant system where many voices are heard, leading to decisions that best reflect the will of the people.  
 B) The parties fight for their narrow interests, the will of the people is ignored, and the results do not serve the people.



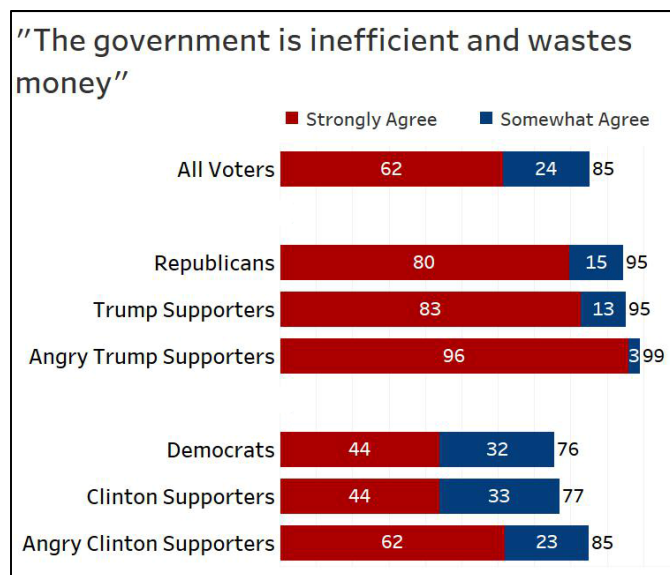
Consistent with their disparagement of partisan conflict, one of the most widely endorsed critiques was that "Government has too much gridlock,"



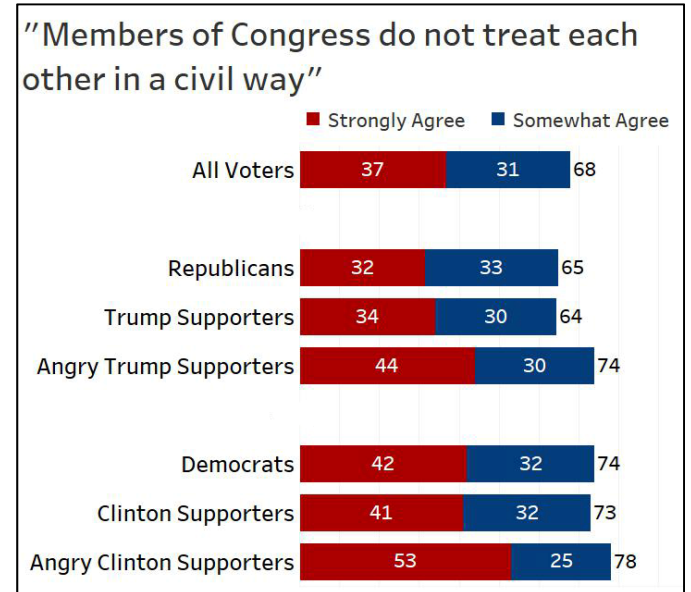
with two thirds of Trump and Clinton supporters agreeing strongly. Angry Clinton supporters were especially intense, with 8 in 10 agreeing strongly.



Presumably perceptions of polarized gridlock play a major role in the extremely high consensus that the government is inefficient and wastes money. This critique elicited overwhelming agreement among all voters, with a robust 62% agreeing strongly, rising to 83% among Trump supporters and an extraordinary 96% among angry Trump supporters. Clinton supporters concurred but at much lower levels of intensity.



A more modest level of concern, though embraced by two-thirds, is about another symptom of polarization in Congress: that Members do not treat each other in a civil fashion.



Large majorities also complain about factions or single Members blocking popular legislation: "Too often a faction, or even a single Member in Congress, can block legislation or appointments supported by the majority" (73%, 45% strongly; 71% Republicans, 41% strongly; 78% Democrats, 51% strongly).

### ***Elected Officials Seen As Not Responsive Enough to the Views of the People***

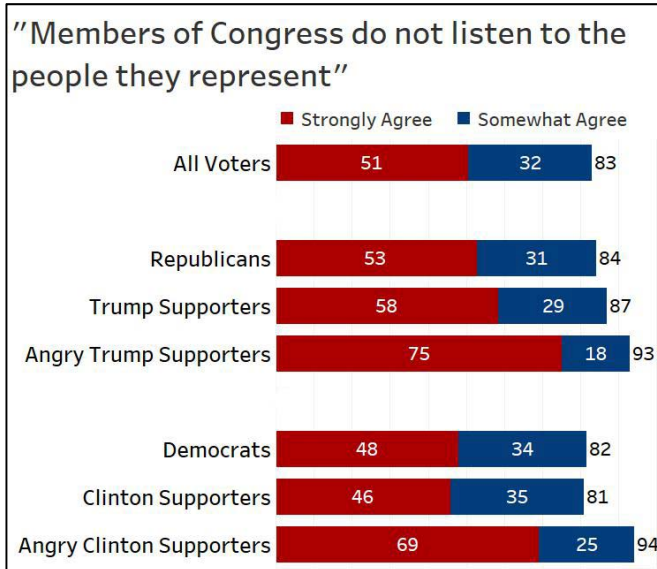
Coming from yet another angle, besides criticizing elected officials for ignoring the people's interests in favor of various interests groups, voters overwhelmingly criticize elected officials for not being responsive enough to the views of the people. Apparently, voters think—logically—that if elected officials were more responsive to the people, they would more effectively serve the people.

To begin with, overwhelming majorities agreed that Members of Congress do not even bother to listen to the people they represent, with 51%





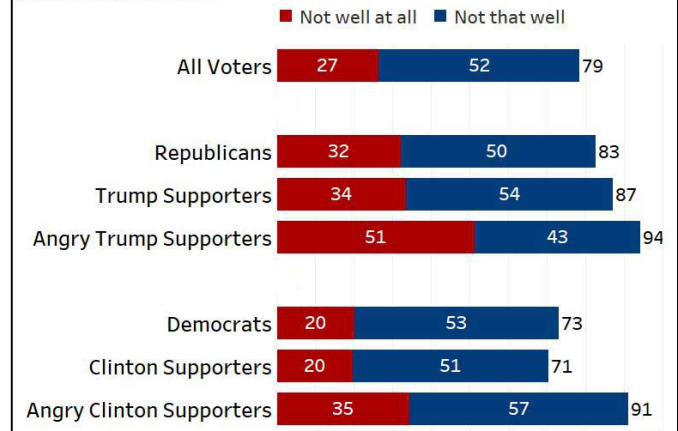
agreeing strongly. This rises to 58% among Trump supporters and 75% among angry ones. Just under half of Clinton supporters agreed strongly, but seven in ten angry ones did.



Given that Members are perceived as not listening, it is not surprising that 8 in 10 believed that elected officials have a poor understanding of the views of most Americans, with 27% saying they understand "not well at all." Among Trump supporters this rises to 34%, and for angry Trump supporters 51% saying "not well at all," with a total of 94% of them giving poor grades. Angry Clinton supporters also stood out.



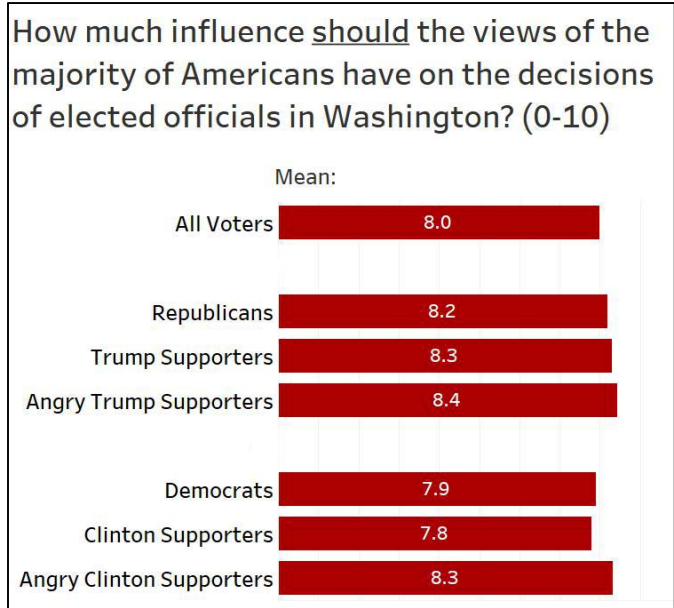
In general, how well do you think elected officials in the Federal government understand the views of most Americans: very well, somewhat well, not that well, or not well at all?



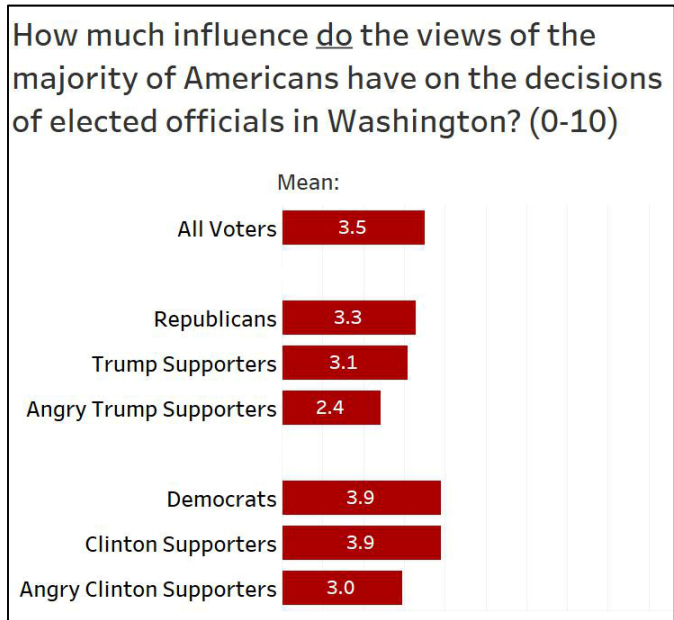
Perhaps even more central, voters call for elected officials to be more responsive to the people. This does not mean that voters want officials to follow those views in a mechanical fashion, or that they favor direct democracy. Asked how much influence the views of the majority *should* have on the decisions of elected officials in Washington, using a scale of 0 to 10, the mean response was 8.0—high, but less than 10. Among Trump supporters this was a bit higher at 8.3, and among angry Trump supporters 8.4. Angry Clinton supporters were also higher at 8.3.





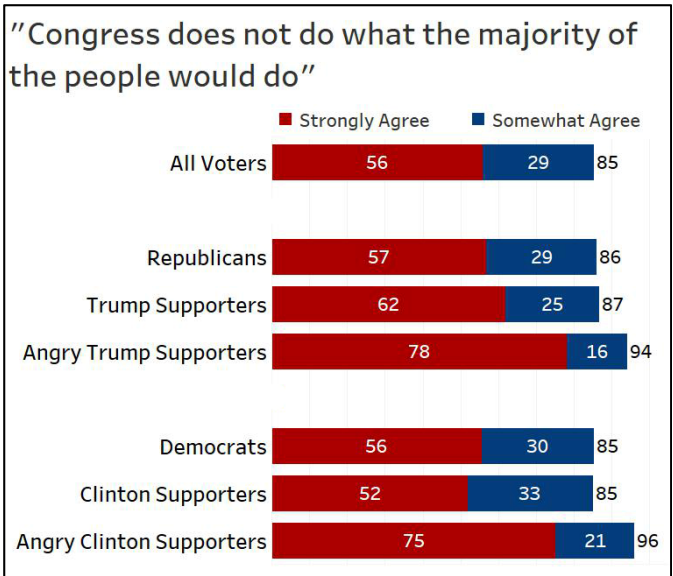


But when asked how much influence majority views *do* have, the mean response was just 3.5. Among Trump supporters this was just 3.1, with the lowest score from angry Trump supporters at 2.4. Democrats were relatively sanguine, except among angry Clinton supporters.

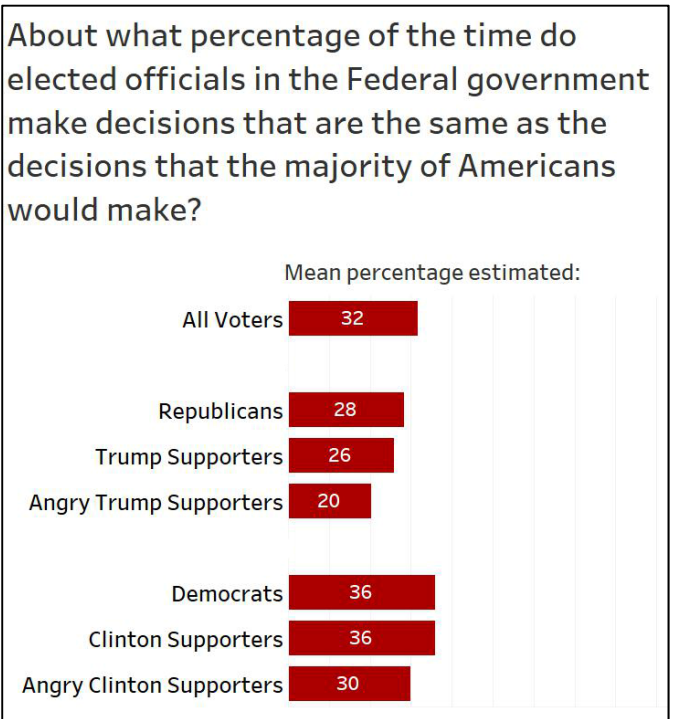


Similarly, overwhelming majorities agreed that “Congress does not do what the majority of people would do.” Overall 56% agreed strongly, rising to 62% of Trump supporters and 78% of angry Trump

supporters. Clinton supporters were relatively more low-key, except for the angry ones.



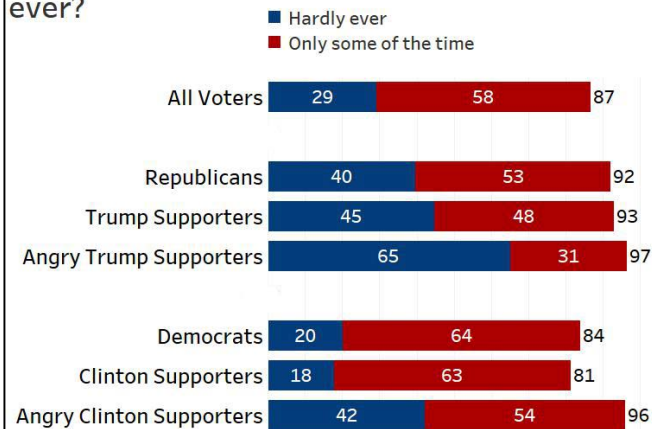
Asked what percentage of the time elected officials make the decisions that the majority of Americans would make, the mean estimate was about one third of the time, dropping to 26% among Trump supporters and 20% among angry Trump supporters.





And asked how much of the time the Federal government acts in a way “consistent with the common sense of the American people,” an overwhelming majority said only some of the time (58%) or hardly ever (29%). Among Trump supporters the number saying “hardly ever” rises 16 points to 45%, and for angry Trump supporters, yet another 20 points to 65%.

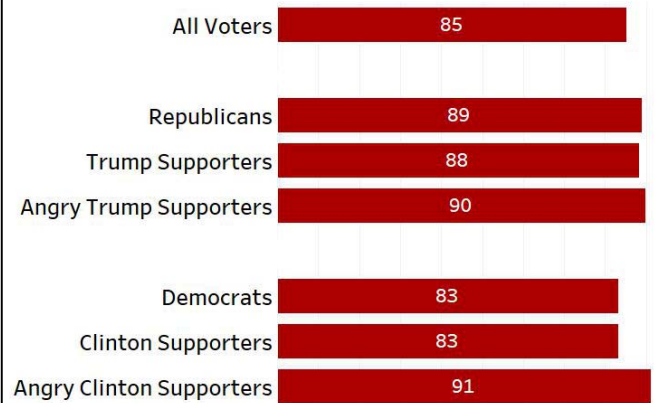
In general, how much of the time would you say that the Federal government acts in a way that is consistent with common sense of the American people: almost always, most of the time, only some of the time, or hardly ever?



Voters unequivocally call for the people to have greater influence. In the questions mentioned above, in which respondents were asked to assess how much influence the people do have and how much they should have, overwhelming majorities prescribed a higher level of influence.



Percent saying people should have more influence than they do:



## Quotes from Donald Trump

*Nobody has control of me other than the people of this country.*

*I'm working for you.*

*Voters, not special interests will be in charge.*

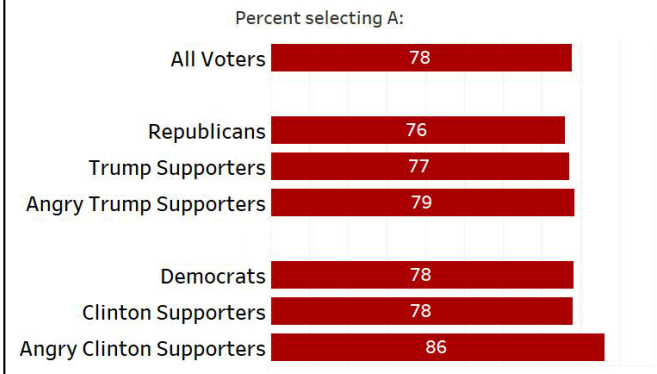
*It is time for REAL CHANGE that puts the people back in charge.*

Respondents were asked to choose between two arguments on this question. Very small numbers embraced the view that listening to the people would not have an effect on gridlock because Congressional polarization simply mirrors the public. Overwhelming majorities in all categories took the position that listening to the views of the people would help Congress move beyond gridlock, because the people are less polarized than Congress.



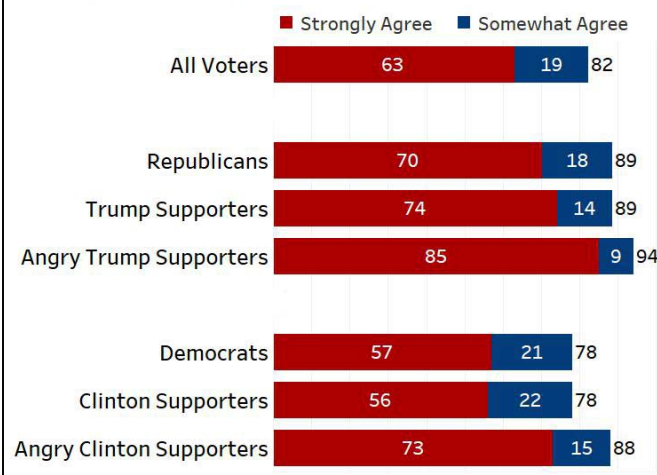
### When Congress gets stuck in gridlock, do you think:

- A) If Congress would listen to the views of the people, this would help break the logjam, because the people are less polarized than Congress.  
 B) Turning to the views of the people would not help, because the gridlock in Congress is just a reflection of the polarization among the people.



The perceived lack of Congressional responsiveness may well be related to a widespread critique that Members of Congress stay in office too long, due to a lack of term limits. Indeed, due to the advantages of incumbency, overwhelming majorities get reelected, thus reducing their need to be responsive to constituents. Eight in ten agreed with this critique. Sixty-three percent agreed strongly, rising to 74% among Trump supporters and 85% among angry Trump supporters, consistent with Trump's emphasis on shaking up the establishment. Clinton supporters concurred but less strongly.

### "Because there are no term limits Members of Congress stay in office too long"

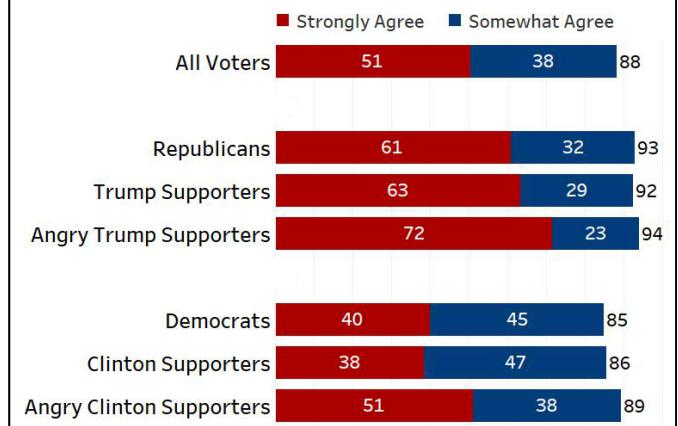


### Government Non-responsiveness to Views of the People Seen as Contrary to Democratic Principles

The criticism that the government is not responsive to the people is not simply a preference. Government non-responsiveness is at odds with widely endorsed democratic principles about the source of government legitimacy.

Overwhelming majorities agree that the will of the people is the basis of the authority of government. This view is especially intensely held by Republicans and Trump supporters. Among voters overall, 51% agreed with this principle strongly, while this rises to 61% among Republicans, 63% among Trump supporters and 72% among angry Trump supporters. Among Democrats, fewer held this view strongly, but here too the number rises among angry Clinton supporters.

### "The will of the people should be the basis of the authority of government"

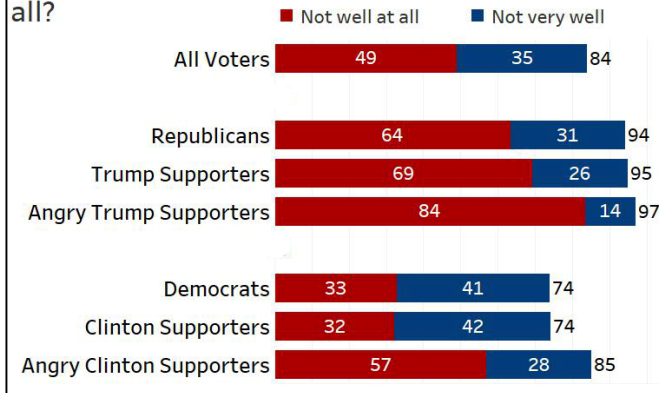


Presumably this is highly related to the widespread belief that the Founders of the American republic would feel the US government is doing a poor job of fulfilling the vision of the Founders, captured in making "We the People" the first three words of the Constitution. Among voters overall, an overwhelming majority thought the Founders would feel that the government fulfills their vision not very well (35%), or not well at all (49%), with those saying "not well at all" rising to 84% among angry Trump supporters.





Imagine the Founders of the American republic were somehow able to observe how the US government is operating today. In your opinion, would the Founders think that the US government is fulfilling the vision they had: very well, somewhat well, not very well, or not well at all?



### Possible Reforms

**Overwhelming majorities favor reducing the amount of money flowing into campaigns and creating a new system for giving the people a greater voice in government. Reducing gerrymandering and making it easier to vote also get strong support.**

Respondents were presented a series of possible reforms to counter some of the widely perceived problems with government. In each case they were also presented brief arguments for and against each reform.

#### Campaign Finance Reform

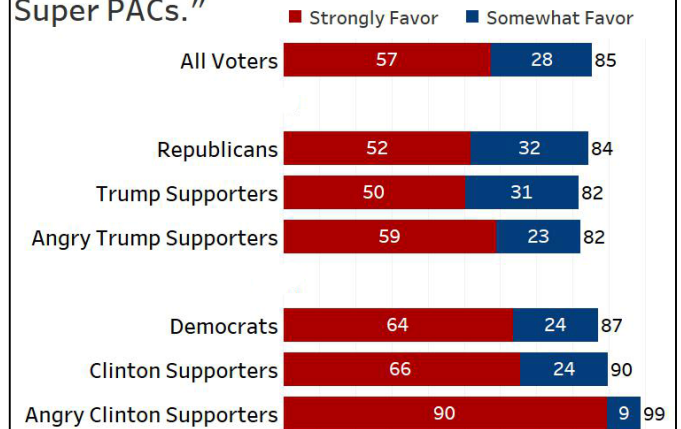
Respondents were told:

“One proposal is to try to reduce the amount of money flowing into political campaigns and Super PACs. Supporters say that this would reduce the influence of campaign donors on Members of Congress and the President. Opponents say that this would limit the freedom of expression of donors.”

Asked whether they “favor or oppose trying to reduce the amount of money flowing into political

campaigns and Super PACs,” overwhelming majorities in all categories favored this idea.

**Reform: “Trying to reduce the amount of money flowing into political campaigns and Super PACs.”**



Because the US Supreme Court has blocked many ideas for limiting the amount of money flowing into campaign because it could conflict with First Amendment rights of expression, reformers have proposed an alternative approach that seeks to counter the influence of large donors by increasing the influence of small donors.

Respondents were told:

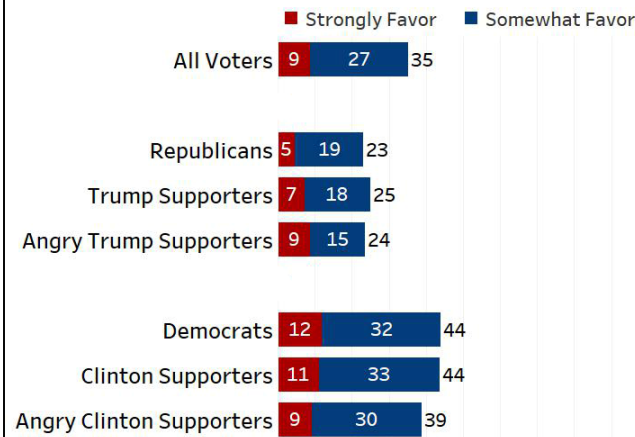
“One proposal is to increase the influence of small donors by having the government match the donations made by people who make donations below a certain amount. Supporters say that this would increase the influence of small donors and thus offset the influence of big donors. Opponents say this is not a good way to spend government funds and would probably not make much difference.”

Asked whether they favor or oppose “having the government match the donations made by people who make donations below a certain amount,” less than half in all categories endorsed the idea. Democrats had a larger minority in support than Republicans.





### Reform: "Having the government match the donations made by people who make donations below a certain amount."

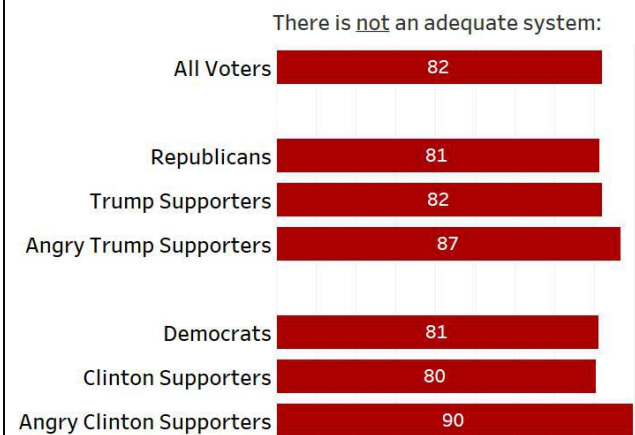


Overwhelming majorities also favor the government making active efforts to discern the views of the people on issues the government is dealing with. Presented two arguments, small minorities embraced the views that elections are an adequate means for the people to express their views, while overwhelming majorities embraced the view that the government needs to make active efforts between elections. Here again angry Trump and Clinton voters were especially strong on this view.

### New System for Giving the People a Greater Voice

In response to a variety of questions respondents expressed a need to have a new system for giving the views of the people a greater voice. More than eight in ten said that currently there is not an adequate system for the American people to be heard in Congress, with angry Trump and Clinton supporters being especially high.

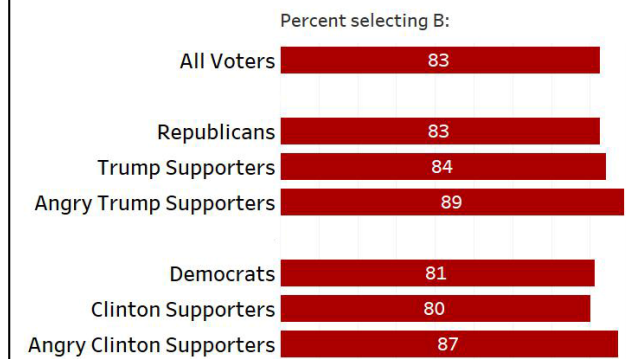
### Do you believe that currently there is or is not an adequate system in place for the voice of the American people to be heard in Congress?



### Do you think in the United States today:

A) Elections have proven to be an adequate means for the people to express their views on what the government should do and to set a direction for the country until the next election.

B) Elections alone are not enough. The government should make an active effort in between elections to find out how the people view the issues the government is dealing with.



Respondents were also presented a specific idea for a new system for giving the people a greater voice.

Respondents were told:

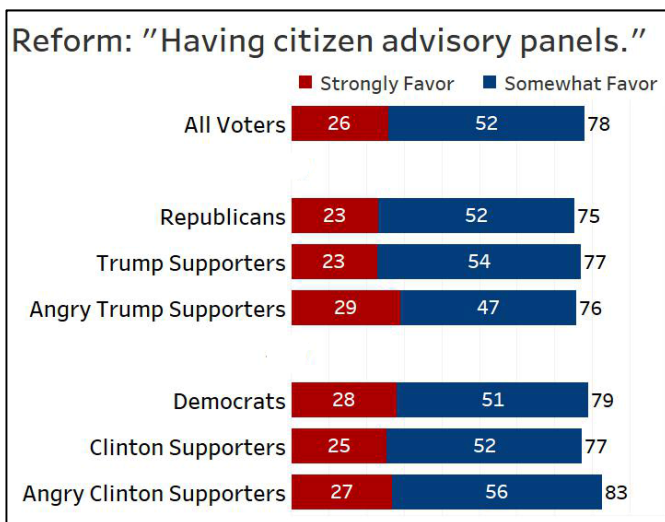
"Another type of proposal is to seek to offset the power of special interests by having advisory panels made up of large representative samples of citizens who would be briefed on the issues Congress deals with, evaluate arguments, and then make recommendations.

Supporters say that if the informed views of ordinary citizens were clear, this would make it harder for Members of Congress to make decisions that favor special interests rather than what's best for the people. Opponents say that a citizen



advisory panel would make it harder for Members of Congress to exercise their independent judgment and do what is best for the country—rather than what they think is popular at the time.”

Asked whether they favor or oppose having citizen advisory panels, nearly eight in ten favored the idea. Democrats were slightly more positive than Republicans, with angry Clinton supporters the highest.



### **Reducing Gerrymandering**

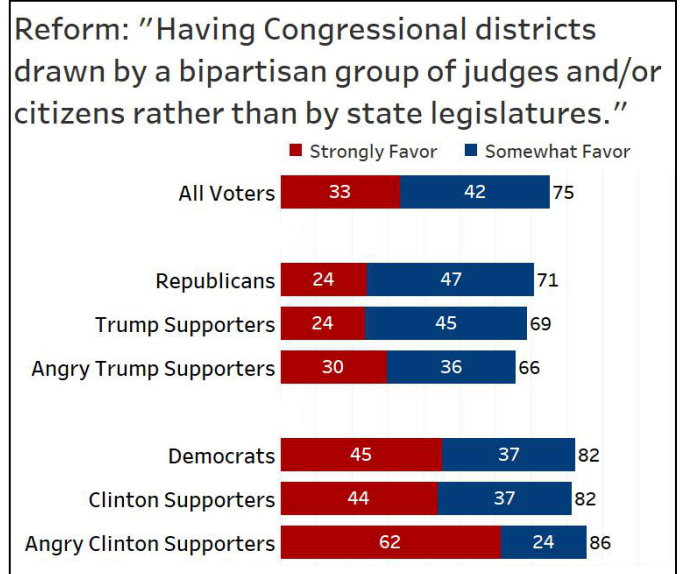
Another plan for giving the people more influence is to try to make Congressional elections more competitive by reducing gerrymandering.

Respondents were told:

“Another type of proposal is meant to reduce the extent to which the boundaries of Congressional districts are drawn so that incumbents do not get much competition from the other party—this is known as gerrymandering. One proposal is to not have Congressional districts drawn by state legislatures, which can be dominated by one party, but rather have them drawn by a bipartisan group of judges and/or citizens.

Supporters say that this would make Congressional races more competitive and thus make candidates more responsive to the people and less to their parties. Opponents say that state legislatures are elected by the citizens and thus they reflect the will of the people better than an unelected commission.”

Asked whether favored or opposed having districts drawn by such a bipartisan group of judges and/or citizens, three quarters favored it. Interestingly, Trump supporters—and even more so, angry Trump supporters—were a bit less supportive, though still a majority. Democrats, and especially angry Clinton supporters, were extremely supportive.



### **Making it Easier to Vote**

Another idea for ensuring that the people have a voice is to make it easier to vote. Respondents were told:

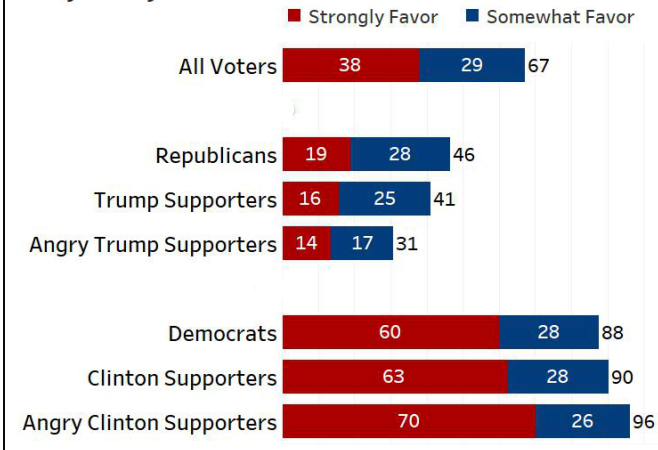
“Another proposal is to make it easier for people to vote by making it easier to register and to vote early or by mail. Supporters say that if more people vote, this would make the electorate a more complete representation of the people. Opponents say that it is not all that hard to vote



and voters can take the responsibility for making sure they get registered and vote.”

While overall two thirds favored making it easier to vote, this support was not bipartisan. Just under half of Republicans favored it, with Trump supporters being even lower, and angry Trump supporters as low as 3 in 10. Democrats overwhelmingly supported it, with angry Clinton supporters reaching near unanimity.

### Reform: “Making it easier for people to vote by making it easier to register and to vote early or by mail.”



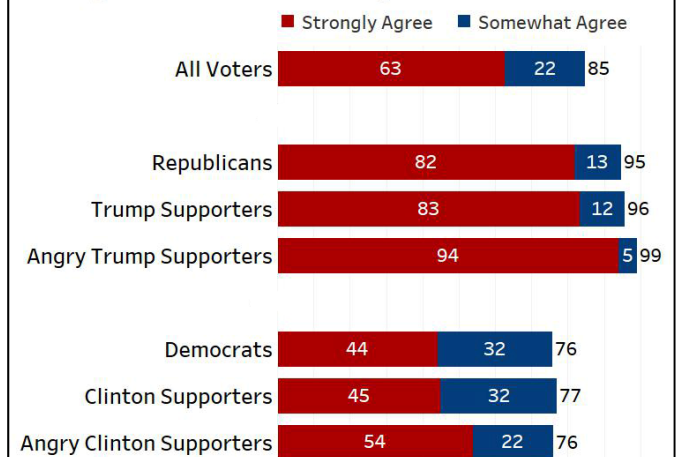
### Specific Policy Outcomes

#### Specific Policy Outcomes Elicit Less Intense Criticism, Except for a Small Number Linked to Government Dysfunction

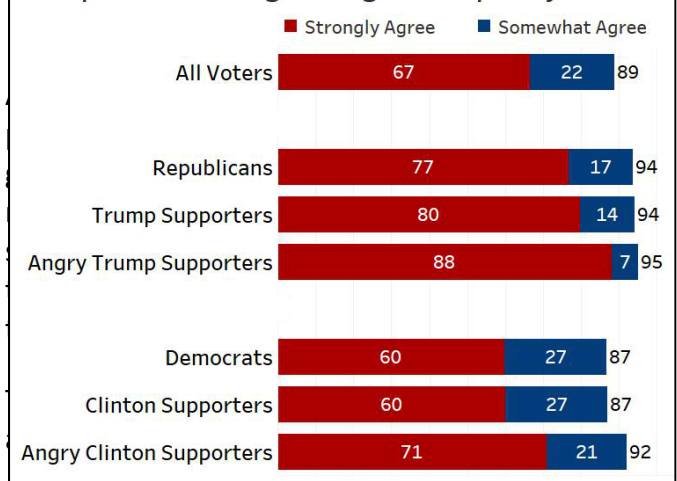
In general, specific policy outcomes appear to be a lesser factor in the general public’s dissatisfaction with government than the frustrations with the policymaking process discussed above. Only four critiques elicited strong agreement from a majority, and all of these were clearly related to process concerns.

Three of them were clearly related to frustration with government polarization, gridlock and dysfunction.

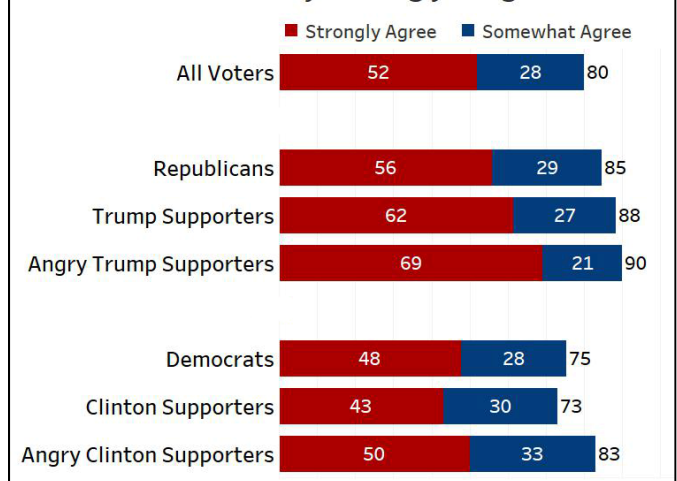
### “The government runs big deficits”



### “The government has been unable to agree on a plan for fixing immigration policy”

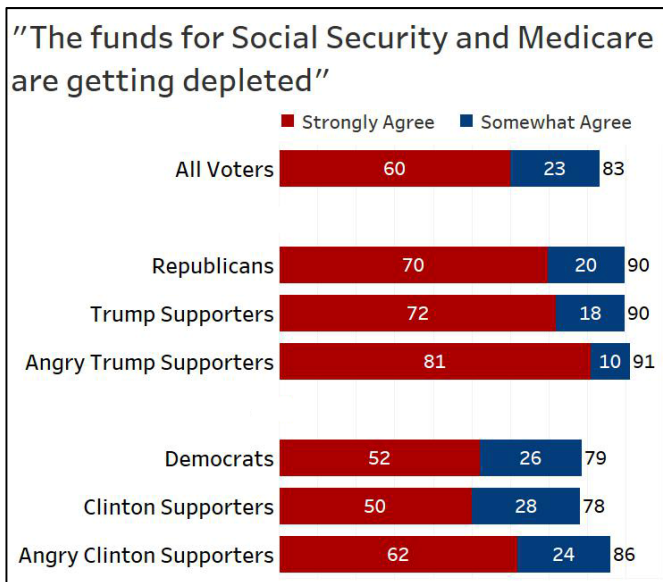


### “The government makes international trade agreements that help corporations but hurt American workers by letting jobs go abroad”





government makes trade agreements that help corporations but hurt American workers.



Clearly, this is related to the view that government serves corporations but not the people. Among those that strongly agree that Congress does not do what the majority of their constituents want were more likely to strongly agree with this policy position (14 points higher), while those that strongly agreed that corporations had too much influence were 8 points higher.

Among Republicans and Democrats, a few additional critiques elicited strong agreement from party majorities, as one would expect. Among Republicans, some of these were related to themes that Trump emphasized in the campaign and did elicit especially strong agreement among angry Trump voters, including:

- There are too many illegal immigrants in the United States
- The government tramples on the constitutional rights of citizens
- The government does not do enough to stop terrorist groups
- The government does not do enough to prevent the possibility of people voting

who are not legally entitled to vote or who have already voted

- The government does not defend traditional values
- Taxes are too high

as well as a standard Republican critique that:

- The government tries to limit guns too much

Likewise, half or more of Democrats strongly agreed that:

- The government isn't doing enough to protect the environment
- There is growing inequality between the rich and everyone else and the government isn't doing enough about it
- There is too much poverty in the US and the government is not doing enough about it
- Taxes on the wealthy have come down too far and they are not paying their proper share

and the flip side of the Republican critique above:

- The government does not limit guns enough

However, it is more likely that, even for those who have strong feelings about these issues, they are seen primarily as areas of partisan conflict, not necessarily as a basis for being angry at the government per se. The critiques related to the process of government decision-making ignoring the people are likely—and correctly—perceived as being something that transcends partisan conflict. They are not simply complaints about the influence of the other party on policy. Rather, they come from a more deeply held normative critique that government leaders are acting in an illegitimate fashion by failing to fulfill their duties as elected officials in line with their constitutional role and the original vision of the Founders.





**Voice Of the People** is a non-partisan organization that seeks to re-anchor our democracy in its founding principles by giving ‘We the People’ a greater role in government. VOP furthers the use of innovative methods and technology to give the American people a more effective voice in the policymaking process.

VOP is working to urge Congress to take these new methods to scale so that Members of Congress have a large, scientifically-selected, representative sample of their constituents—called a Citizen Cabinet—to be consulted on current issues and providing a voice that accurately reflects the values and priorities of their district or state.



## PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

The **Program for Public Consultation** seeks to improve democratic governance by consulting the citizenry on key public policy issues governments face. It has developed innovative survey methods that simulate the process that policymakers go through—getting a briefing, hearing arguments, dealing with tradeoffs—before coming to their conclusion. It also uses surveys to help find common ground between conflicting parties. The Program for Public Consultation is part of the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland.

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