

C9 What do Democratic voters care about?



Read the article. After that find reasons why a majority of Democratic voters' biggest concern is beating Trump instead of other pressing issues (e.g. health care).

Together with your partner, make a list of topics the Democratic party should focus on.

Compare your list with the study data at <https://thehill.com/hilltv/what-americas-thinking/444295-poll-democratic-voters-prioritize-defeating-trump-over-their>.

“Dem voters care more about beating Trump than any one policy issue”

by Matthew Sheffield

A majority of Democratic voters say they would rather back a candidate with the best chance of beating President Trump than one who agrees with them on their top policy issue, according to a new poll.

In a Hill-HarrisX survey released Friday, 65 percent of registered voters who identified as Democrats or independents who lean Democratic said it was more important to choose a primary nominee who has the best chance of defeating Trump. Thirty-five percent of the group said they preferred a candidate who agreed with their top issue.

There was wide agreement across demographic groups of Democrats and left-leaning independents, with 70 percent of women and 60 percent of men saying they prioritized winning back the presidency over any one issue.

Eighty percent of those age 65 and older said they would prioritize defeating Trump, a view shared by 71 percent of those between the ages of 50 and 64. Fifty-six percent of respondents between 35 and 49 said beating Trump was their top priority, with 58 percent of voters under the age of 35 saying the same. (...)

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online at <https://thehill.com/hilltv/what-americas-thinking/444295-poll-democratic-voters-prioritize-defeating-trump-over-their> (access 10.06.2020)

“Op-ed: Biden’s campaign is at risk of going from one mistake to another – he needs a better message”

by John Elliss

A successful Biden campaign is not that hard to imagine or execute. The key is to keep it simple and clarify the choice. Framing the choice is arguably the most important element of a successful presidential campaign. How voters understand an election determines, to a significant degree, its outcome. In 1980, Ronald Reagan did it this way: “Are you better off than you were four years ago?” In 1992, James Carville put it this way: “it’s the economy, stupid.” In 2008, Barack Obama cast the election as an affirmation of “hope and change.” In 2016, Donald Trump framed the choice with “build the wall” and “drain the swamp.” To date, Democrats have framed the 2020 presidential election as a referendum on President Trump.

That’s a questionable proposition on at least two levels. It cedes the power of argument to the presi-

dent and it leaves Democrats at the mercy of events. Perhaps sensing this, the Biden campaign is now in the midst of what political consultants call a “repositioning.” Biden is now, according to the Washington Post, mapping out a “revolutionary agenda.” What that means is this: The Biden campaign is going from one big mistake (the Trump referendum) to another (the revolutionary agenda). The voters who matter are not really interested in either. Those voters are “at risk” and what Covid-19 and the consequent collapse of the American (and global) economy have urgently revealed is *the importance of social safety net(s)*.

Tens of millions of Americans hang by a thread. There are any number of harrowing statistics to back up that assertion, but let’s make it quick and take two sentences from the most recent GoBankingRates annual survey: “Almost half of respondents – 45% – said they have \$0 in a savings account. Another 24% said they have less than \$1,000 in savings.” (Apart from that), due to the health consequences of COVID-19, Medicare Part A might face insolvency in 6 years and Social Security’s trust funds will

*run out in 15 years. At the moment, **the actual outlook is likely to be far worse.*** (...)

Making the election a referendum on President Trump doesn't help Democrats advance their cause. They already have every anti-Trump vote there is to be had in the United States of America. All those voters need is a mail-in ballot or a ride to the polls on Election Day.

What Democrats don't (yet) have are the votes of enough "persuadables" in the 6–8 states that will decide the election's outcome in the Electoral College (supposedly Minnesota, Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Arizona). That subset of the electorate doesn't share the Democrat's frantic disdain for President Trump. They are deeply skeptical (to put it mildly) of "revolutionary agendas." But they do trust Democrats more than Republicans on the two biggest social safety net issues; Social Security and Medicare, and on most of

the others (food stamps, unemployment insurance, Obamacare, etc.) as well.

A good campaign defines its adversary. Democrats should not make Trump their adversary. They should make the modern Republican Party their adversary and force Trump to defend it. Another reason not to make the election a referendum on President Trump is that it can turn around and become a referendum on Joe Biden. That would be fine if Biden was in the prime of his life and political career, but he is not. He's "lost a step or two," as his friends say. Trump surrogates and more than a few Democrats (later in the evening) say he's senile. Moreover, he embodies the politics of the past. No one really wants to go back to the way it was. It didn't end well. The only convincing role left for Biden now is that of the aging political warrior. One last battle, one last stand, one higher purpose: to make sure the safety net(s) don't fray beyond repair. (...)

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online at www.cnbc.com/2020/06/04/the-biden-campaign-needs-a-better-message.html

"Trump's 2020 election strategy"

by Kashish Parpiani (May 25 2020)

Trump's re-election narrative is taking shape (...). As the presumptive Democratic nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden remains confined to his basement, President Donald Trump has taken advantage of his role as the incumbent president to organise "thinly veiled campaign events" amidst the coronavirus pandemic. Trump recently visited a Ford manufacturing plant in Michigan, with the purpose of surveying its altered operations to produce ventilators. But Trump's visit also came from the standpoint of his re-election bid.

Much-like his 2016 campaign, Trump's focus once again seems to be on courting blue-collar workers. (...)

Targeting Democrat governors

In his contest against Hillary Clinton, Trump pulled off a win in the swing-state of Michigan by a narrow margin. He mobilized white working-class voters by tapping into their anxieties on immigration and playing-up job losses in the mid-west due to America's industry-base shifting to countries like China. This

time, Trump is construing Democrats as the ones impeding his post-COVID-19 economic revival.

Biden has stepped up attacks on Trump's unfulfilled promises, by alleging him to have "turned his back on Michigan's working families." In response, Trump has singled out swing-states ruled by Democrats in his support for protestors "who are sick of social distancing as an infringement on freedoms." Thus, at the Ford plant, Trump presented himself as the standard-bearer for those longing for an American economic reawakening: "Americans who want and need to return to work should be supported."

Furthermore (...), Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer emerged as a vocal critic of a weak federal response. (...) But on the local level, she has faced armed demonstrators in multiple rounds of protests at the Michigan State Capitol and reportedly has also been the subject of "credible threats" of assassination. Given her role as a Democrat overseeing an electorally-crucial state, Trump's strategy of supporting local protests has emerged as the ideal approach by which he can avoid the elections from becoming a referendum on his handling of the pandemic.

Thus, Trump has similarly focused on swing-states ruled by Democrats. Trump has alleged Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf to have continued lockdowns without a credible rationale: “You have areas of Pennsylvania that are barely affected and [Wolf wants] to keep them closed.” And in Wisconsin, Trump’s anti-lockdown rhetoric has spurred local Republicans to call for “liberating” residents from stay-at-home orders by Gov. Tony Evers.

Repurposing the anti-swamp narrative

(...) Trump is now repurposing the narrative off a so-called *rigged elite system only he can fix* assuming there is a deep-rooted conspiracy against his presidency. Calling it “the biggest political crime in American history,” Trump has accused his predecessor Barack Obama’s administration for a *deep state campaign* to undermine Trump’s presidency before it even began. (...)

Although the ‘Obamagate’ conspiracy now seems to be getting debunked with reports emerging on Flynn’s name never having been redacted in the first place, one can expect Trump to nevertheless double down on the conspiracy to taint Biden. (...)

Touting unfinished business with China

In 2016, Trump alleged the US political establishment’s bipartisan support for free trade with China to have

resulted in “unacceptable outcomes” for America’s industrial mid-west. In office, Trump engaged in a trade war of tariffs and retaliatory tariffs with China for over 18 months, before announcing the limited Phase One trade deal. Wherein, Trump exacted Chinese assurances to increase imports by at least \$200 billion over the next two years. (...)

Now, ahead of the 2020 election, the coronavirus pandemic has presented Trump an opportunity to once again tap into anti-China sentiment. According to a recent poll, largely owing to the pandemic, Americans hold an unfavourable view of China by a margin of 66 to 26.

In addition, China has reportedly been lagging on its Phase One commitments. This has presented Trump an opportunity to once again demonstrate the efficacy of the ‘America First’ world view, in face of the Biden campaign construing his approach as being “tough talk, weak action.” (...)

Thus, Trump’s re-election strategy currently encompasses his effort to construe Democratic governors as the ones impeding resumption of economic activity, target Biden’s favourability by propagating Obamagate, and capitalise on anti-China sentiment to validate his ‘America First’ approach.

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Source: www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/trump-2020-election-strategy-66695/

C9 Tasks

Get together in groups and work on one of the following tasks:

- ▶ Imagine you are Joe Biden’s campaign manager: With the help of the articles above (and your list from task 2), create a campaign video or campaign speech which outlines the main issues of your campaign to persuade undecided voters. Find a catchy campaign slogan as well. You can also use informations of Joe Biden’s 2020 campaign website (<https://joebiden.com>).
- ▶ Imagine you are Donald Trump’s campaign manager: With the help of the articles above, create a campaign video or campaign speech which outlines the main

issues of your campaign to persuade your supporters and undecided voters, especially in swing states. Find a catchy campaign slogan as well (you can also hold on to “Keep America Great”).

You can also use information of Donald Trump’s 2020 campaign website (www.donaldjtrump.com).

Make sure you stay in character and also refer to your rival to point out why your presidential candidate should be elected in November!

- ▶ Find examples for President Trump’s tweets against Democratic Governors and appealing protests against social distancing.