



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

# Americans on Solar Panel Tariffs

## A National Survey of Registered Voters

### April 2018

# Methodology

**Fielded by:** Nielsen Scarborough

**Method:** Administered online to a probability-based sample selected from a larger panel recruited by telephone and mail.

**Margin of Error:** +/- 2.2%

**Sample:** 1,999 registered voters

**Fielding Dates:** March 9-23, 2018

# **Solar Panel Tariffs**

# Solar Panel Tariffs

We will now turn to an issue about solar energy panels. As you may have heard, there is a debate about whether the U.S. should impose a tariff (like a tax) on solar panels imported from other countries, especially from Asia.

Here is some background:

The U.S. has a law called the 1974 Trade Act which allows companies to request that the government help them provide protection from a surge of products being imported into the U.S. This law has not been invoked for quite some time--the last time was 2001. That is in part due to the fact that the U.S. has joined a number of international trade agreements, as part of the World Trade Organization, to lower and generally seek the elimination of trade tariffs.

Recently, two companies named Suniva and Solar World, with US operations, who manufacture solar panels, requested such protection, saying that solar panels were being imported from other countries, especially from Asia, in such high volumes that these companies could not compete.

The U.S. government investigated their claims and agreed to apply a tariff on solar panels from most countries of 30% during the first year, declining to 25% in year two, 20% in year three and 15% in year four.

# Solar Panel Tariffs

The effect of this tariff will be to increase the price of solar panels in the U.S. for U.S. consumers.

U.S. companies who manufacture solar panels will benefit from this tariff because it will make their solar panels more competitive. However, not all solar manufacturers favor the tariffs.

Nearly all U.S. companies who install solar panels have opposed this tariff because the higher cost of the imported solar panels makes it harder for them to provide solar energy at a price that is competitive with electricity from traditional sources, such as natural gas and coal.

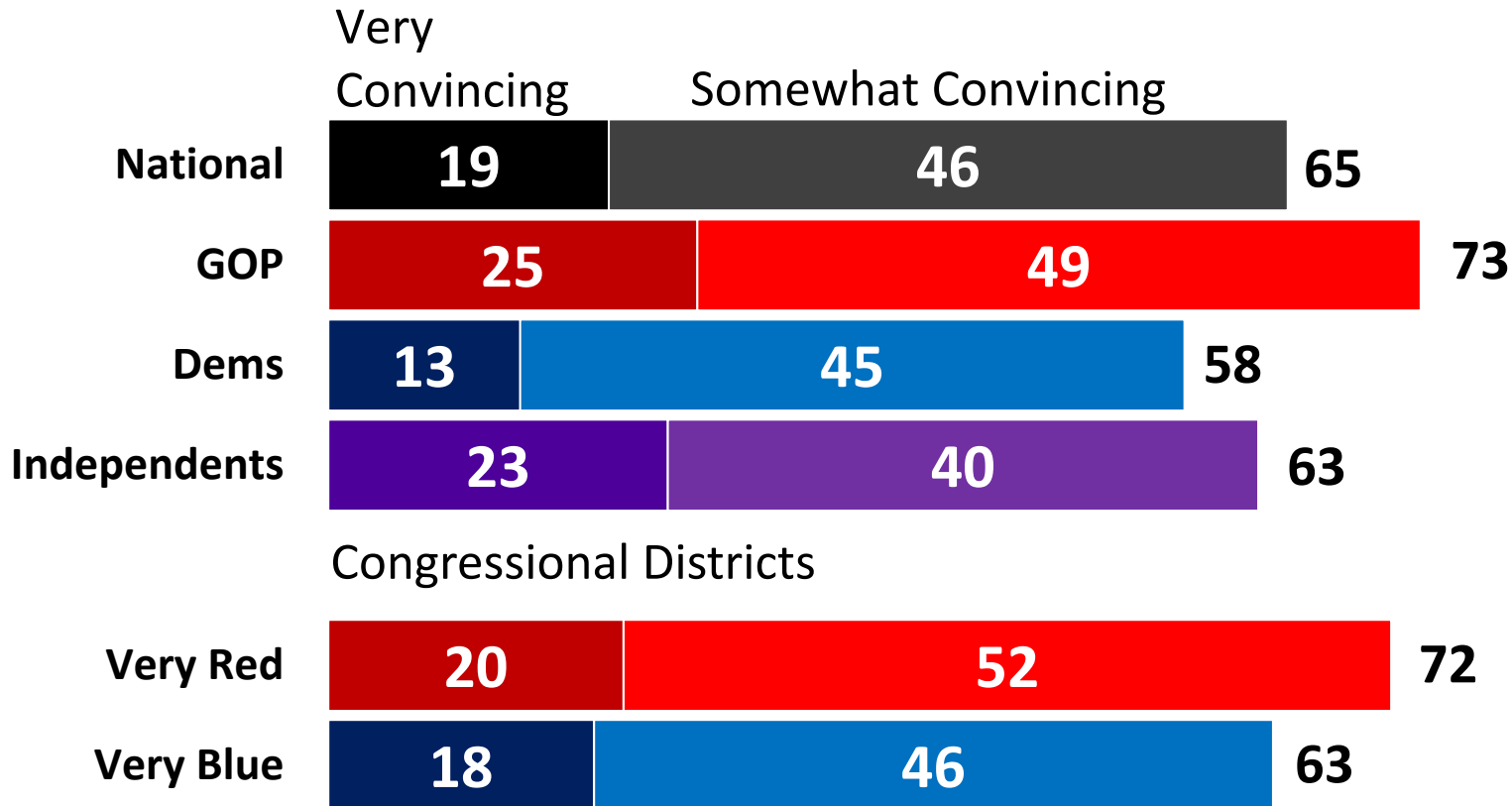
Environmental groups have also opposed the tariffs because the increased cost of solar panels would discourage the use of solar energy.

We would like to know if you favor or oppose the plan to apply a tariff on imported solar energy panels over the next four years. But first, we would like you to evaluate arguments for and against this proposal.

# Solar Panel Tariffs

## PRO ARGUMENT

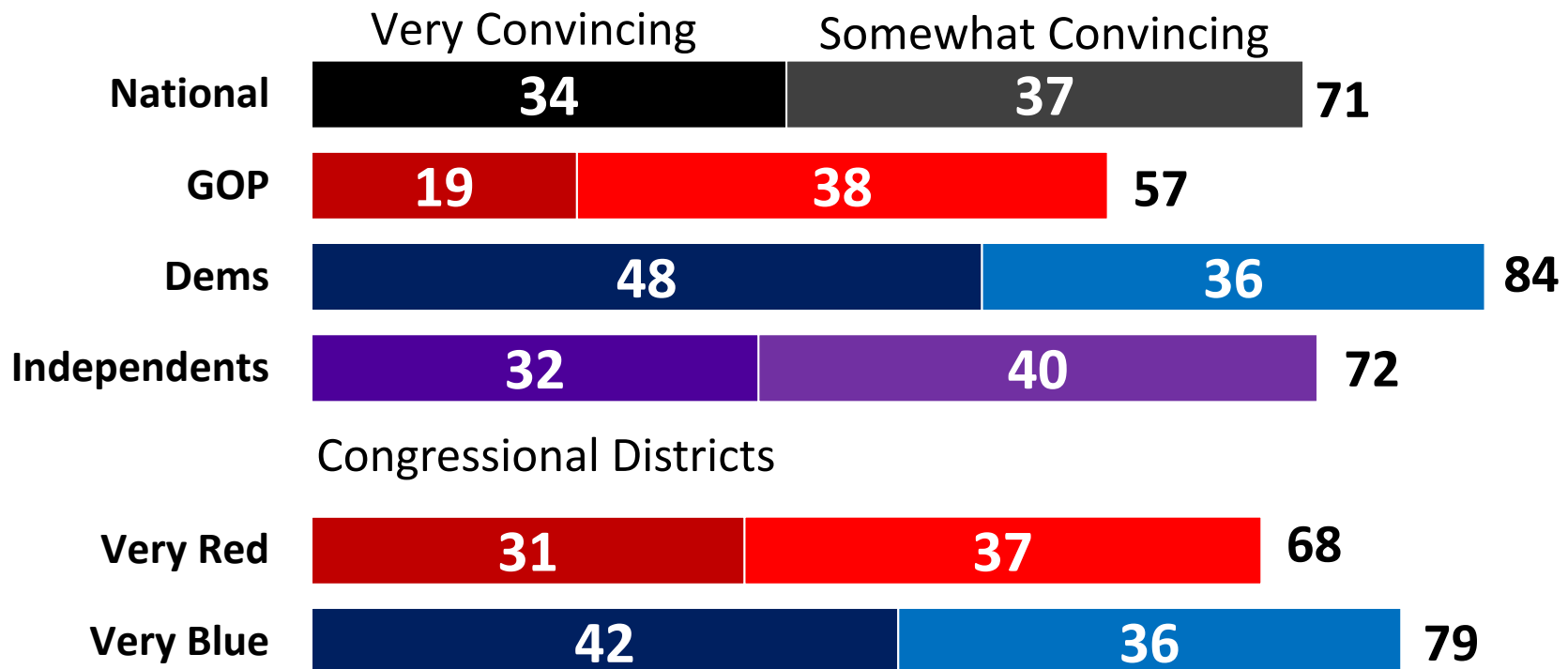
A tariff on solar energy panels will help protect some manufacturers of solar cells and panels, operating in the U.S., whose products are being undercut by a surge of lower-priced imports. Some of these companies have gone bankrupt, costing American jobs, and more could follow. The tariffs will give these companies a few years of breathing room they need to flourish. According to the government, this relief from the tariffs could generate thousands of new jobs in the solar manufacturing industry.



# Solar Panel Tariffs

## CON ARGUMENT

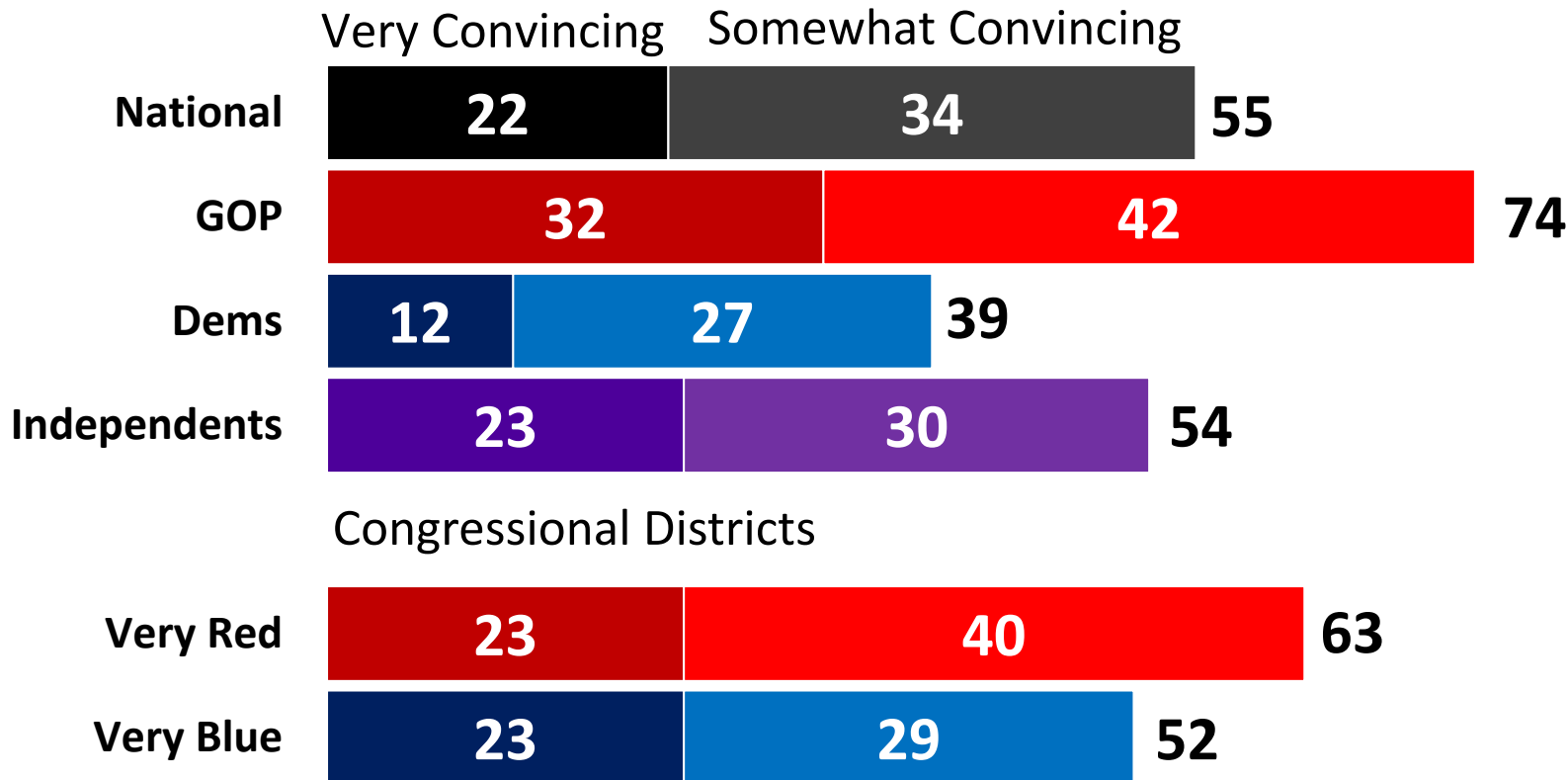
These tariffs will ultimately hurt the solar industry and American workers as well. The tariffs will raise prices on solar products, making solar energy more expensive. Tariffs don't help build manufacturing infrastructure in the US - smart energy policy does. According to industry experts, though tariffs may benefit a few solar manufacturers, for the industry overall, they will result in about 20,000 fewer high-paying jobs. Solar was finally getting cheap enough to compete with coal, providing a low-cost alternative electricity source and leading to cleaner and healthier air.



# Solar Panel Tariffs

## PRO ARGUMENT

Many of the trade deals that are negotiated between the United States and other countries are a bad deal, and America's inability to compete in the manufacture of solar energy panels is yet another reflection of those bad deals. The United States has too often let countries like China push us around. The United States should more strongly confront other countries on how they treat America and get better deals. Pushing back on low-priced solar energy panels is a good place to start.

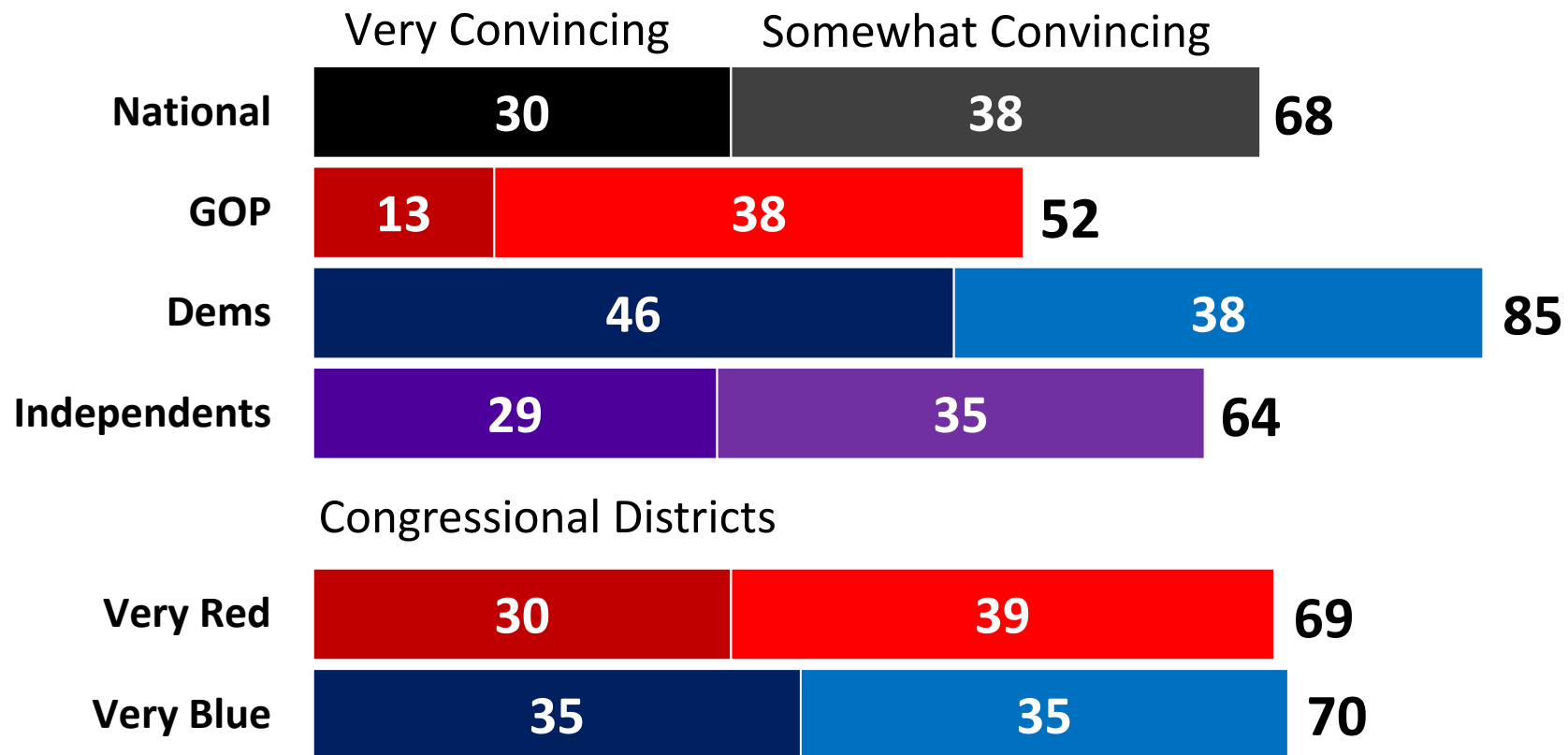




# Solar Panel Tariffs

## CON ARGUMENT

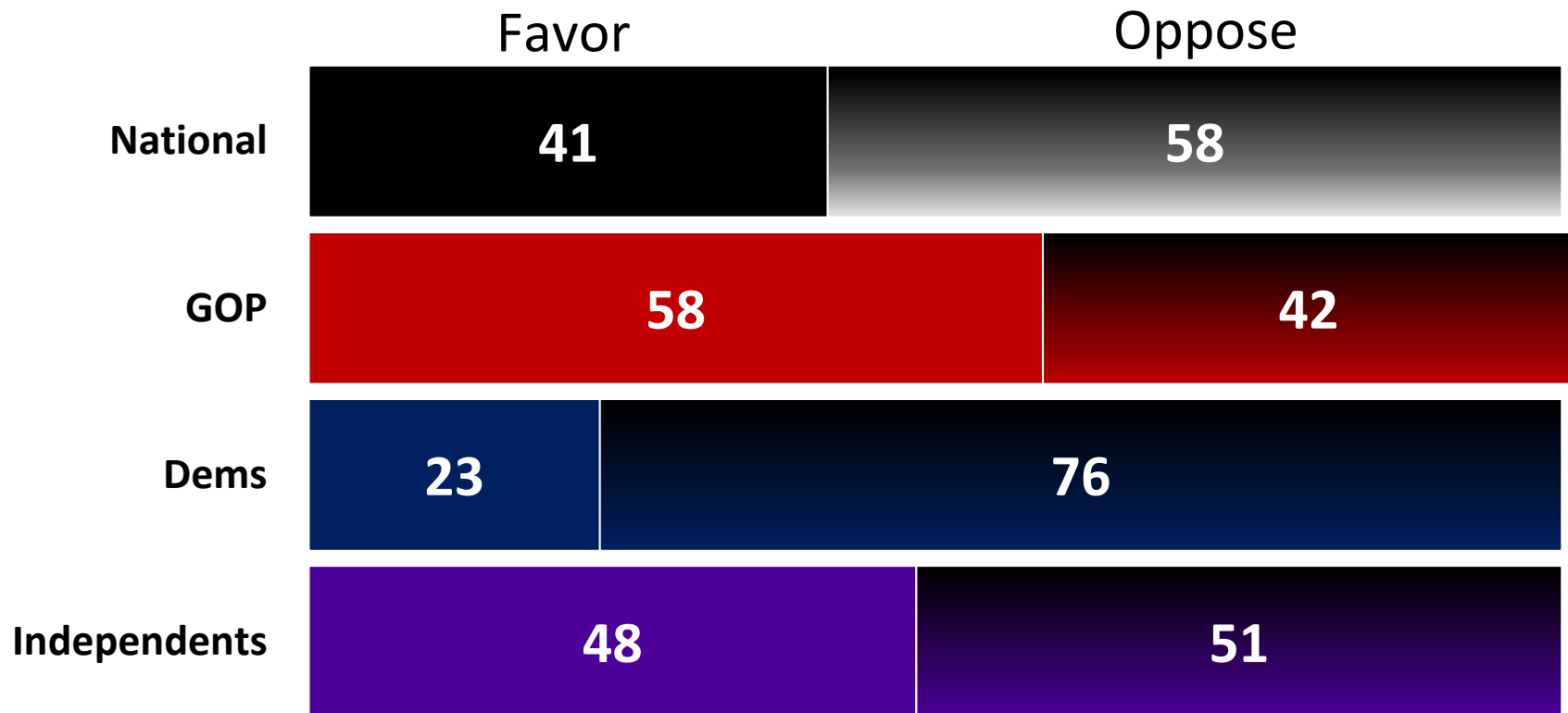
If we start putting up tariffs against imports, it will only hurt us in the end. Other countries will retaliate and put tariffs on US products and we could end up in an escalating trade war. Reducing the supply of solar panels will cost the jobs of Americans who install them. Free and fair trade has been an important part of the growth of the US economy, resulting in lower prices for American consumers. It is fine to try to negotiate better trade deals, but randomly picking solar energy panels as a target for new tariffs does not make sense.



# Solar Panel Tariffs

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

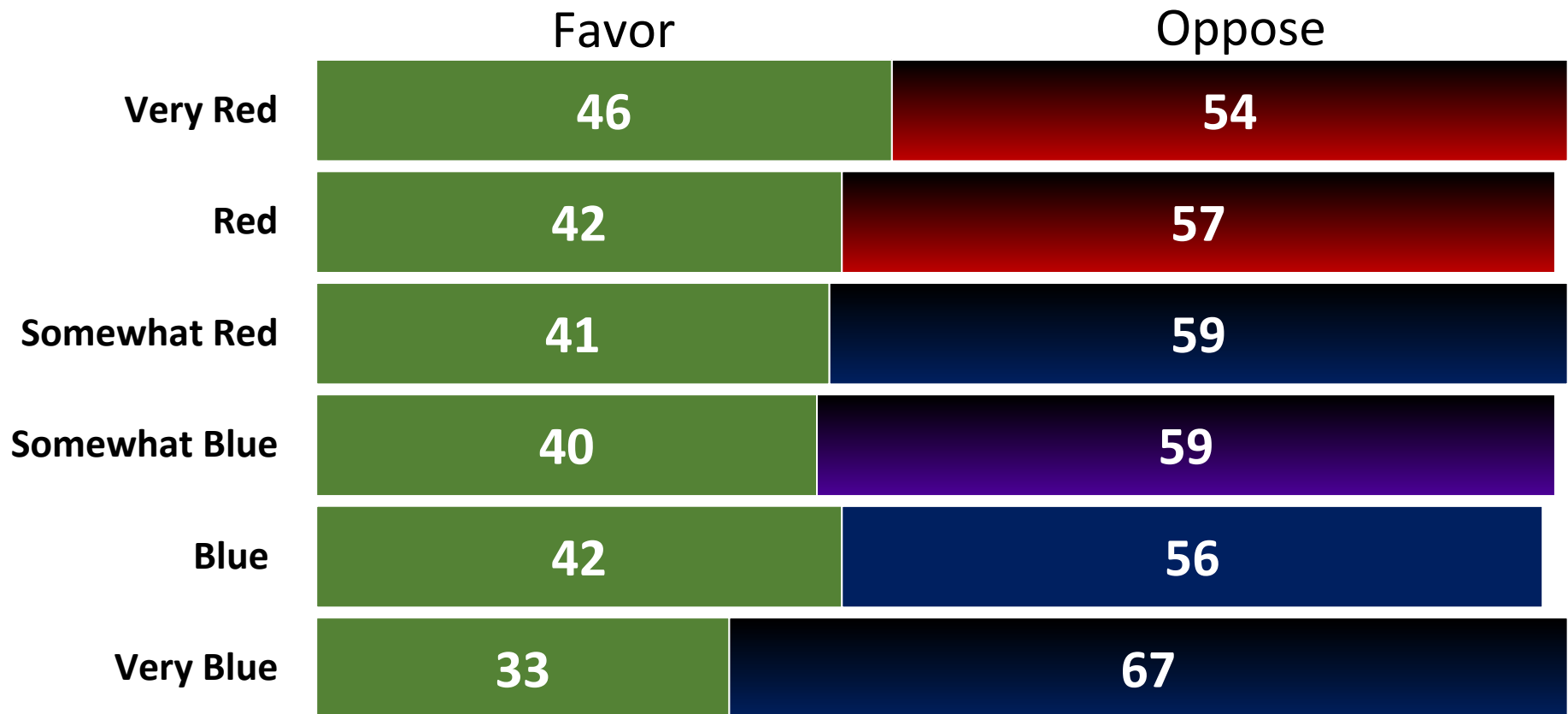
So, having considered these arguments, do you favor or oppose the plan to impose a tariff on solar energy panels of 30% in year one, declining to 25% in year two, 20% in year three and 15% in year four?



# Solar Panel Tariffs

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

So, having considered these arguments, do you favor or oppose the plan to impose a tariff on solar energy panels of 30% in year one, declining to 25% in year two, 20% in year three and 15% in year four?



# Solar Panel Tariffs

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION - DEMOGRAPHICS

