

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Priorities USA
Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group
Global Strategy Group
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RE: New Poll & Messaging Guidance: Russia, Immigration and Trade War
Sticking to Trump

Summary

Donald Trump's dealings with Vladimir Putin, his handling of immigration and the separation of children from their families, and the impact of his trade war have stuck with voters in a way nothing else has since the beginning of his presidency and greatly imperil Republican chances in November. In response to an open-ended question, voters volunteer in large numbers concerns about these issues, showing the remarkable saliency the recent negative actions by the Trump administration have had. This translates into the worst ratings for Trump on his truthfulness, temperament, dealings with Russia, and immigration policies we have not seen in any of our eleven previous national tracking surveys on the Trump presidency.

Aspects of the economy are significant vulnerabilities for Trump. Only 35% say that Trump's economic policies are good for people like them, and only 33% report a favorable opinion of the Trump-Republican tax bill. By 47% to 22%, voters say things are getting worse rather than better in terms of wages keeping up with the cost of living – a significantly more negative result than our February measurement. By a 20-point margin, voters say increases in the cost of living have outstripped any tax cut they may have received. Trump continues to be identified in voters' minds as looking out for the interests of wealthy people and big corporations rather than the interests of regular people. Despite Trump's bragging, our poll finds that President Trump's economic record falls far short as a counterweight to all of the other negative impressions that surround him.

The survey results identify many opportunities for Democrats and progressives to reinforce voters' growing concerns about Trump, including among a key group of Trump voters whose current support for him is weak. **Especially important in this regard is the record of Donald Trump and the Republicans in giving large tax cuts to drug companies and health insurance companies while allowing them to raise drug prices and insurance premiums without any limits. Unlike Russia and immigration, voters won't hear about this as much in the press, meaning Democrats must continue to carry the message in paid media and on the campaign trail.**

The Fight for Congress

Voters' unhappiness with Donald Trump has given Democrats their largest lead in the generic congressional trial heat in any of our three national surveys this year. Nationally, 49% of voters say they intend to vote for their Democratic candidate in their district, while 41% say they intend to vote for the Republican candidate.

Democrats have large advantages among women, particularly college-educated women, younger voters, African American voters, and Hispanic voters.

In addition to having a lead with voters overall, Democrats have regained a significant advantage in voter enthusiasm: 75% of those who intend to vote for a Democrat say they are highly enthusiastic and motivated about voting, compared to 64% of those who intend to vote for a Republican. Non-college educated white voters, who often are thought of as Trump's base, report substantially lower levels of motivation than other parts of the electorate. **Among all highly-motivated voters (68% of the total electorate), Democrats are ahead in the generic congressional trial heat by 54% to 38%.**

Our survey results clearly indicate that the Trump factor is helping Democrats and hurting Republicans. By 51% to 37%, voters say they would rather see more Democrats elected to Congress to be a check and balance on Trump than more Republicans elected to Congress to help Trump pass his policies and programs. Notably, voters who backed Trump in 2016 are far less eager to elect Republicans to help Trump (75%) than Clinton voters are to elect Democrats to be a check on Trump (94%). This reflects the fact that Clinton voters are far more likely to strongly disapprove of Trump's performance (83%) than Trump voters are to voice strong approval (63%). Among the 37% of Trump voters who do not strongly approve of him, just 52% want to elect Republicans to help him pass his policies. Large shares of these weak Trump voters express an unfavorable reaction to Trump's temperament and leadership style (53%), his dealings with Russia and Vladimir Putin (48%), and his truthfulness in the things that he says (47%). By 35% to 27% they express more doubts than confidence about whether Trump has the integrity and honesty a president should have (34% say they feel somewhere in between).

The Weakness of Trump's Economic Position

For as much as President Trump brags on his economic record, the new Priorities USA poll shows that voters are largely unimpressed and most of them are not feeling any personal benefit from Trump's policies despite viewing them as a boon for the wealthy.

When asked about their reaction to what they have been hearing lately about Trump's economic policies, voters are equally divided: 41% report a favorable reaction, and 41% report an unfavorable reaction. **Trump's trade war clearly is a liability for him: by 56% to 31% voters report having an unfavorable reaction to what they have heard lately about Trump's trade policies and his decisions to engage in a trade war with China and Europe.**

But the weakness of Trump's economic position goes far beyond trade policy. Even as national job statistics improve, only 37% say that things are getting better in their own communities with regard to the availability of good jobs. A significantly larger share of the electorate, 47%, say that things are getting worse with regard to wages and incomes keeping up with the cost of living (only 22% say things are changing for the better). Among non-college educated white voters, more say that things are changing for the worse than for the better with regard to wages. **Nearly two thirds of voters (64%) say that the cost of health care is getting worse, including 57% of weak Trump voters.**

When we ask voters about their opinion of the new tax law passed by the Republicans and signed by President Trump, only 33% are favorable, 21% are neutral, and 38% are unfavorable. **One reason why the tax law is doing so little to help Trump and the Republicans who passed it is that most voters feel the law is doing little to help them. Just 24% say the tax cut they received is larger than any increase in the cost of living they are experiencing, while 44% say their increased cost of living exceeds any tax cut they may have received.**

One of the key questions Democrats and progressive should use to frame this election is “whose side are you on.” Of particular note in this regard is that by 61% to 5% voters say things are getting better for people who already are wealthy, while by 38% to 32% these same voters say things are getting worse for the middle class and average working families. It is little wonder, then, that voters say by 56% to 25% that Trump mainly looks out for the interests of wealthy people and big corporations rather than the interests of regular people. Even among Trump voters, just 54% have a clear sense that Trump is focused on the interests of regular people.

Advancing the Case Against Trump and the GOP

One of the clear and important takeaways from this survey is that Democrats and progressive should be playing offense against Trump and Republicans on economic issues, including on the cost of health care.

The best testing message in our survey that advances the economic/health care argument against Trump and the GOP is this:

Donald Trump and the Republicans in Congress have given large tax cuts to drug companies and health insurance companies, while allowing them to raise drug prices and insurance premiums without any limits.

Fully 70% of voters have an unfavorable reaction to these policies, including 57% who are very unfavorable. Nearly half of all Trump voters, including 62% of weak Trump voters, have an unfavorable reaction to Trump and the GOP Congress on this matter – showing its potential to cut into the Trump base. Non-college educated white women react strongly against Trump and the GOP on this matter.

There is nearly as strong reaction by voters against efforts by Trump and the Republicans to cut Medicare and Medicaid: 65% overall react unfavorably when they learn that “the Trump administration and Republicans in Congress have submitted budget proposals that include large cuts to Medicare and Medicaid.” A 52% majority are very unfavorable. This issue also is important in winning over white non-college women in the upcoming elections.

The battle over Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh also provides an opportunity for Democrats and progressive to make an important point about health care: 59% are unfavorable (including 49% who are very unfavorable) when they learn that Trump “nominated a new U.S. Supreme Court Justice who is likely to overturn and eliminate the protections for people with pre-existing medical conditions in the Affordable Care Act.”



It is worth noting that a second argument related to Kavanaugh also is potent: 58% are unfavorable (including 48% who are very unfavorable) when they learn that Trump “nominated a new U.S. Supreme Court Justice who has argued that a president cannot be indicted for criminal offenses and cannot be required by a special counsel to turn over evidence.”

Trump’s inhumane “zero tolerance” actions on immigration proves uniquely motivating for Democratic voters. Of all the issues we tested, the one that evokes the strongest reaction from voters who already intend to support Democrats this November is: “the Trump administration instituted a new immigration policy that separated children from their parents at the border and held young children in government detention facilities” (87% very unfavorable). Voters across the board reject Trump’s cruel family separation policies. This is a reversal from recent elections that saw immigration as a more motivating issue for Republicans than Democrats.

About This Poll

Garin-Hart-Yang and Global Strategy Group conducted this poll by telephone July 26 – July 31, with a representative national cross section of 1,000 presidential year voters and recent registrants. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percentage points, and care has been taken to ensure that the geographic and demographic divisions of the electorate are properly represented based on past voter turnout statistics.