



PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

# CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

**Pennsylvania's 7<sup>th</sup>  
Congressional District**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2021**

PRESENTED BY



# Overview of Topics

- Importance of Countering Influence of Large Campaign Donors
- Enhancing the Role of Small Donors
- Requiring Greater Public Disclosure Of Campaign-Related Donations
- Constitutional Amendment to Allow Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance (Overturn “Citizens United”)

# Methodology

**Field Dates:** January 25 – February 12, 2021

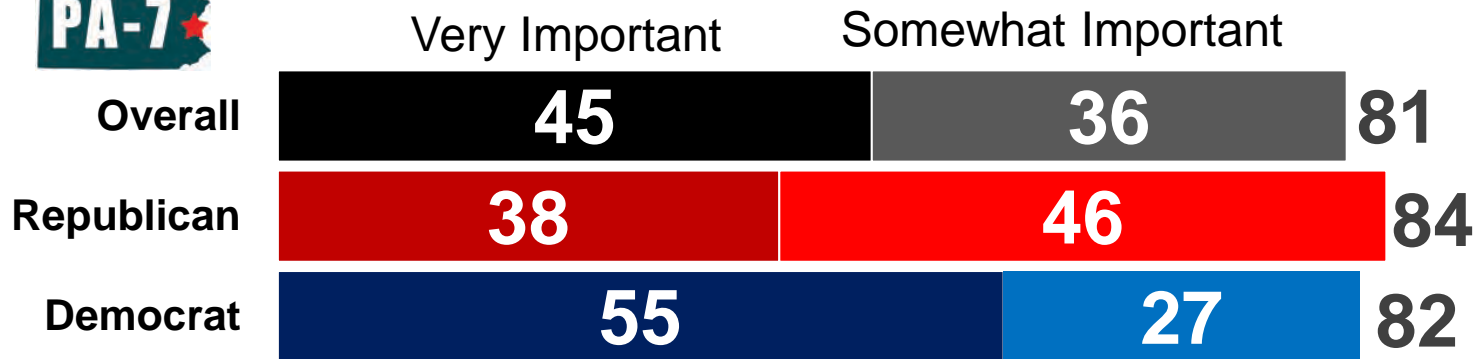
**Sample Size:** 436 Adult Residents of  
Pennsylvania's 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

**Weighting:** The sample was weighted by age, education, gender, ethnicity and partisan balance for Pennsylvania's 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

# **Reducing the Influence of Big Campaign Donors**

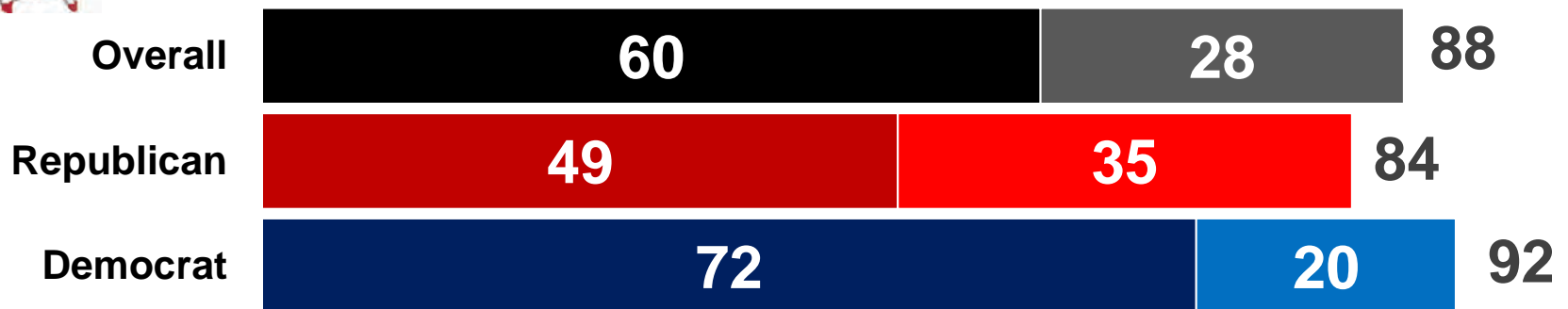
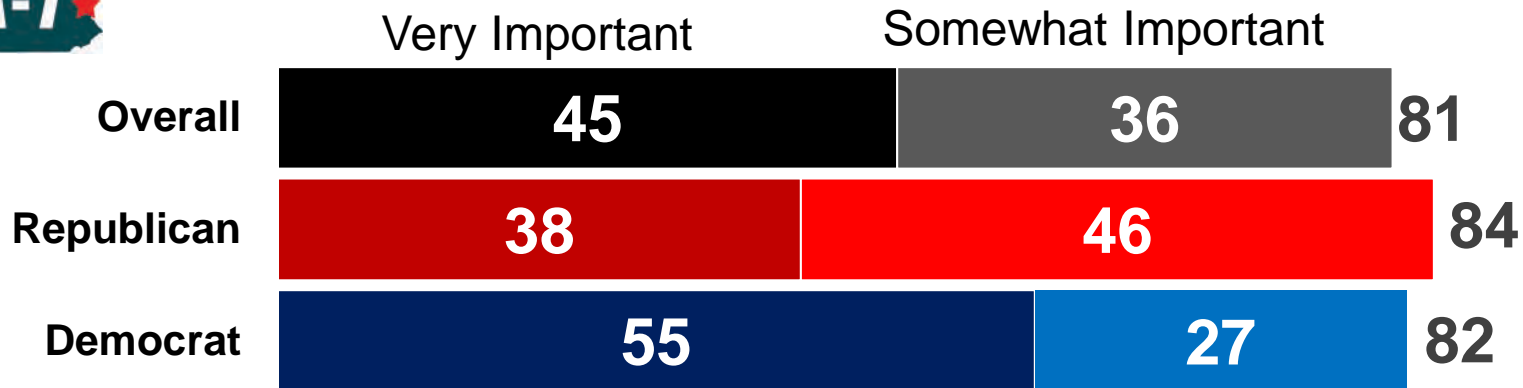
# Importance of Issue

How important is the goal of reducing the influence of big campaign donors—including special interests, corporations and wealthy people—on the Federal government?



# Importance of Issue

How important is the goal of reducing the influence of big campaign donors—including special interests, corporations and wealthy people—on the Federal government?



# **OFFSETTING THE INFLUENCE OF BIG CAMPAIGN DONORS**

**Enhancing the Role of  
Small Campaign Donors**

## PROPOSAL:

# Government Matching Small Donations

- Candidate must first agree not to take any donations over \$1,000.
- The government will match 6 to 1 all donations up to \$200. (For example, if someone were to make a donation of \$100, the government would provide \$600.)
- Paid for by slight increases in fines for individuals or corporations who violate federal laws.



## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

# Limiting candidates to small donors will decrease influence of big donors

### Six-to-One Match of Small Donations

#### ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

By limiting candidates to small donors, big donors will have less influence on them once they are in office. As an elected official, they will then be more likely to be responsive to their constituents, as a whole, not just well-financed special interests.

Candidates who do not want to be beholden to big donors will be more able to run for office and succeed. This program won't add to the deficit and will improve the quality of American democracy.



Very Convincing

Somewhat Convincing

Overall

35

51

86

Republicans

34

52

87

Democrats

38

53

91

## ARGUMENT AGAINST

**Will promote fringe candidates;  
No proof this will diminish influence  
of special interests.**

### Six-to-One Match of Small Donations

#### ARGUMENT AGAINST

Giving money to any candidate—just because they have a substantial following of small donors—won't necessarily produce good candidates. This will give fringe candidates who are not electable a government-funded platform for furthering their extreme ideas.

Finally, ideas like this have been tried in some states and there's no clear evidence they have diminished the influence of special interests.



Very Convincing      Somewhat Convincing

Overall

20

43

62

Republicans

18

42

60

Democrats

21

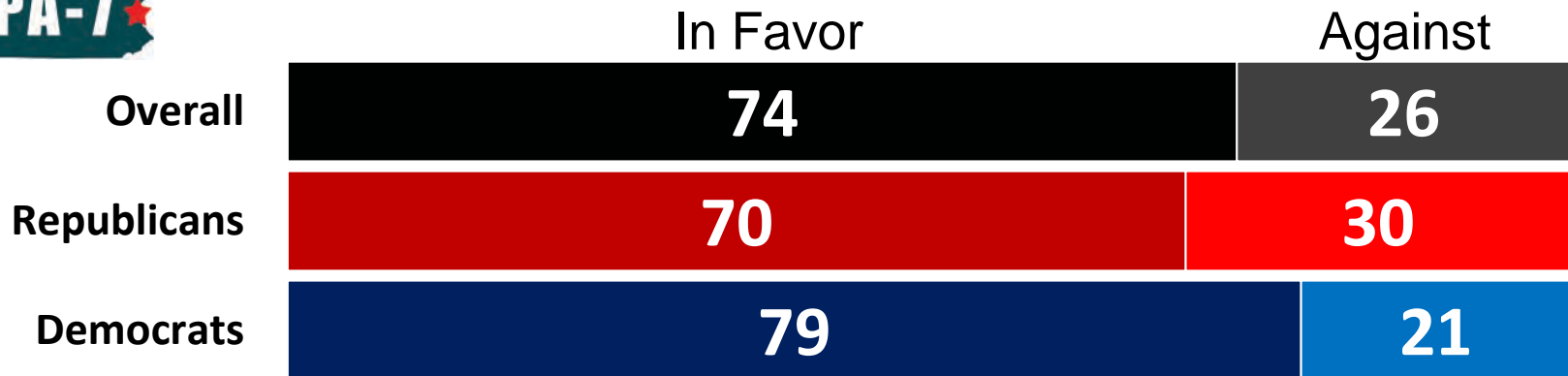
45

66

# Government Matching Small Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

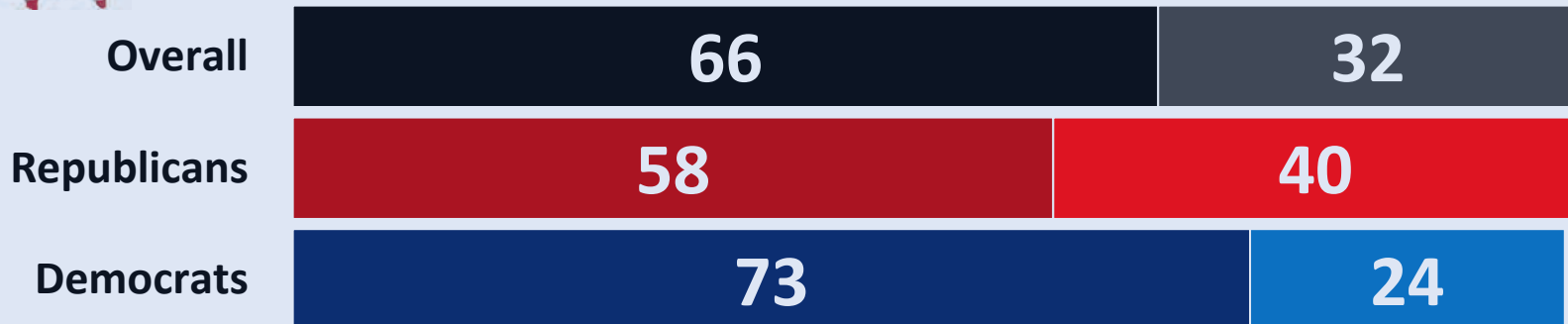
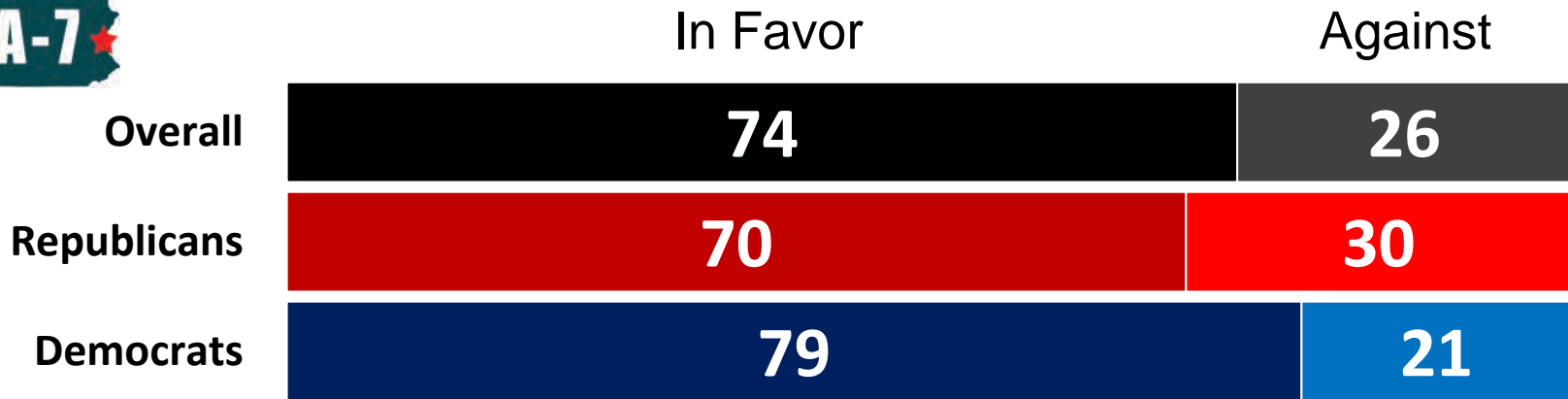
Candidate must first agree not to take any donations over \$1,000. Then, the government will match 6-to-1 all donations up to \$200.



# Government Matching Small Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Candidate must first agree not to take any donations over \$1,000.  
Then, the government will match 6-to-1 all donations up to \$200.\*



*\* In the national survey, this question was asked differently.*

# **OFFSETTING THE INFLUENCE OF BIG CAMPAIGN DONORS**

**Requiring Greater  
Public Disclosure of  
Campaign-Related  
Donations**

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

- There are donations that can be made anonymously to certain organizations that can support candidates and political causes. Critics call this ‘dark money.’
- With U.S. Supreme Court’s “Citizens United” decision, no longer any limits on such donations.
- Since then, the amount of such anonymous donations has gone up dramatically.
- There are a number of proposals for requiring that such donations be publicly disclosed.

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR #1

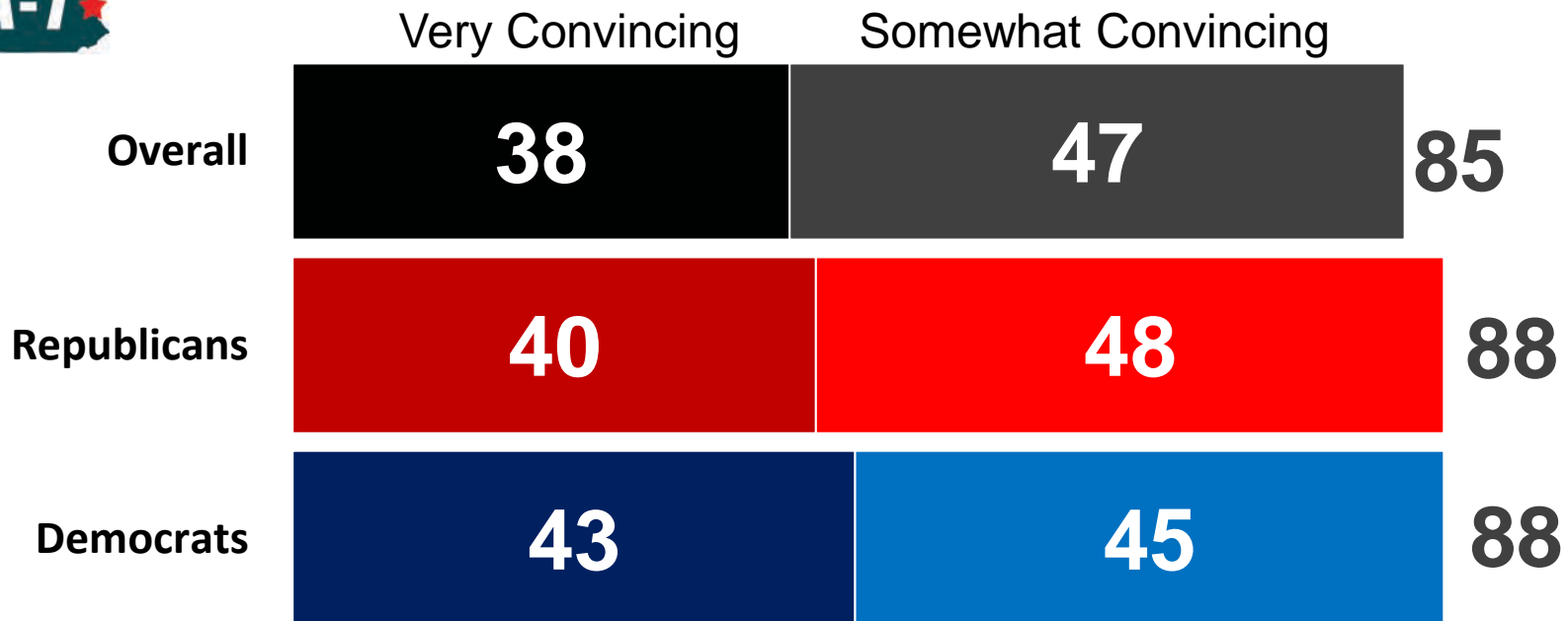
# Transparency makes it harder for Member to do favors in exchange for donations.

### Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

#### ARGUMENT IN FAVOR #1

When campaign-related donations are fully disclosed, it makes it more difficult for elected officials to do favors, taking actions that serve the interests of the donor, rather than the common good. If the donation is disclosed, the public, the media, and watchdog groups can question whether an action was a favor in exchange for a donation.

This will create political costs for the elected official, as well as discourage donors from seeking favors through donations.



## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR #2

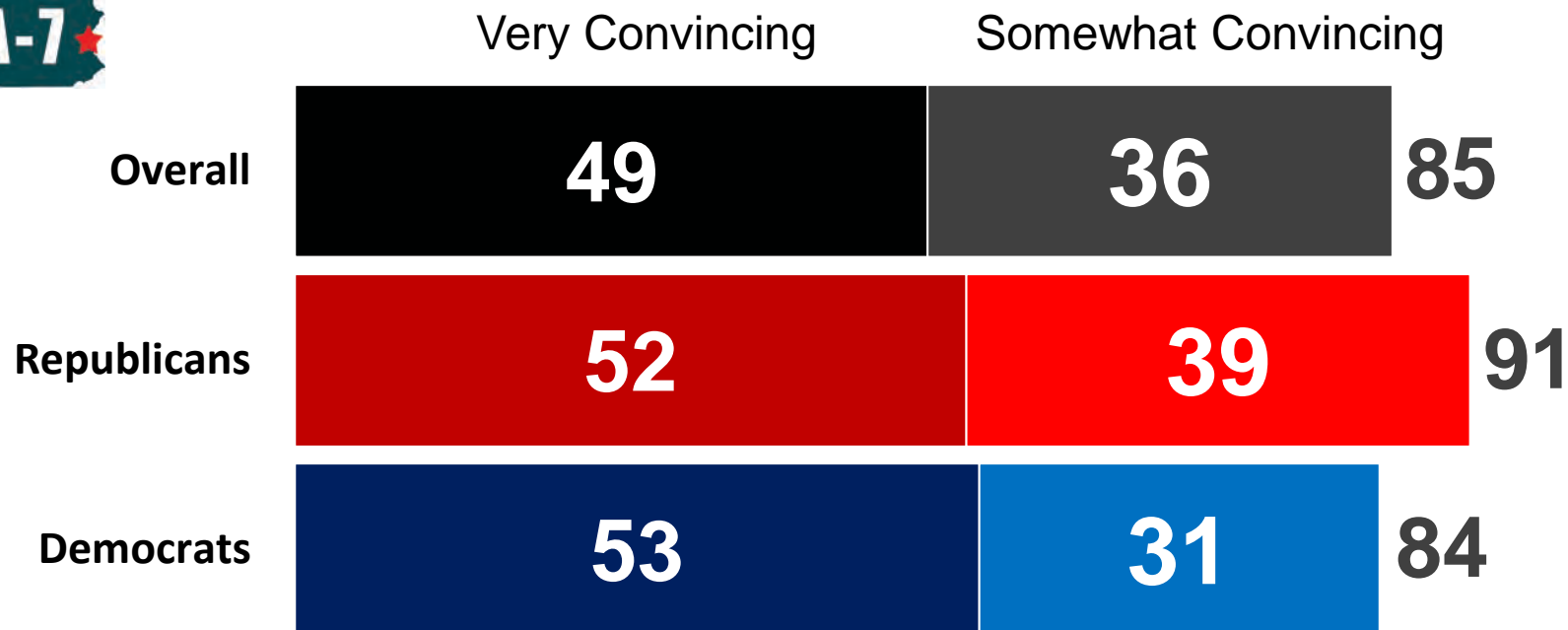
# Voters have right to know who gives money to candidates to get sense of potential allegiances.

Greater Public Disclosure  
of Campaign-Related Donations

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR #2

When judging a candidate, people have a right to know who is providing money in support of the candidate.

Voters can get a better sense of the allegiances that the candidate might have and the interests they might support.





## ARGUMENT AGAINST #1

# Donations are free speech; Disclosure can lead to false accusations.

### Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

#### ARGUMENT AGAINST #1

Making a campaign donation has been established by the U.S. Supreme Court as a basic right as part of the principle of free speech. If every donation is subject to public scrutiny, it can lead to claims that it was basically a bribe, when in fact it might not be at all.

People may also get harassed or threatened for making donations. This will discourage people from making such donations, including completely legitimate ones.



Very Convincing      Somewhat Convincing

Overall

16

41

57

Republicans

24

42

66

Democrats

14

37

51

## ARGUMENT AGAINST #2

# Requirements won't be effective; Member can deny influence.

### Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

#### ARGUMENT AGAINST #2

Public disclosure is not going to prevent elected officials from doing favors in exchange for financial support. Even if elected officials are, in fact, taking a position to serve the interests of a donor (in exchange for support), the officials can simply say that they think the position is the right one – and there's no way to prove they don't think that.

Furthermore, in some cases the politician may genuinely support the position. Disclosure will not clarify what's really going on.



Very Convincing      Somewhat Convincing

Overall

17

40

57

Republicans

17

41

58

Democrats

18

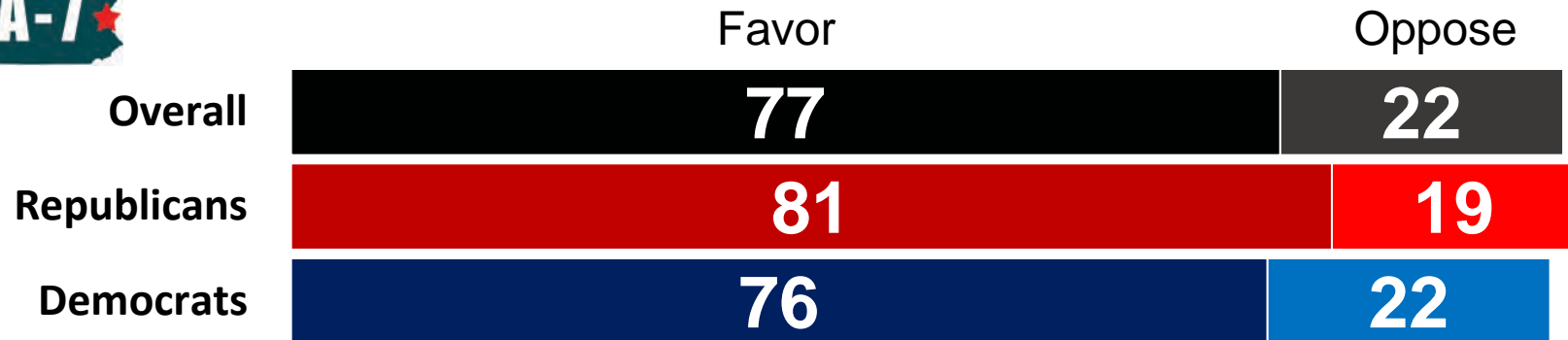
38

55

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

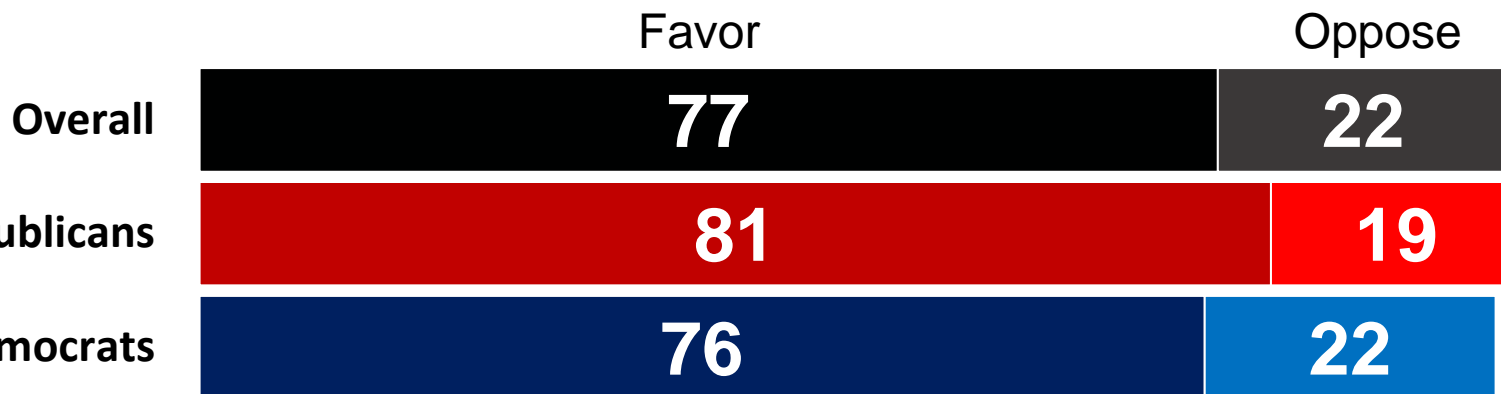
Require that all individuals or organizations that donate or receive a total of \$10,000 or more for campaign-related activities promptly register with the FEC and have their name and the amount of the donations listed on the Commission's website.



# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Require that all individuals or organizations that donate or receive a total of \$10,000 or more for campaign-related activities promptly register with the FEC and have their name and the amount of the donations listed on the Commission's website.



# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Require corporations, unions and other groups report campaign related donations within 24 hours, make the information available to the public on their websites, and report it to the FEC.

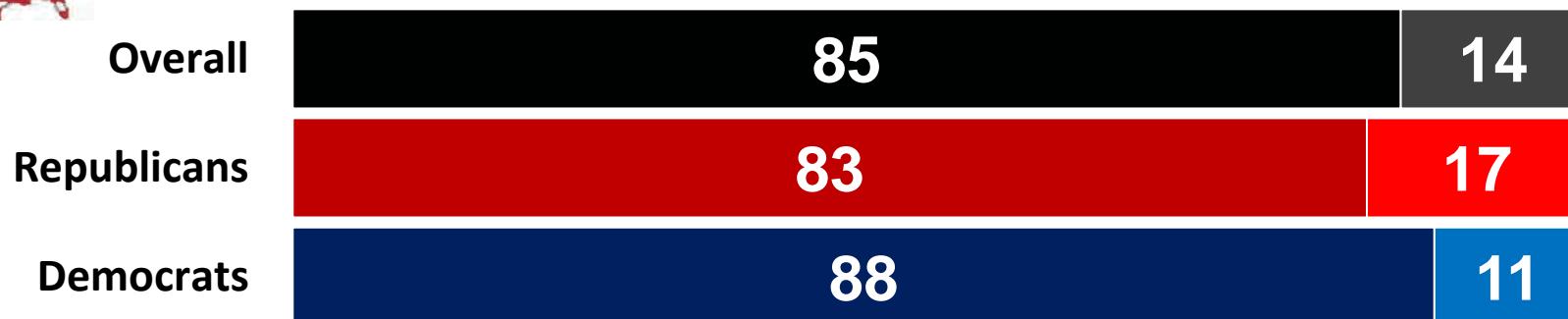
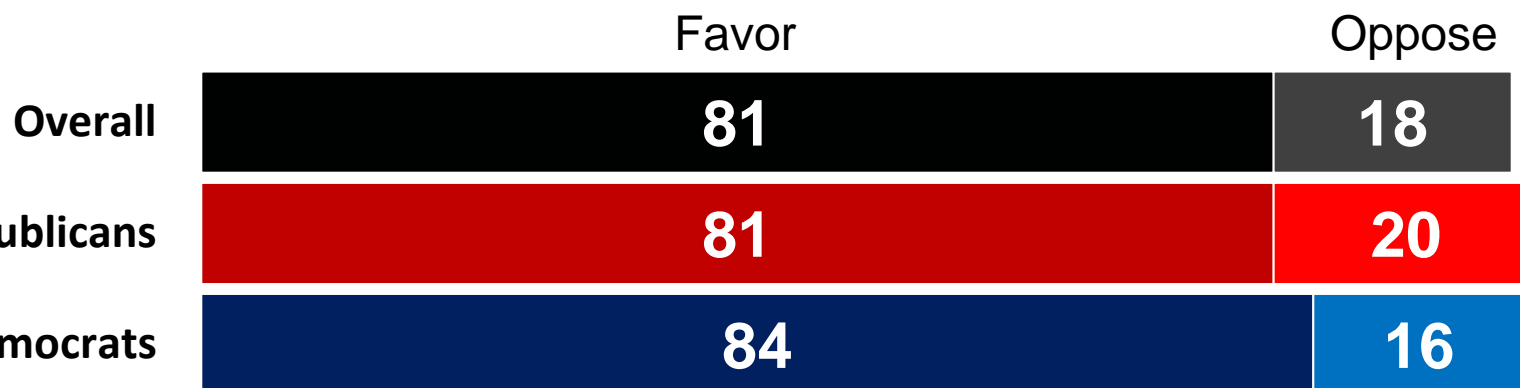


	Favor	Oppose
Overall	81	18
Republicans	81	20
Democrats	84	16

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

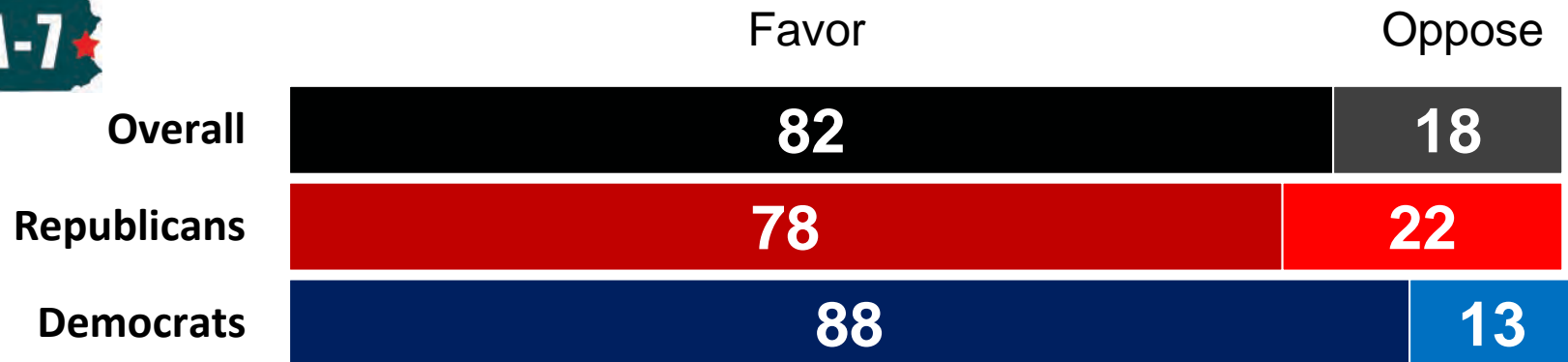
Require corporations, unions and other groups report campaign related donations within 24 hours, make the information available to the public on their websites, and report it to the FEC.



# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

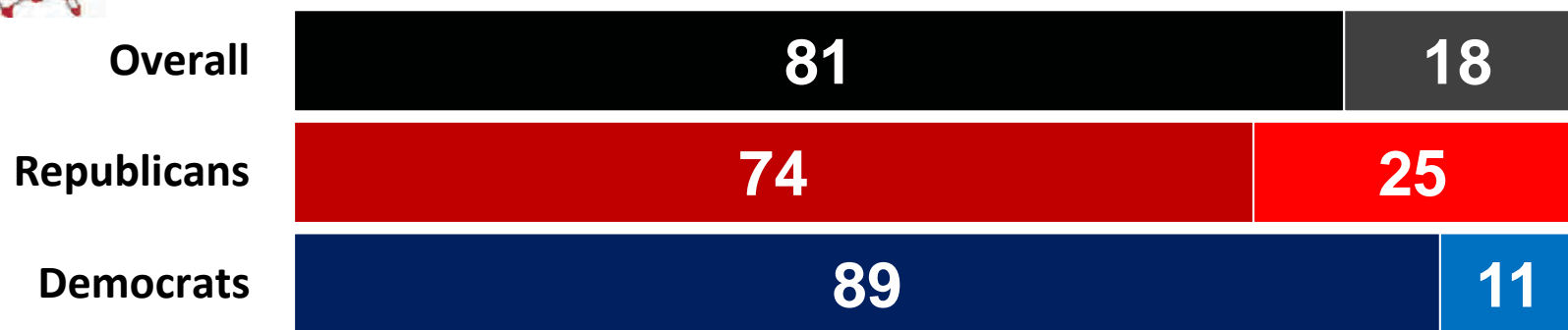
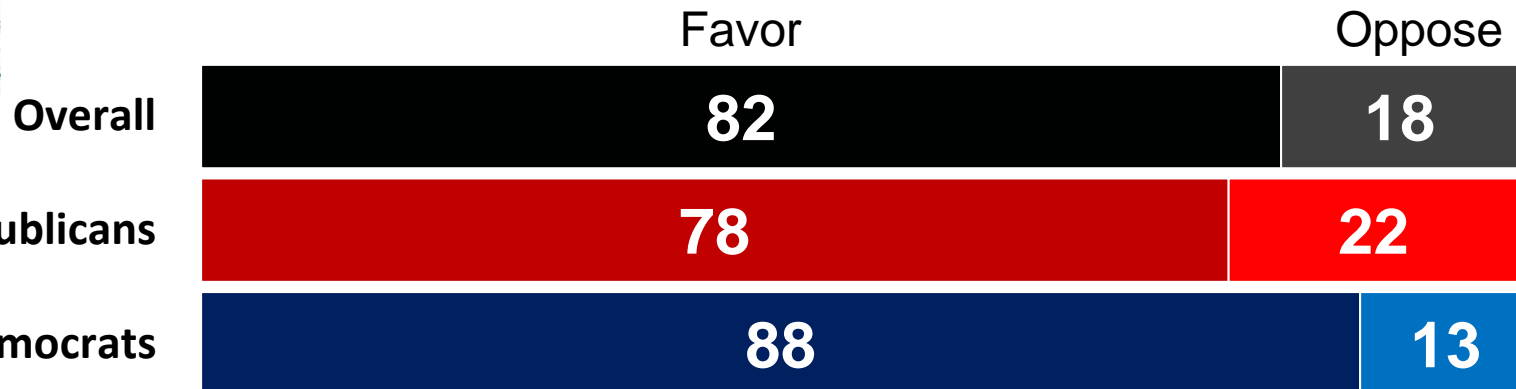
The Federal Communications Commission would require the public disclosure of the names of significant donors in paying for TV or radio ads in support of candidates or related to controversial public issues.



# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

The Federal Communications Commission would require the public disclosure of the names of significant donors in paying for TV or radio ads in support of candidates or related to controversial public issues.

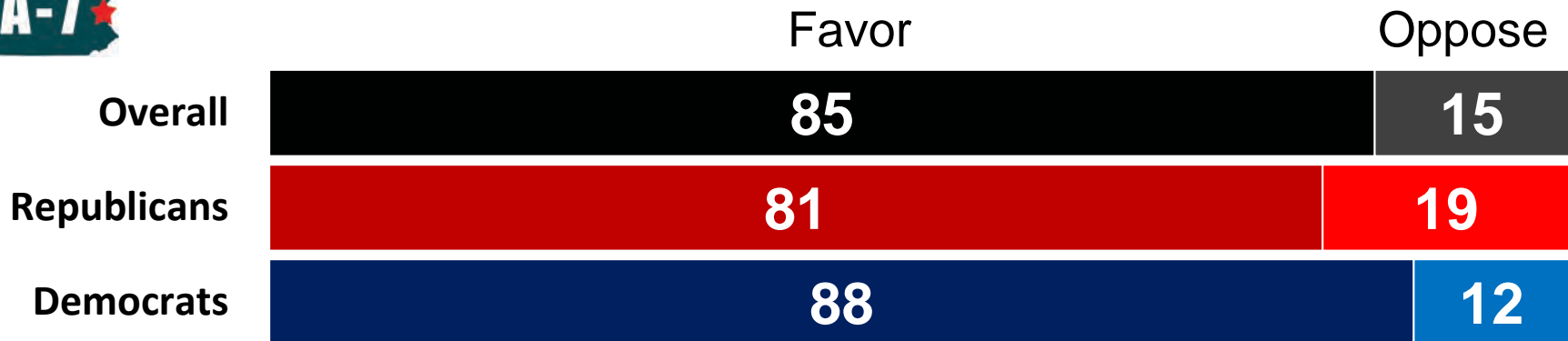




# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

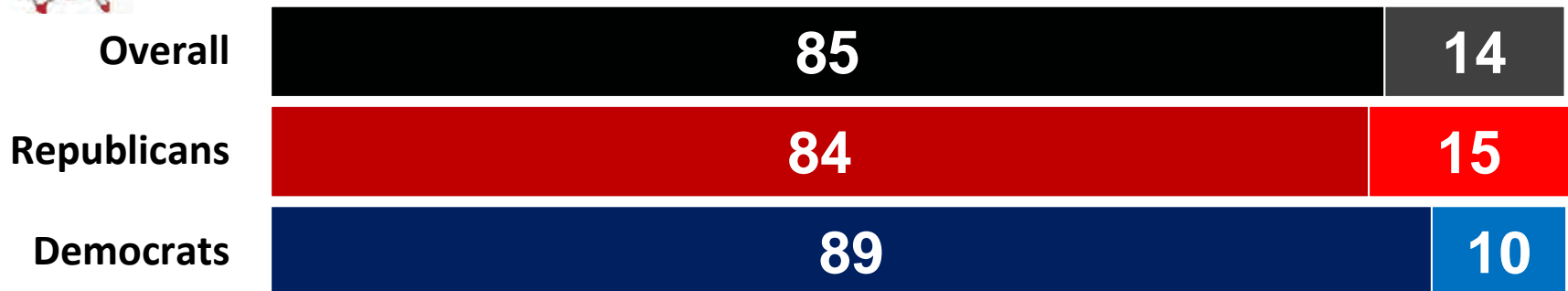
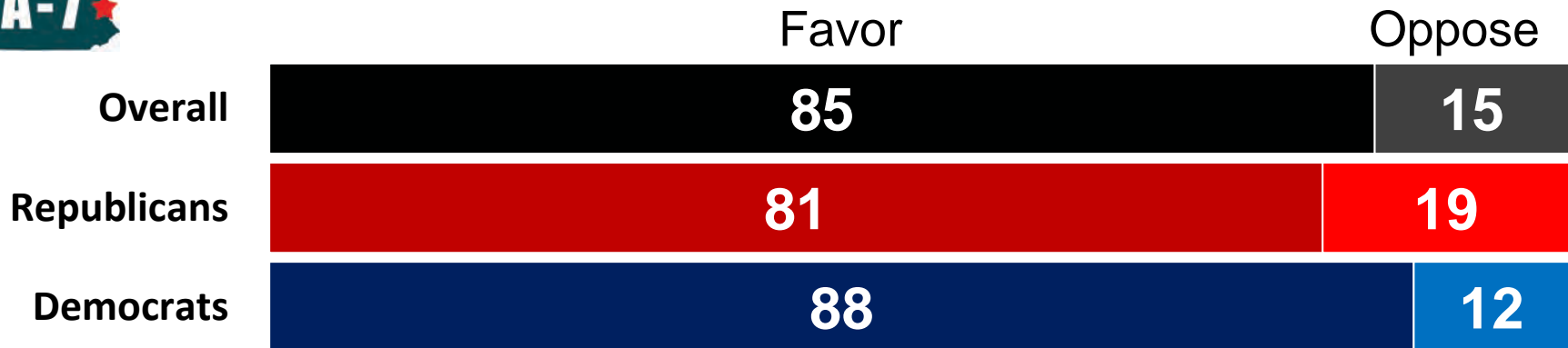
Require federal contractors to publicly disclose donations to groups that spend money on campaign-related activities



# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Require federal contractors to publicly disclose donations to groups that spend money on campaign-related activities



# **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ALLOWING CONGRESS TO REGULATE CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

**(Overturn “Citizens United”)**

## PROPOSAL:

# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

Some people think:

- these proposals for campaign finance reform are not adequate to counter the influence of big donors;
- Congress should directly limit all forms of campaign-related donations.

For Congress to do this, however, would require a new Constitutional amendment, which would override the Supreme Court's past decisions on this subject, including 'Citizens United'.

Passing any Constitutional amendment is quite challenging. It requires ratification by two thirds of Congress and three quarters of all states.

Such an amendment has been proposed in both houses of Congress. It has two parts, which we will consider one at a time.

# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

## Part 1

Congress and the states may regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others seeking to influence elections.

# ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

Part 1

Since “Citizens United,” flood of money, gives rich more influence, basically bribery, drowning out ordinary voters, Congress should be able to set limits

Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

Clearly, we cannot go on letting people and organizations use the cover of the First Amendment to allow what is essentially bribery of Members of Congress. Since the recent Supreme Court decision to allow unlimited contributions, there has been a flood of money pouring into organizations seeking to influence elections. The rich should not have more influence just because they have more money. They are drowning out the voice of most ordinary voters.

The Founders would be horrified by the amount of money in elections and this is just the kind of problem that they established the Constitutional amendment process to address. Congress should be able to set reasonable limits on political spending.

PA-7

Very Convincing

Somewhat Convincing

Overall

43

42

84

Republicans

34

47

82

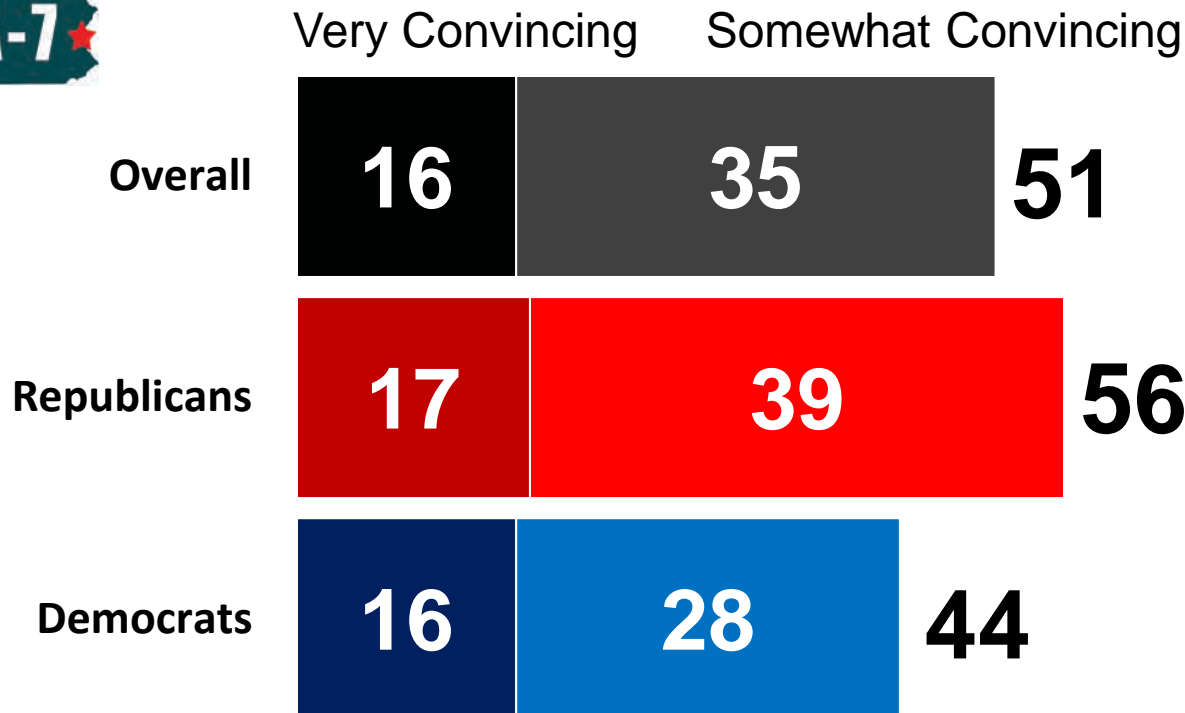
Democrats

50

36

86

# Would limit freedom of speech; risky to tamper with the Constitution



**Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance**

**ARGUMENT AGAINST**

This proposal is an end run around Constitutional principles—practically an attempt to repeal the First Amendment. If people want to spend money making their views heard about a candidate, the government should not have the right to stop them. Should we assume that the government knows what the right amount of free speech is?

Real freedom of speech is often inconvenient for somebody. You can't just pick and choose where you want it to apply. Tampering with the Constitution is a risky idea. Once you start limiting some forms of speech it becomes a slippery slope toward more and more limits on our freedoms.

# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

## Part 2

In writing campaign finance laws, Congress would have the right to treat corporations and other organizations differently from ‘natural persons.’

This would allow Congress to restrict or even prohibit corporations and other organizations from spending money to influence elections.



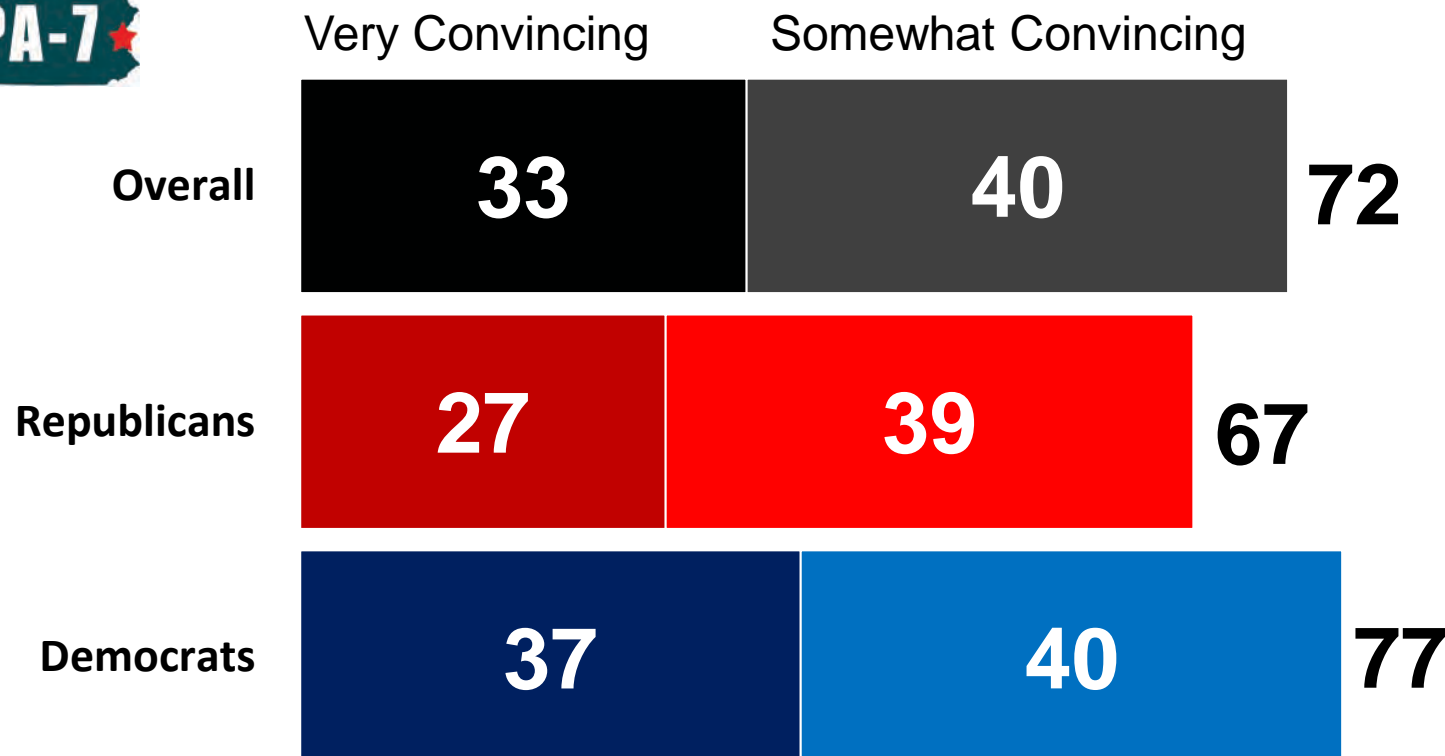
## Constitution is meant to protect individuals, not corporations

**Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance**

**ARGUMENT IN FAVOR**

A corporation should not have the same rights as a person. The idea that it is a group of people expressing their point of view is a fallacy. All of the people who are part of the corporation do not necessarily share a single point of view. A corporation is created to perform a function or to make money. It does not have the right to vote.

Pursuing political influence through campaign-related donations in the service of a corporation's goals is not something the Constitution was ever meant to protect. If the individuals associated with a corporation want to express a point of view or donate to a campaign, they are still free to do so.



# ARGUMENT AGAINST

Part 2

## Citizens should have right to come together as a corporation and promote their views, like individuals

**Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance** Part 1

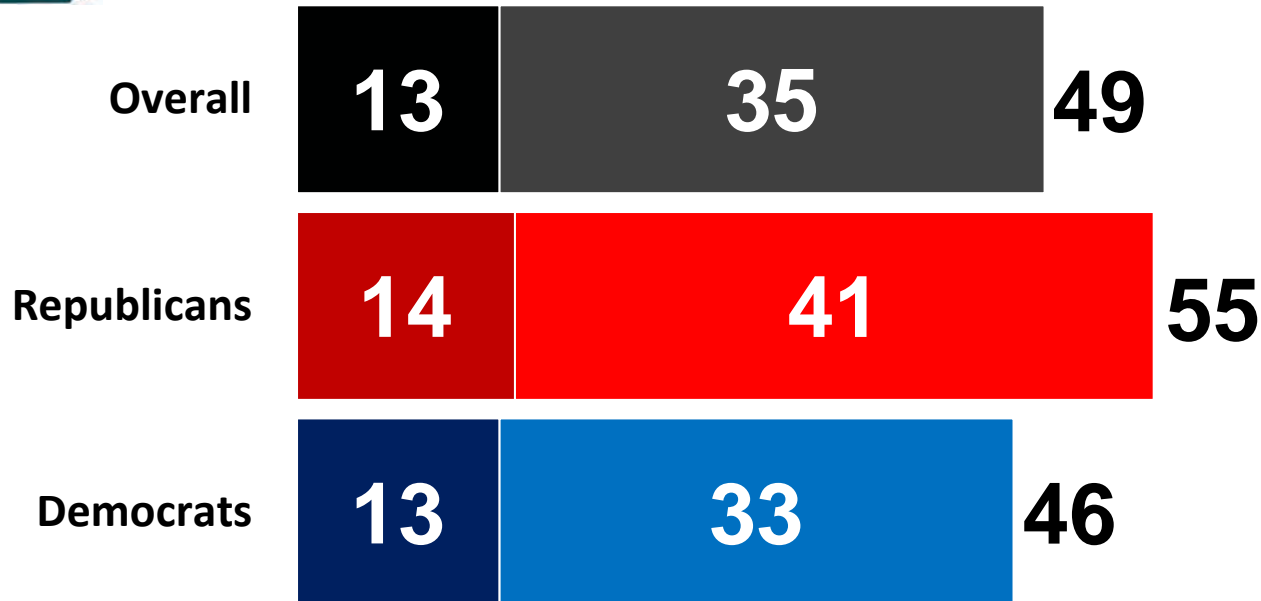
**ARGUMENT AGAINST**

People have the right to come together and become shareholders in a corporation. As shareholders, they have a shared interest in the goals of this corporation. Thus, the corporation should have the same rights of free expression as do the individual shareholders. The fact that they are also seeking to make money should not make any difference.

Making a Constitutional amendment that would restrict the freedom of shareholders to act together would subvert the underlying principles of the Constitution. Furthermore, some of the corporations that would be limited by this law are nonprofit corporations that serve good causes and should not be prevented from making their voice heard.



Very Convincing    Somewhat Convincing



# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Would you recommend that your Members of Congress vote in favor of or against a Constitutional Amendment allowing Congress to directly regulate campaign financing and treat corporations differently than individuals?

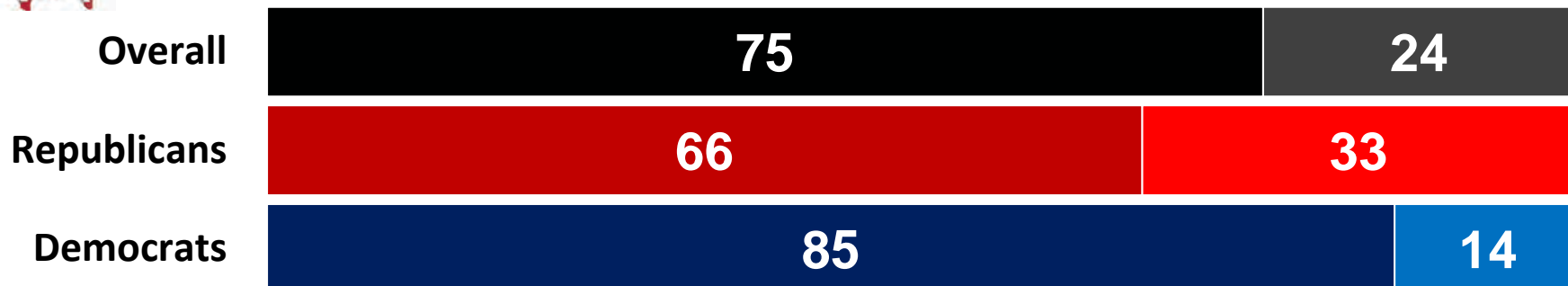
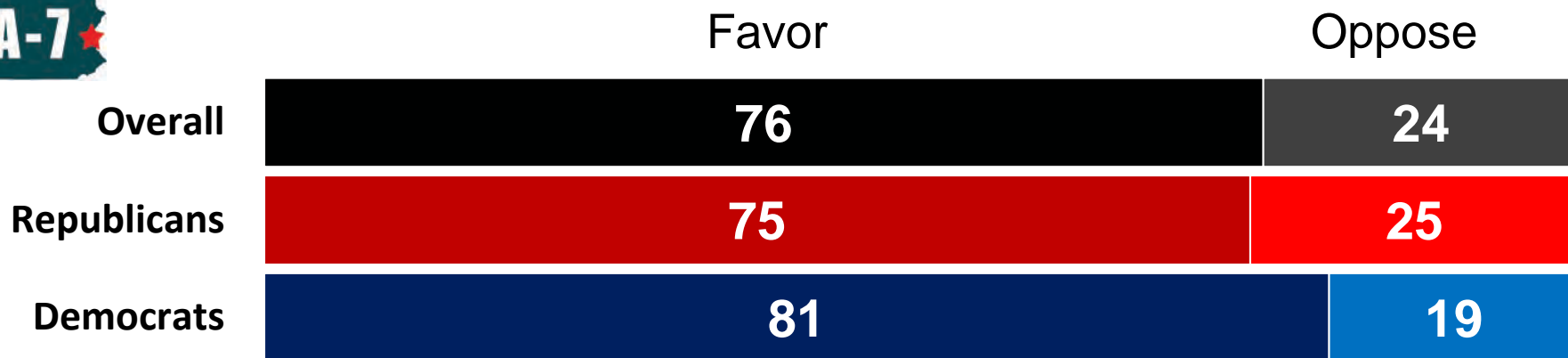


	Favor	Oppose
Overall	76	24
Republicans	75	25
Democrats	81	19

# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Would you recommend that your Members of Congress vote in favor of or against a Constitutional Amendment allowing Congress to directly regulate campaign financing and treat corporations differently than individuals?





PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

# CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

**Pennsylvania's 7<sup>th</sup>  
Congressional District**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2021**

PRESENTED BY



**Civic** Genius

# Six-to-One Match of Small Donations

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

By limiting candidates to small donors, big donors will have less influence on them once they are in office. As an elected official, they will then be more likely to be responsive to their constituents, as a whole, not just well-financed special interests.

Candidates who do not want to be beholden to big donors will be more able to run for office and succeed. This program won't add to the deficit and will improve the quality of American democracy.

# Six-to-One Match of Small Donations

## ARGUMENT AGAINST

Giving money to any candidate—just because they have a substantial following of small donors—won't necessarily produce good candidates. This will give fringe candidates who are not electable a government-funded platform for furthering their extreme ideas.

Finally, ideas like this have been tried in some states and there's no clear evidence they have diminished the influence of special interests.

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR #1

When campaign-related donations are fully disclosed, it makes it more difficult for elected officials to do favors, taking actions that serve the interests of the donor, rather than the common good. If the donation is disclosed, the public, the media, and watchdog groups can question whether an action was a favor in exchange for a donation.

This will create political costs for the elected official, as well as discourage donors from seeking favors through donations.



# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR #2

When judging a candidate, people have a right to know who is providing money in support of the candidate.

Voters can get a better sense of the allegiances that the candidate might have and the interests they might support.

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## ARGUMENT AGAINST #1

Making a campaign donation has been established by the U.S. Supreme Court as a basic right as part of the principle of free speech. If every donation is subject to public scrutiny, it can lead to claims that it was basically a bribe, when in fact it might not be at all.

People may also get harassed or threatened for making donations. This will discourage people from making such donations, including completely legitimate ones.

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## ARGUMENT AGAINST #2

Public disclosure is not going to prevent elected officials from doing favors in exchange for financial support. Even if elected officials are, in fact, taking a position to serve the interests of a donor (in exchange for support), the officials can simply say that they think the position is the right one – and there's no way to prove they don't think that.

Furthermore, in some cases the politician may genuinely support the position. Disclosure will not clarify what's really going on.

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR #1

When campaign-related donations are fully disclosed, it makes it more difficult for elected officials to do favors, taking actions that serve the interests of the donor, rather than the common good.

If the donation is disclosed, the public, the media, and watchdog groups can question whether an action was a favor in exchange for a donation.

This will create political costs for the elected official, as well as discourage donors from seeking favors through donations.

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR #2

When judging a candidate, people have a right to know who is providing money in support of the candidate.

Voters can get a better sense of the allegiances that the candidate might have and the interests they might support.

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## ARGUMENT AGAINST #1

Making a campaign donation has been established by the U.S. Supreme Court as a basic right as part of the principle of free speech. If every donation is subject to public scrutiny, it can lead to claims that it was basically a bribe, when in fact it might not be at all.

People may also get harassed or threatened for making donations. This will discourage people from making such donations, including completely legitimate ones.

# Greater Public Disclosure of Campaign-Related Donations

## ARGUMENT AGAINST #2

Public disclosure is not going to prevent elected officials from doing favors in exchange for financial support. Even if elected officials are, in fact, taking a position to serve the interests of a donor (in exchange for support), the officials can simply say that they think the position is the right one – and there's no way to prove they don't think that.

Furthermore, in some cases the politician may genuinely support the position. Disclosure will not clarify what's really going on.

# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

Clearly, we cannot go on letting people and organizations use the cover of the First Amendment to allow what is essentially bribery of Members of Congress. Since the recent Supreme Court decision to allow unlimited contributions, there has been a flood of money pouring into organizations seeking to influence elections. The rich should not have more influence just because they have more money. They are drowning out the voice of most ordinary voters.

The Founders would be horrified by the amount of money in elections and this is just the kind of problem that they established the Constitutional amendment process to address. Congress should be able to set reasonable limits on political spending.



# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

## ARGUMENT AGAINST

This proposal is an end run around Constitutional principles—practically an attempt to repeal the First Amendment. If people want to spend money making their views heard about a candidate, the government should not have the right to stop them. Should we assume that the government knows what the right amount of free speech is?

Real freedom of speech is often inconvenient for somebody. You can't just pick and choose where you want it to apply. Tampering with the Constitution is a risky idea. Once you start limiting some forms of speech it becomes a slippery slope toward more and more limits on our freedoms.

# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

## ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

A corporation should not have the same rights as a person. The idea that it is a group of people expressing their point of view is a fallacy. All of the people who are part of the corporation do not necessarily share a single point of view. A corporation is created to perform a function or to make money. It does not have the right to vote.

Pursuing political influence through campaign-related donations in the service of a corporation's goals is not something the Constitution was ever meant to protect. If the individuals associated with a corporation want to express a point of view or donate to a campaign, they are still free to do so.

# Constitutional Amendment Allowing Congress to Regulate Campaign Finance

## ARGUMENT AGAINST

People have the right to come together and become shareholders in a corporation. As shareholders they have a shared interest in the goals of the corporation. Thus, the corporation should have the same rights of free expression as do the individual shareholders. The fact that they are also seeking to make money should not make any difference.

Making a Constitutional amendment that would restrict the freedom of shareholders to act together would subvert the underlying principles of the Constitution. Furthermore, some of the corporations that would be limited by this law are nonprofit corporations that serve good causes and should not be prevented from making their voice heard.