



# **★ COMMON GROUND ★ EAMERICAN PEOPLE**



# **POLICY POSITIONS** SUPPORTED BY BOTH **DEMOCRATS & REPUBLICANS**

Updated February 2024



#### Multi-Year Study Finds Significant Common Ground Among the American People

The Federal government is currently failing to address numerous problems. This failure is largely due to increasing partisan polarization resulting in government gridlock. One may well have the impression that there is virtually no common ground between Republicans and Democrats in America today.

Some speculate that polarization in the American public is driving the polarization in Congress. However, there are strong reasons to believe that the polarization in Congress primarily comes from other sources. Over the last decades, concurrent with the increase of polarization in Congress there has been an extraordinary increase in the amount of money flowing from special interests into political campaigns as well as a dramatic increase in the number of lobbyists operating in Washington. As many of these special interests have competing objectives their increased efforts at influencing government decisions, and the increased access derived from campaign contributions can exert centrifugal forces on the policymaking process.

Still the question stands as to whether there is common ground between Republicans and Democrats in the public—at least more than Congress. If so, the public would have the potential to become an arbiter between the parties, offering a pathway toward convergence.

To find out if there is such common ground, a major multi-year study of the American people was conducted by the Program for Public Consultation with the support and participation of Voice of the People, and more recently Common Ground Solutions. Financial support was also provided by the Democracy Fund, the Hewlett Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the MacArthur Foundation and the Circle Foundation.

### **In-Depth Surveys Conducted on Hundreds of Policy Proposals**

#### **PPC'S Online Public Consultation Surveys**

The Program for Public Consultation (PPC) at the University of Maryland has conducted dozens of public consultation surveys with more than 100,000 survey respondents (though some individuals were respondents in more than one survey). Most of the policy positions considered were based on proposed legislation. Others were derived from proposals made by the president or were items in budget proposals.

The surveys were not simply standard polls used by the media or in political polling. For many issues, average Americans have a lack of information and in some cases misinformation on key issues. They also have not heard key arguments on each side of the issues. Research shows that in these circumstances poll responses are not highly stable and subject to even minor variations in the wording of the questions. Thus, they are not a reliable source of direction for policymakers.

Therefore, for this project, a unique survey form that goes well beyond standard polls was used. The aim of the process—developed by PPC—is to put respondents in the shoes of a policymaker; thus, they are called "policymaking simulations." In this process, respondents are:

- provided a briefing on the issue and the policy proposals under consideration
- presented and asked to evaluate arguments for and against the policy proposal
- finally, asked for their recommendations

In some cases, the final recommendations are simply a binary question, such as whether the respondent favors or opposes a proposed legislative action. In other cases, the respondent is not only given the option of making a change or not but is given the ability to specify their level of preferred change on a continuum, such as raising a tax rate or a benefit level. In some cases, respondents are also given feedback about the impact of their choices. For example, in making choices about budget items, they are immediately shown the impact of their choices on the budget deficit.

The content of the policymaking simulations are reviewed in advance by proponents and opponents of the policy options to ensure that the briefings are accurate and balanced and that the arguments presented are indeed the strongest ones being made by proponents and opponents.

The surveys were conducted online with samples of 2,400 or more, in most cases provided by Nielsen Scarborough from their larger probability-based panel that was recruited by phone and mail. Visit **vop.org/common-ground** for more information about the process respondents went through as well as field dates, sample sizes, links to the full questionnaires and reports for each survey, status of legislation and information on related standard polls.

#### **DDL's In-Person Deliberative Polls**

While most of the findings are from online policymaking simulation surveys conducted by PPC, some are also derived from the "deliberative polls" conducted by the Deliberative Democracy Lab (DDL) at Stanford University. In a deliberative poll a representative sample of Americans goes through a process in which they are first polled on key issues using standard poll questions. They then read briefings on the key issues that have been reviewed by a bipartisan oversight committee. Next, they meet for several days in person, hear from experts on the issues, hear competing arguments and get a chance to discuss the issues. At the end, they are polled again.

DDL final poll results are included in the list of policy positions herein, noted by (DDL).

# **Positions With Majority Support**

In the next pages, the policy positions that received majority support overall, and in most cases, by majorities of both Democrats and Republicans.

To get a quick grasp of the level of support for each position nationally and among Democrats and Republicans, the percentage of respondents in each category who support each position is embedded in a medallion that is either gold, silver, or bronze as follows.



Support is 60% or more



Support is **51% – 59%** 



Support is less than 51%, but 53% or more find it at least "tolerable" or do not oppose the proposal (this number is marked with a T)

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# **ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY**

The United States has had a longstanding tension between its needs for protection of the environment and for reasonably priced energy. The challenge of finding the right balance between these priorities has been a perennial of policymaking for some time now. A longstanding concern has been the health effects from air pollution caused by the emissions from use of fossil fuels. These are particularly significant for certain vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly and those with asthma.

More recently the concern has extended to the effect of the use of fossil fuels on the global climate. There is now a clear consensus in the scientific community that energy production from fossil fuels creates greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide, with destabilizing effects on the global climate.

To address both of these effects there have been numerous proposals to promote clean energy—i.e. alternatives to fossil fuels, such as wind and solar, that do not produce negative health effects or destabilize the climate—and to promote greater energy efficiency so as to reduce the demand for energy produced by fossil fuels. These proposals primarily focus on tax incentives and regulations. All of these proposals are controversial as tax incentives reduce public revenues and regulations can increase the cost of cars, trucks and buildings.

# PROVIDE CLEAN ENERGY TAX INCENTIVES FOR: The cost of equipment that produces clean energy, such as solar panels or wind turbines, or stores clean energy: up to 30% The amount of electricity produced with clean energy: equal to up to 5-10% of the average retail cost of electricity The production of transportation fuel that produces 25% fewer emissions than the current average: up to \$1 per gallon An investment in the development of first-of-its-kind clean energy technology to produce, store or distribute energy: up to 30% For installing small residential wind and fuel cell micro-turbines to generate energy for homes Building a new energy-efficient home or residential building: up to \$3,000 Making energy-saving improvements such as fuel-efficient lighting, doors, windows, or insulation: up to \$6,500 Installing a new energy-efficient heating or air conditioning system: up to \$1500 Building new energy-efficient commercial buildings: up to \$4.75 per square foot Making energy-saving improvements to commercial buildings that reduce energy: up to \$9.25 per square foot Manufacturers of fully electric buses: a tax credit equal to 10% of the sales price of each bus sold The cost of installing a charging station that can be used by anyone: up to 50%





#### COMMITMENTS TO REDUCING GREENHOUSE GASES



Commit to the 2014 Paris Agreement to combat climate change

68 60 85

Go beyond the Paris Agreement and aim for more significant cutbacks on greenhouse gas emissions

71 52 89

Adopt the goal of reducing US greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 2% a year, as part of the Paris Agreement

69 59 78

Provide adjustment assistance to coal workers who lose their job as a result of the transition to cleaner forms of energy

77 59 93

Adopt a proposed plan – the Clean Power Plan – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power plants by 2-3% a year, provided that coal workers receive adjustment assistance

# **REGULATIONS**

71 50 91

Require higher fuel efficiency standards for cars and light trucks

74 56 89

Require electric companies to have a minimum portion of their electricity come from renewable sources

77 65 90

Adopt stricter regulations on hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which have significant greenhouse gas effects, and require businesses to gradually replace them with alternatives

#### CONSTRAINING FOSSIL FUEL EXTRACTION

71 56 86

Grant waivers to the 15 out of 17 coastal states who have requested that the ban on new offshore drilling be kept in place for their states

74 68 83

DO NOT lift the regulation requiring that oil drilling equipment be inspected by independent auditors certified by the federal government

85 78 92

Renew for 5 years the tax that oil companies pay to a special fund which covers the cost of oil spills, and raise the tax from 9 cents to 10 cents per barrel

# OIL & GAS DRILLING IN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

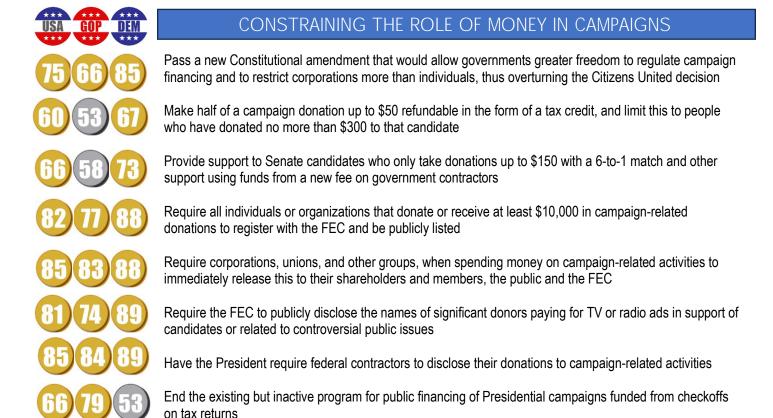


Do NOT allow expansion of oil and gas production on federal lands previously dedicated to wildlife preservation (DDL)



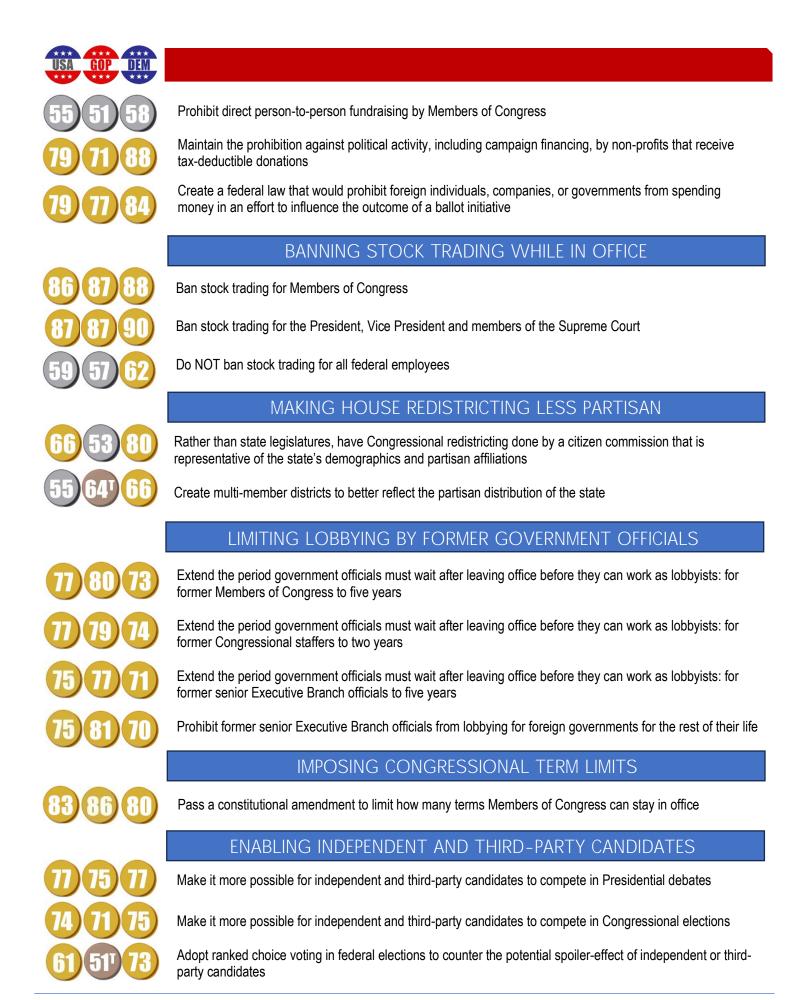
Numerous government reforms have been proposed that seek to counter potential distortions to the democratic process by:

- constraining the role of money in the campaigns and making it more transparent
- limiting lobbying by recently retired government officials
- making the process of House redistricting more representative of the partisan balance of a state
- making it more possible for independent and third-party candidates to compete in elections
- banning stock-trading by Members of Congress



To ensure that those making campaign donations from abroad are registered US voters, require all

campaigns to get the address and CVV code of all credit card donors



# **GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS**



#### **VOTING REFORM**



Establish by law uniform national standards for in-person, mail-in, and early voting for Congressional elections (DDL)

65 50 81

Allow citizens to register to vote online (DDL)

64 61 79

Allow citizens to register to vote on Election Day, with a government issued ID (DDL)

56 62<sup>1</sup> 76

Establish automatic voter registration for all eligible voters with an option to opt-out (DDL)

65 68<sup>1</sup> 69

Make federal election day a national holiday (DDL)

#### **ELECTION INTEGRITY**



Require that all voting machines produce a paper record of the vote that the voter verifies and then drops in a ballot box (DDL)



Have each state require its voting jurisdictions to conduct an audit of a random sample of ballots in each election to ensure that the votes have been accurately counted (DDL)

59 **90** 61<sup>7</sup>

Require all voters to provide a government-issued photo identification that was obtained with proof of citizenship (DDL)



Install video monitors at all drop boxes for ballots to protect against fraud (DDL)

72 63 84

Do NOT allow representatives from political parties and other groups to challenge the eligibility of voters as they cast their ballots at polling places and as officials count the votes at tabulation centers (DDL)

# SUPREME COURT REFORM



Require members of the Supreme Court to comply with the same ethical standards that apply to other federal judges



# **U.S. POSTAL SERVICE**

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has been under continuous financial pressure since 2008. Funded exclusively by selling its products and services, it has suffered from a decline in its first-class mail business, due in part to the rise of electronic mail, especially for billing.

During this period USPS has reduced its workforce considerably, streamlined operations for greater efficiency, and increased its package deliveries. In this way it has managed to achieve an operating profit. However, it is still seriously in the red because it has not been able to meet the requirement set by Congress to prefund its future retiree health care benefits.

Congress has attempted several times in the last several years to address the Postal Service's issues comprehensively. A major bill (S. 1789) passed the Senate in 2012 but got no further. Legislators and government officials continue to struggle with the problem. Recently, reforms to the Postal Service have been offered by:

- the Department of Treasury's Postal Task Force in their 2018 report,
- the Postmaster General in her statement to the House of Representatives in 2019.
- the House of Representatives, which passed the USPS Fairness Act (H.R. 2382) in early 2020.

The major issues they have addressed include:

- whether to allow USPS to raise their postal rates,
- whether the Postal Service should be allowed to start up new lines of business, offering non-postal services and products.

PPC conducted a study in 2015 of these issues and more based on proposals put forward at the time by the Postmaster General, the Inspector General, and bills under consideration in the Senate and House.





# **POLICE REFORM**

For decades now, there have been periodic efforts to reform police practices and laws regarding the use of force, especially deadly force, by law enforcement officers. The recent deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and other incidents of law enforcement officers using deadly force have stimulated protest and demands for policing reforms.

Congress introduced two comprehensive police reform bills to address these issues: The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act (H.R. 7120, S. 3912), sponsored by Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA) and Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ); and the JUSTICE Act (S. 3985), sponsored by Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC).

The provisions in these two bills continue to be the basis for ongoing debates over police reform, including:

- when police officers should use deadly force;
- what types of force police officers should be able to use, such as chokeholds;
- the use of no-knock warrants;
- the standards by which officers are held accountable for their use of excessive force;
- whether racial bias among police is a problem to be addressed; and
- how much regulation there should be of military equipment transferred to the police.



# POLICIES REGARDING USE OF FORCE



Make it a duty for officers to intervene when another officer is using excessive force; provide training for when and how to intervene



Prohibit chokeholds and other neck restraints that prevent breathing or block the flow of blood or oxygen to the brain



Require officers to be trained in de-escalation and other alternative techniques, require such techniques be exhausted before using deadly force, and make officers criminally liable if they fail to do so



Ban no-knock warrants, by which officers can break into a suspect's home without knocking, and without identifying themselves

# INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS



Require all officers to wear body cameras, and to turn them on when they are responding to a police call or interacting with a suspect



Create a national database or registry of police misconduct, available to all police departments (e.g. to use when considering employing an officer) and the public



Incentivize states to hire an independent prosecutor in cases against an officer who used deadly force



Amend qualified immunity so that it is more possible to hold officers liable when civilians sue them for using excessive force



# RESPONSES TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



For non-violent criminal offenders, have police officers direct them into treatment rather than charge them with a crime



In response to 911 calls related to mental health issues, send mental health professionals rather than police officers

# OTHER PROVISIONS



Require officers to receive training to address implicit bias toward minorities



Require police departments to get local government approval for requests for surplus military equipment, and prohibit requests for certain high-powered military equipment

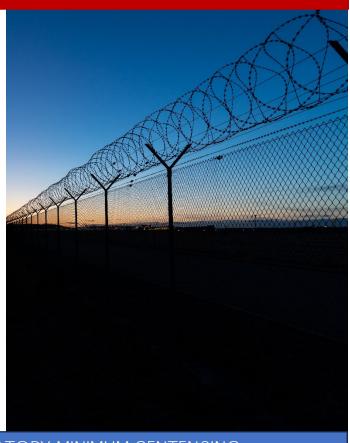
# **SENTENCING REFORM**

For some time now there has been a substantial debate about the high level of incarceration in the United States. Since the 1980s the number of Americans in prison has quadrupled and is greater than any other country in absolute terms and on a per capita basis. Much of this increase has been due to mandatory sentencing laws that were established starting in the 1980s.

In 2017 two major pieces of legislation were proposed which sought to reduce mandatory minimum sentences and give judges more discretion in sentencing — the First Step Act (S. 3649 by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and the Smarter Sentencing Act (S. 1933) by Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT). These were the basis of the PPC survey explored below. In 2018, a limited version of the First Step Act (S. 756) by Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK) was passed into law.

Provisions not passed into law were subsequently incorporated into a new bill called The Next Step Act, sponsored by Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ) (H.R. 1893) and Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) (S. 697). The Smarter Sentencing Act did not pass and was reintroduced by Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) (S. 2850).

Below are provisions from the Smarter Sentencing Act and what is now the Next Step Act, that received bipartisan support.





#### REDUCING MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCING



Reduce the mandatory minimum sentence for 'one strike' drug offenses from 10 years to 5 years



Create a new sentencing category for those convicted of transporting or storing drugs or drug money that does not carry a mandatory minimum sentence



Give judges discretion to release early, prisoners who were convicted as juveniles and who have completed at least 20 years of their sentence

# LIMITING THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF CRIMINAL RECORDS

Currently, one in three American adults – about 78 million people – have a criminal record. Many of these people have just been arrested or charged, but were never convicted, while many other have been convicted of minor, non-violent crimes. These criminal records often stay with people for their entire life.

There has been a long-standing controversy about the negative consequences that such criminal records have on people's ability to become employed, get housing, and vote.

In some cases, these negative consequences are due to the actions of the government and public institutions such as public housing authorities and licensing boards. Across the country, there are over 44,000 rules that put up barriers for people with criminal records, and restrict them from employment, licensing, public housing, voting and other activities.

In other cases, the negative consequences of a criminal record are the result of discrimination by private employers, who may see people as too much of a liability. Studies have found that this discrimination falls hardest on racial minorities with criminal records.

To address these concerns, several proposals have been introduced by Members of Congress to remove these barriers. Some of these proposals would prohibit employers, licensing boards and public housing authorities from disqualifying people – rejecting applicants, firing employees or evicting tenants – based solely on certain criminal records. Other proposals would make it easier for records of arrests or non-violent drug offenses to be sealed from the public. And another would restore voting rights to people with felony records once their prison sentences have been completed.

These proposals have appeared in:

- Next Step Act of 2019 by Rep. Bonnie Watson-Coleman (H.R. 1893) and Sen. Cory Booker (S. 697)
- Fair Chance at Housing Act of 2019 by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (H.R. 3685) and former Sen. Kamala Harris (S. 2076)
- Jobs and Justice Act of 2020 by Rep. Karen Bass (H.R. 8352)
- Democracy Restoration Act of 2021 by Sen. Ben Cardin (S. 481)
- For the People Act of 2021 by Rep. John Sarbanes (H.R. 1) and Sen. Jeff Merkley (S. 1)



# **EMPLOYMENT & LICENSING**



Prohibit employers and licensing boards from disqualifying a person on the basis that they were arrested but not charged, or charged but not convicted



Prohibit employers and licensing boards from disqualifying a person on the basis that they were convicted of a petty, non-violent crime



Limit the period of time during which licensing boards and employers can disqualify a person for certain convictions: for a misdemeanor, one year after they complete their sentence; for a felony, five years after they complete their sentence



Protect employers from being held liable, in the event an employee with a criminal record commits a crime, for having knowingly hired an applicant with a criminal record



Prohibit employers and licensing boards from disqualifying a person on the basis that they were convicted of a crime unrelated to their ability to responsibly perform the job

# PUBLIC HOUSING



Prohibit public Housing Authorities from rejecting an applicant or evicting a tenant on the basis that they were arrested but never convicted or convicted of a minor non-violent crime. In the case of an applicant with a felony record, a review board that would include tenants would make the determination on a case-by-case basis.



# SEALING CRIMINAL RECORDS



Provide people who have been arrested but not charged, or charged but not found quilty the right to have their records sealed from the public, for a minor cost



Automatically seal the record of a non-violent drug offense, five years after the offender completes their sentence

# FELON REINFRANCHISEMENT



Automatically reinstate the right to vote after people have completed their prison sentence

# PRISON REFORM



A controversial aspect of the criminal justice system is how people are treated while in prison. Two areas in which reforms have been proposed by Members of Congress are solitary confinement, and the rates which prisons and jails charge for phone calls.

Solitary confinement is a tool often used by prison staff to protect the safety of the prisoners and the staff, as well as to punish people in prison who violate both serious and minor rules. The use of solitary confinement has been controversial for a while, as it can cause severe and long-term mental health issues. The United Nations and other human rights organizations have called on the US to create national standards to severely curtail its usage.

Over the last several years, states have put in place restrictions on the use of solitary confinement in state prisons and jails. Following this. Members of Congress have introduced proposals to restrict the use of solitary confinement nationwide, by limiting the reasons for which it can be administered, and the length of time a person can be kept in solitary. These proposals have appeared in:

- Restricting the Use of Solitary Confinement Act by Rep. Bonnie Watson-Coleman (H.R. 8155)
- Solitary Confinement Reform Act of 2019 by Sen. Dick Durbin (S. 719).



#### PHONE CALLS FROM PRISON



Require prisons and jails to charge inmates no more for phone calls than the rates companies normally charge for comparable service

# RESTRICTING THE USE OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT



Require that solitary confinement only be used for the prisoner's own safety or for punishment for serious violations, for no more than 30 days in a row or 40 days in a two-month period



Require that solitary confinement only be used for safety reasons, and never as punishment, for no more than 15 days in a row or 20 days in a two-month period

# THE FEDERAL BUDGET

Every year, the Executive Branch and Congress develop a budget for spending areas that Congress controls on an annual basis called the discretionary budget. This does not include mandatory spending, such as for entitlement programs like Social Security. At any time, Congress can make changes to general revenues, and some such changes are often incorporated into the annual budget proposal.

A central consideration in the development of the budget is the deficit and the growing national debt which now stands at \$34 trillion. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that on its current trajectory the debt could grow to over 150% of GDP by 2050, a level not seen in US history.

Voices from both sides of the aisle have called for reductions in deficit spending and there have been various efforts to control the deficit through legislative action, most recently the Budget Control Act which requires that Congress establish and stay within spending limits. However, these efforts have limited effects, as Congress has regularly raised the spending limits.

More recently, with the economic downturn driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, Congress increased spending as an emergency response. The findings explored below pre-date the Covid-19 emergency.

Respondents were initially told that they would be dealing with the discretionary budget and general revenues and were informed about the projected budget deficit for the year. They were given the opportunity to change spending levels in over 30 areas, change tax levels for each income group, and adopt or change other taxes. For each policy option, respondents were shown the effect on the budget deficit.



# DISCRETIONARY SPENDING



Reduce defense budget for general operations by \$7 billion



Reduce subsidies to agricultural corporations by \$7 billion

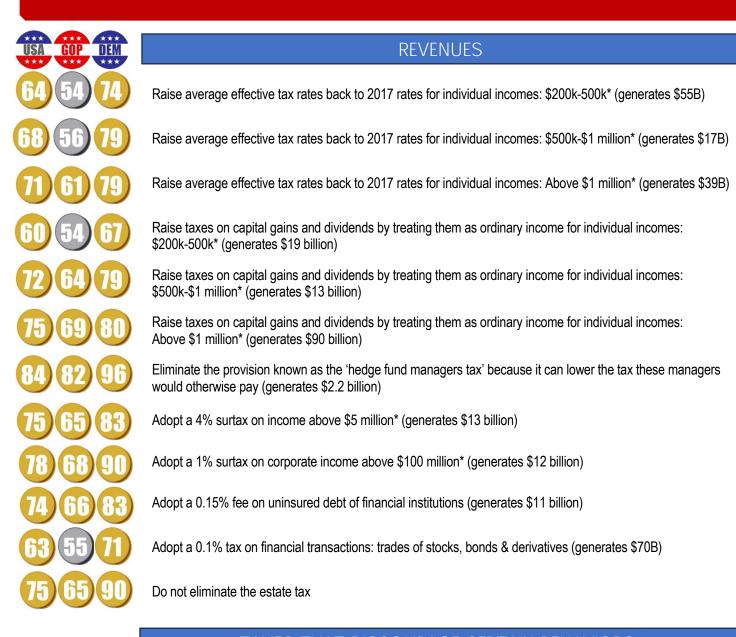


Reduce spending on nuclear weapons programs by \$2 billion



Reduce spending on agencies that enforce federal law by \$2 billion





# TAXES THAT DISCOURAGE CERTAIN BEHAVIORS

Raise taxes on various tobacco products (generates \$5 billion)

Raise alcohol taxes to 25 cents per ounce of alcohol\* (generates \$5 billion)

#### ADDITIONAL TAX REFORMS

Do not lower the corporate tax rate from 21% to 15% (DDL)

# **HEALTH INSURANCE**

There is substantial agreement that the US healthcare system has serious problems. A remarkably high 18% of GDP is devoted to healthcare—far higher than other developed countries, but without producing better health outcomes. Before the COVID pandemic, 28 million people did not have health insurance—also a much higher rate than other developed countries. With the massive job losses associated with the pandemic the number of uninsured rose dramatically.

In 2009, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed to improve access and lower the costs of healthcare. Since its passage there has been much debate over whether it should be modified. In 2017, the American Health Care Act (AHCA) was put forward calling for the repeal of many of the provisions of the ACA, but it failed to pass. However, in 2018 the repeal of the individual mandate provision of the ACA was passed.

In 2021, the American Rescue Plan was passed in response to the substantial increase in unemployment and millions of people losing their health insurance that resulted from the Covid pandemic. That bill had two major healthcare provisions:

- Allow Medicare to negotiate for lower drug prices, which was supported by a large bipartisan majority of the public, per a 2019 Deliberative Democracy Lab survey; and
- Increase ACA subsidies for low- and middle-income buyers to make insurance more affordable, which is supported by large majorities of the public (see PPC survey results below).

The ACA subsidy increases were temporary, however, and in August 2022, the Inflation Reduction Act was passed which extended those subsidies for three years. Because they are temporary, and debate about their extension will happen in the future, such proposals have been kept on the list of common ground proposals.



# EXPANDING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE



Offer a government-run public option open to all individuals (DDL)



Allow people aged 55 years or older to purchase a Medicare plan (DDL)



Change the ACA to allow insurance companies to offer low-premium, high-deductible "copper plans" to people aged 30 and over

# LOWERING ACA MARKETPLACE INSURANCE COST



Expand federal subsidies in the ACA that help the middle class to include more people (DDL)



Increase federal subsidies in the Affordable Care Act that help the poor (DDL)

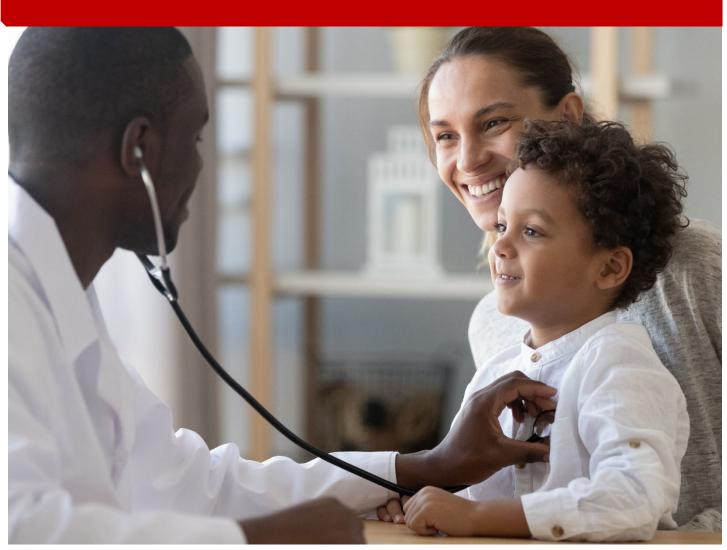
# PRESERVING ACA RULES ON HEALTH INSURANCE COST



Do not repeal the ACA rule that prohibits insurance companies from charging older people more than three times what they charge younger people



Do not repeal the ACA rule that prohibits insurance companies from considering pre-existing conditions when setting premiums





# REDUCING HEALTH CARE COSTS



Make changes to the patent system to allow generic drugs to get on to the market more quickly (DDL)

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH



High priority for the government to ensure that everyone who wants substance use treatment can get it



\$10 billion to make treatment available to those who want it but are not able to get it



Expand and improve treatment programs in prisons



For non-violent criminal offenders, have police officers direct them into treatment rather than charge them with a crime



In response to 911 calls related to mental health issues, send mental health professionals rather than police officers



Since the Supreme Court Dobbs v. Jackson decision that overturned Roe v. Wade, the subject of the government's role in abortion has been foreground in the public discourse. The Supreme Court effectively pushed the decision about abortion to the states, generating widespread debate.

Sixteen states have established new laws making abortion illegal at any point in the pregnancy, or reinstating such laws that were in place before the Roe v Wade decision. On the other hand, the voters of the relatively conservative state of Kansas rejected a ballot initiative which would have removed protections for abortion from their state's constitution.

Reducing the number of abortions through means other than criminalization have been subjects of public debate for decades, including increasing the use of birth control or putting up more requirements to getting an abortion. Such policies have largely been crafted and implemented on the state level, with more liberal states preferring the birth control route and more conservative states preferring the abortion regulations route.



# REDUCING UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES



Require education about birth control in public schools

79 73 87

Make it more possible to get birth control

82 76 90

Continue to mandate insurance coverage for birth control

78 69 87

Increase subsidies for birth control

# INCREASING BARRIERS TO ABORTION



Require doctors to show woman ultrasound images of fetus before abortion

# CRIMINALIZING ABORTION



Do NOT make abortion a crime, at any stage of pregnancy



Do NOT make abortion a crime before fetal viability



Do NOT allow states to criminalize crossing state lines to get an abortion

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

After the moderate success of the UN's Millennium Development Goals, countries around the world committed to achieving the even more ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). US commitment to provide foreign aid to solve world problems has remained steady over the last few decades and continues to be the highest among donor nations in absolute terms, though relatively low in terms of a percentage of GDP.





### MEETING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Increase spending \$11 billion a year to achieve the goal of universal access to vaccinations by 2030, which would require a 0.5% increase in taxes



Increase spending \$18 billion a year to get halfway to the goal of eliminating chronic hunger by 2030, which would require a 0.85% increase in taxes



Increase spending \$21 billion a year to get halfway to the goal of universal access to clean drinking water and sanitation by 2030, which would require a 0.95% increase in taxes



The US should use diplomacy and financial support to promote democracy and human rights throughout the world (another SDG) (DDL)

# **NET NEUTRALITY**

Since the internet became a widespread tool for citizens and businesses, there has been a concern over the possibility that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) might require users to pay a fee to gain access to all websites and might require websites to pay a fee to have the fastest available download speeds. To address this concern, 'net neutrality' rules were established by the Obama Administration



in 2014 that guaranteed all websites and users would be treated equally by ISPs.

In April 2017, under the Trump administration, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) announced their intention to repeal these 'net neutrality' rules. On December 14th, 2017, the FCC voted to repeal the 2015 net neutrality rules. This repeal went into effect in June 2018.

Since then, legislation has been introduced by Democrats to reinstate net neutrality, and President Biden has nominated a chairperson to the FCC who has pledged to reinstate net neutrality, but they have yet to be nominated. Several states have also passed legislation to instate all or some of the net neutrality regulations.



# **NET NEUTRALITY**



Have net neutrality regulations

# **LOW INCOME ASSISTANCE**

Since the War on Poverty in the 1960s, one of the most polarizing issues in the American political discourse has been the question of how much the federal government should invest in efforts to mitigate poverty.

While the American economy has grown 400% over the last 50 years, the percentage of the population living under the poverty line has barely budged and is currently around 12% with 38 million individuals living under the poverty line, including about 12 million children. Various pieces of Congressional legislation and other proposals have called for both expanding and for cutting back Federal poverty programs.



# **FOOD ASSISTANCE**



Increase SNAP benefits for single mothers by at least 13%

81 66 93

Increase SNAP benefits for individuals living alone by at least 25%

73 82 67

Disallow using SNAP benefits for sweetened sodas

76 85 68

Disallow using SNAP benefits for candy

88 81 93

Provide discounts on fruit and vegetables purchased using SNAP benefits



# ADDRESSING CHILD POVERTY

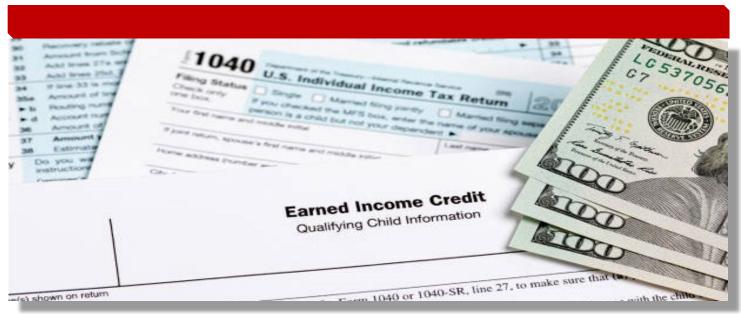


Make pre-kindergarten available to all 4-year-olds in low-income families and expand the availability of Early Head Start programs



Set up a Congressional commission to develop a plan to reduce child poverty by half in 10 years and as close to possible to zero in 20 years







#### HELPING THE WORKING POOR



Raise the federal minimum wage to \$12

Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit, which provides a benefit to more middle-class workers (DDL)

Increase the maximum earnings that a worker without children can make and be eligible for EITC from \$14,820 to \$18,000

If a company is found guilty of not fully paying its workers (wage theft), take away its right to bid on government contracts

A conservation program in which US Forest Service would employ 100,000 young people and cost \$250 million/year

A childcare and early education program that would employ 100,000 childcare workers and early education teachers and cost \$3 billion/year

A school renovation program that would employ 650,000 construction and maintenance workers and cost \$50 billion/year

A community projects program that would employ 750,000 people and cost \$30 billion/year

#### OTHER POSITIONS

Provide up to \$1,800 in additional student aid per semester to low-income students through the Pell Grant program

Give states the option to receive federal poverty program funds in the form of a block grant

Do NOT have the federal government give cash grants of \$1,000/month to all adults at least 18years-old (DDL)

Do NOT have the federal government fund a bond for each child born that will accumulate in value until the child turns 18 when it becomes available to them (DDL)



The Social Security Board of Trustees has reported for some years now that as the Baby Boom generation has been retiring, the cost of benefits have been superseding revenues, depleting the Social Security's Trust Fund. This is known as the Social Security "shortfall". The most recent report concluded that if no changes are made to Social Security revenues and/or benefits, by 2034 the Trust Fund will be fully depleted and current benefit levels will have to be reduced by 23%.

Fixing the Social Security shortfall is often portrayed as "third rail" in US politics, because voters are perceived as wanting it both ways: extending the solvency of Social Security without increasing taxes or reducing benefits. Standard polls, which ask about each reform in isolation without any mention of how they would affect the shortfall, are largely responsible for that false perception.

When voters are informed about the shortfall, and asked to come up with a package of reforms to solve it, they make recommendations that reduce the shortfall and extend Social Security's solvency for decades, even if they themselves would face higher taxes or reduced benefits.



# ADDRESSING THE SHORTFALL

81 78 90

Reduce benefits for the top 20% of lifetime earners\* (reduces shortfall by 11%)

**75 75 76** 

Raise the retirement age to at least 68 years old over a 10-year period\* (reduces shortfall by 14%)

Raise the payroll tax rate from 6.2% to at least 6.5%\* (reduces shortfall by 16%)

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Making wages over \$400k subject to the payroll tax (reduces shortfall by 61%)

# Raise t

# INCREASING BENEFITS

Raise the minimum benefit for those who have worked at least 30 years from \$951 to \$1,341, or 125% of the poverty line (increases shortfall by 7%)

# COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS (COLAS)



Changing the COLA to focus more on what older adults buy (increase shortfall by 12%)

# **MEDICARE**

The Medicare Board of Trustees has reported for some years that, as the Baby Boom generation retires, the Medicare Trust Fund is being depleted as benefits have been superseding revenues. This is known as the Medicare "shortfall." The most recent report concluded that if no changes are made to Medicare revenues and/or benefits and other costs, the Trust Fund will be depleted by 2031 and benefit levels will have to be scaled back.

However, there has only been one reform made to Medicare to address this shortfall: giving Medicare the ability to negotiate prices for certain drugs. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MEDPAC) have put forward options for addressing this shortfall.



Standard polling often shows that the public does not want to take any measures to fix the Medicare shortfall, by raising taxes or reducing benefits. This is because these reforms are asked about in isolation without any mention of how they would affect the shortfall.

When voters are informed about the shortfall and asked to come up with a package of reforms to solve it, they make recommendations that reduce the shortfall and extend Medicare's solvency for decades, even if they themselves would face higher taxes or reduced benefits.



#### REDUCING PAYMENTS FOR BENEFITS



Encourage use of generic drugs by lowering costs for generic drugs and raising them for name brand drugs (reduces shortfall by 2%)

# REDUCING PAYMENTS TO PROVIDERS



Require drug companies to accept 17% less money for drugs that go to people with modest incomes (reduces shortfall by 3%)



Reduce payments to hospitals to equalize them with payments made for the same services when conducted in doctors' offices (reduces shortfall by 2%)

# INCREASING REVENUES



Raise the Medicare payroll tax on all current earners by 0.1% from 1.45% to 1.55%\* (reduces shortfall by 11.3%)



increase Medicare premiums that cover outpatient services for those with incomes over \$85,000 (\$170,000 for married couples) by 15% (reduces shortfall by 3.5%)



Do NOT increase standard premiums by 15 percent, so that premiums cover 30 percent of all costs to the government rather than the current 25 percent (reduces the shortfall by 16%)

#### CONTROLLING COSTS IN OTHER WAYS



Do NOT limit how much Medigap can cover



Limit payments from malpractice lawsuits to \$250,000 for pain and suffering, and \$500,000 for punitive damages (reduces shortfall by 4%)



Numerous voices from both sides of the aisle have called for immigration reform in light of:

- an extraordinary number of immigrants living without legal status in the country (now 10.5 million)
- unresolved issues about how to deal with adults who were illegally brought into the US as children
- a continuous flow of immigrants seeking to cross the border illegally
- a flood of asylum seekers primarily from Central American that have created a major backlog of pending cases
- a huge demand for immigrant workers in various industries.



# DEALING WITH IMMIGRANTS WITHOUT LEGAL STATUS



Create a new long-term visa with a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who have been here for some time and do not have a criminal record



Provide undocumented immigrants eligible for DACA status with full legal status and a path to citizenship

First-time violators of immigration laws should only be expelled, not subject to criminal punishment (DDL)



73 80 68

Require that employers use the E-Verify system to establish the legal status of current employees and all new applicants

### INCREASING THE NUMBER OF WORK VISAS

69 73 67

Increase the number of available temporary non-farm work visas (H2B) from 66,000 to around 200,000 a year

59 66 63

Increase the number of visas for low-skilled workers to move to the US for industries that need them, like agriculture and services (DDL)

80 72 90

Increase the number of visas for skilled workers to move to the US (DDL)

54 531 63

Increase the number of employment-based visas for immigrants who have skills needed in the US labor market

#### DEALING WITH REFUGEES

93 90 96

Increase personnel to process asylum seekers' claims faster (DDL)

57 65 70

Provide aid to reduce poverty and violence in Central America (DDL)

# PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORITY FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE & ARMS SALES

The question of when the United States should use military force is a profound question. There has been a long-running debate about the role of Congress and the President when it comes to making these decisions. The constitution gives Congress the power to fund the military and declare war and declares the President as the Commander in Chief of the military.

However, there are ambiguities about which branch of government has the power in a number of specific situations related to the use of force and the transfer of arms to another country. Currently there are a number of pieces of Congressional legislation that seek to give Congress greater authority.



# PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORITY



Automatically cut off funding to military operations initiated by the President after 60 days, outside the framework of a declaration of war or a response to an attack on the US, unless Congress votes in favor of continuing it



Repeal the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force, established after 9/11, which gave the President authority to use military force against international terrorism



Require any arms sale over \$14 million to be approved by a simple majority of Congress



# INTERNATIONAL TRADE

International trade has been controversial for some decades. Each international trade agreement has been preceded by a major debate about whether the benefits of trade outweigh the costs, particularly for American workers.



# USA GOP DEM

#### HAVING INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS



As a general principle, continue to promote international trade through a set of internationally agreed-on rules



Have a free trade agreement with Mexico and Canada



Continue to be part of the World Trade Organization

74 62 88

Rejoin the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the trading agreement between 12 Pacific countries, excluding China (DDL)

# PROHIBITIONS ON TRADE

72 82 65

Prohibit the sale of oil from US oil reserves to foreign adversaries

73 84 64

Prohibit the sale of land or property if purchaser is linked to a foreign adversary

80 84 78

Prohibit the sale of farmland to a foreign entity if it poses a national security risk

# MITIGATING THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TRADE

89 90 93

Include enforceable labor standards in new trade agreements

90 79 94

Include enforceable environmental standards in new trade agreements

78 70 85

Increase the amount of unemployment benefits a person receives as a percent of their prior earnings—currently an average of 39%

69 60 75

Increase the maximum amount of unemployment benefits a person can receive above the current average of \$472 per week

70 84 59

DO NOT increase the average number of weeks that a person can receive unemployment benefits, above the current average of 26 weeks

81 74 90

Increase the amount spent on training programs for cybersecurity jobs

82 72 93

Increase the amount spent on training programs for jobs in the energy industry

83 81 63

Encourage employers to have more extensive apprenticeship programs by offering them a tax credit up to \$5,000 for each apprentice

# **NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

The Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review put forward numerous controversial positions that have stimulated debate on such issues as whether the US should continue to maintain and extend nuclear arms control treaties, whether the US needs to have its current nuclear capabilities and whether new capabilities need to be developed.

There are also debates about whether the US should maintain its current policies on using nuclear weapons first and current legislation that would restrict the President's ability to use nuclear weapons first.



# HAVING ARMS CONTROL TREATIES

Continue to have arms control treaties with Russia

Extend New START

Continue to abide by the moratorium on nuclear testing

Stay in the INF Treaty and redouble efforts to work with Russians to address concerns of both sides

# **NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPACITIES**

Have enough nuclear weapons to fulfill a minimum retaliatory capability

Phase out land-based missiles (ICBMs) instead of replacing them

### FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Require that before the President uses nuclear weapons first, Congress must be consulted and must make a declaration of war

Do not have the US declare that it would consider using nuclear weapons first in response to a variety of non-nuclear attacks

# IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

Recommit to the Iran Nuclear Agreement (DDL)

# INTERNATIONAL SECURITY & MILITARY ALLIANCES

A central pillar of the world order the US established in the period after World War II was the principle of collective security which says that nations will contribute to collective military operations and/or using economic sanctions in response to international aggression. This principle was also the basis for the US establishing military alliances and mutual defense treaties with other countries or groups of countries. This principle has become more controversial recently as some have questioned whether the US should sustain such commitments.

As NATO celebrated its 70th anniversary, there was a debate about whether NATO is obsolete. Also, the fact that NATO members have historically not met the agreed-upon requirement of spending 2% of GDP for defense prompted calls by former President Trump and some Members of Congress for the US to threaten to pull out of NATO if members do not increase their defense spending. However, since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, many NATO members have been meeting the 2% spending requirement. All of those below 2% have increased spending, with most spending at least 1.85% of GDP.

Also subject to debate are US treaties with Asian countries. Since 1953 the US has had a mutual defense treaty with South Korea and has 24,000 US troops based in South Korea in support of its commitment. Since 1960, the US has had a treaty with Japan that says that the two countries pledge to join forces and act together if there is an armed attack against Japan or against the 39,000 US forces based there.



# UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY



The US should make it a high priority to continue to uphold the principle of collective security by committing to contribute to the collective defense in the event of aggression.

#### MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATIES



The US should continue to be part of the NATO military alliance (with it specified that this entails a commitment to collective defense)



The US should reaffirm its commitment to defend any NATO ally attacked by a hostile force (DDL)



The US should not threaten to withdraw from NATO if European members do not increase their defense spending



The US should continue to have a mutual defense treaty with South Korea

76 80 74

The US should continue to have 24,000 US troops based in South Korea



The US should continue to have a mutual security treaty with Japan

76 80 76

The US should continue to have 39,000 US troops based in Japan

# **UKRAINE-RUSSIA WAR**

In March of 2022, Russia launched a full invasion of Ukraine. The United Nations, including the US, quickly declared this invasion to be an act of aggression that violates Ukraine's national sovereignty as guaranteed by the UN Charter. The invasion triggered a series of debates over the US' role in this conflict:

- the degree of US intervention, if any;
- how to weigh any benefits of intervention against the risk of Russia escalating to nuclear attacks;
- whether to press Ukraine to enter peace negotiations, and if so, under what conditions.



# PROVIDING AID TO UKRAINE



Continue to provide military aid to Ukraine



Continue to provide humanitarian aid to Ukraine



Approve of letting NATO Allies send US-made fighter jets to Ukraine, and for the US to train Ukrainian pilots



# VARIATIONS BY RED/BLUE DISTRICTS, PRIMARY VOTERS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

#### VERY RED AND VERY BLUE DISTRICTS

Naturally the question arises as to whether the common ground positions in the country as a whole are also found in very red or very blue districts. To find out the samples were divided six ways according to the partisan index (from Cook's ratings) for the Congressional districts where the respondent lived. In every case the direction of majority opinion was the same as for the national sample and in nearly all cases the views in very partisan districts differed from overall national sample less than the national sample of partisans, and in the few cases where they did it was by no more than the margin of error.

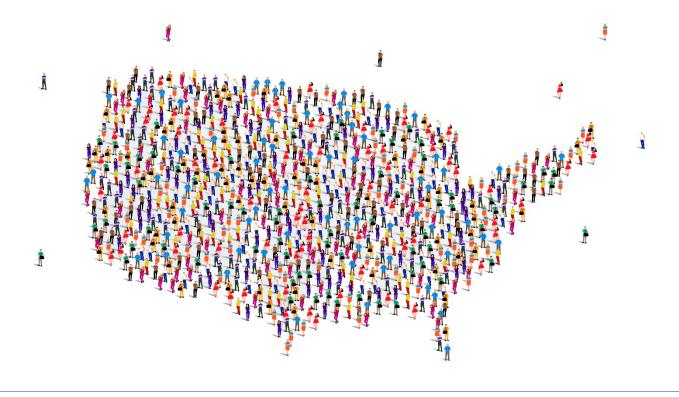
This leaves open the possibility that some specific districts might differ from the national sample more than the national partisan sample, but that is likely to be quite rare and it is extremely unlikely that the direction of majority opinion would differ from the national sample of partisans. It is also possible that the partisan sample within a very partisan district might differ from that national partisan sample, but based on analysis of numerous cases we have generally found that partisans in very partisan districts are no more deviant from the overall national sample than is the national partisan sample.

#### **PRIMARY VOTERS**

While in some cases primary voters of one party were slightly more deviant from the overall national sample than the national partisan sample, in no case did primary voters of either party diverge from the majority position national partisan sample.

#### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Examining the views of the demographic subgroups—including race, age, gender and education—in a very small number of cases a demographic sample was divided while the overall sample had a majority position. In only one case did the majority of a demographic group diverge from the national majority position and, surprisingly, this was a case in which African Americans were not supportive of a tax increase on the wealthy.





POLICY POSITIONS SUPPORTED BY BOTH DEMOCRATS & REPUBLICANS

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