



 **COMMON GROUND** 
OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

May 2024

**Voice**
of the People

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 or



Support is **60% or more**



Support is **51% – 59%**

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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:

- 75** **58** **91** The cost of equipment that produces clean energy, such as solar panels or wind turbines, or stores clean energy: up to 30%
- 76** **62** **89** The amount of electricity produced with clean energy: equal to up to 5-10% of the average retail cost of electricity
- 71** **57** **83** An investment in the development of first-of-its-kind clean energy technology to produce, store or distribute energy: up to 30%
- 79** **70** **88** Building a new energy-efficient home or residential building: up to \$3,000
- 78** **70** **87** Making energy-saving improvements such as fuel-efficient lighting, doors, windows, or insulation: up to \$6,500
- 84** **75** **93** Installing a new energy-efficient heating or air conditioning system: up to \$1500
- 72** **61** **83** Building new energy-efficient commercial buildings: up to \$4.75 per square foot
- 66** **52** **78** Making energy-saving improvements to commercial buildings that reduce energy: up to \$9.25 per square foot
- 69** **52** **84** Manufacturers of fully electric buses: a tax credit equal to 10% of the sales price of each bus sold
- 73** **54** **89** The cost of installing a charging station that can be used by anyone: up to 50%



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

76 54 88

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



GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS



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



PROHIBIT FOREIGN FUNDING OF BALLOT INITIATIVES

79 77 84

Create a federal law that would prohibit foreign individuals, companies, or governments from spending money in an effort to influence the outcome of a ballot initiative

BANNING STOCK TRADING WHILE IN OFFICE

86 87 88

Ban stock trading for Members of Congress

87 87 90

Ban stock trading for the President, Vice President and members of the Supreme Court

59 57 62

Do NOT ban stock trading for all federal employees

LIMITING LOBBYING BY FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

77 80 73

Extend the period government officials must wait after leaving office before they can work as lobbyists: for former Members of Congress to five years

77 79 74

Extend the period government officials must wait after leaving office before they can work as lobbyists: for former Congressional staffers to two years

75 77 71

Extend the period government officials must wait after leaving office before they can work as lobbyists: for former senior Executive Branch officials to five years

75 81 70

Prohibit former senior Executive Branch officials from lobbying for foreign governments for the rest of their life

IMPOSING CONGRESSIONAL TERM LIMITS

83 86 80

Pass a constitutional amendment to limit how many terms Members of Congress can stay in office

GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS



VOTING REFORM

66 61 74

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

ELECTION INTEGRITY

63 71 55

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

63 75 58

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)

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

88 87 95

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



CRIMINAL JUSTICE



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

82 71 94

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

73 55 91

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

INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

89 85 94

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

81 70 92

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

70 52 86

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

CRIMINAL JUSTICE



RESPONSES TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

74 58 90

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

76 59 87

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

OTHER PROVISIONS

72 53 89

Require officers to receive training to address implicit bias toward minorities

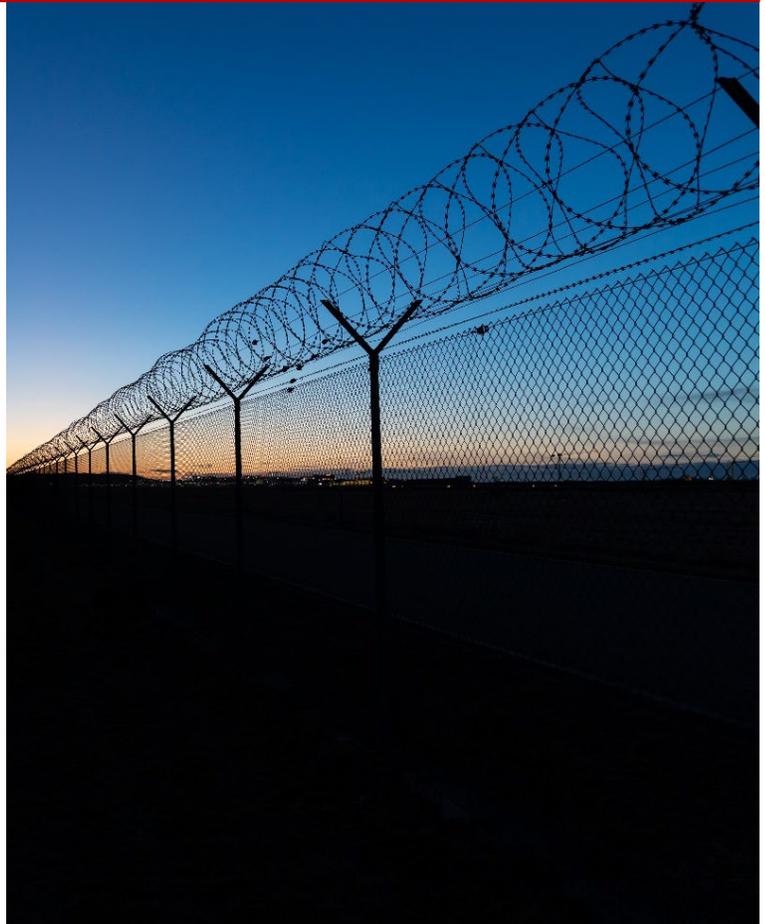
SENTENCING REFORM

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

83 76 90

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

74 64 83

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

78 68 87

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

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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

81 72 90

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

79 68 89

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

74 64 83

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

78 75 82

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

76 65 87

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

79 70 88

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.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE



SEALING CRIMINAL RECORDS

77 70 85

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

75 68 84

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

77 66 88

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

86 84 90

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

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

- 64** **53** **74** Reduce defense budget for general operations by \$7 billion
- 56** **55** **58** Reduce subsidies to agricultural corporations by \$7 billion
- 65** **56** **73** Reduce spending on nuclear weapons programs by \$2 billion
- 56** **51** **60** Reduce spending on agencies that enforce federal law by \$2 billion





REVENUES

- 64** **54** **74** Raise average effective tax rates back to 2017 rates for individual incomes: \$200k-500k* (generates \$55B)
- 68** **56** **79** Raise average effective tax rates back to 2017 rates for individual incomes: \$500k-\$1 million* (generates \$17B)
- 71** **61** **79** Raise average effective tax rates back to 2017 rates for individual incomes: Above \$1 million* (generates \$39B)
- 60** **54** **67** Raise taxes on capital gains and dividends by treating them as ordinary income for individual incomes: \$200k-500k* (generates \$19 billion)
- 72** **64** **79** Raise taxes on capital gains and dividends by treating them as ordinary income for individual incomes: \$500k-\$1 million* (generates \$13 billion)
- 75** **69** **80** Raise taxes on capital gains and dividends by treating them as ordinary income for individual incomes: Above \$1 million* (generates \$90 billion)
- 84** **82** **96** Eliminate the provision known as the 'hedge fund managers tax' because it can lower the tax these managers would otherwise pay (generates \$2.2 billion)
- 75** **65** **83** Adopt a 4% surtax on income above \$5 million* (generates \$13 billion)
- 78** **68** **86** Adopt a 1% surtax on corporate income above \$100 million* (generates \$12 billion)
- 74** **66** **83** Adopt a 0.15% fee on uninsured debt of financial institutions (generates \$11 billion)
- 63** **55** **71** Adopt a 0.1% tax on financial transactions: trades of stocks, bonds & derivatives (generates \$70B)
- 75** **65** **86** Do NOT eliminate the estate tax



TAXES THAT DISCOURAGE CERTAIN BEHAVIORS

- 73** **66** **80** Raise taxes on various tobacco products (generates \$5 billion)
- 61** **56** **65** Raise alcohol taxes to 25 cents per ounce of alcohol* (generates \$5 billion)

ADDITIONAL TAX REFORMS

- 74** **64** **84** Do NOT lower the corporate tax rate from 21% to 15% (DDL)

HEALTHCARE

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

71 59 84

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

79 70 89

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

LOWERING ACA MARKETPLACE INSURANCE COST

72 51 87

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

PRESERVING ACA RULES ON HEALTH INSURANCE COST

81 66 94

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

78 60 93

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



REDUCING HEALTH CARE COSTS

88 **81** **92**

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

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH

80 **67** **94**

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

75 **58** **86**

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

74 **61** **89**

Expand and improve treatment programs in prisons

74 **58** **90**

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

76 **59** **92**

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

BIRTH CONTROL & ABORTION



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

78 71 86

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

CRIMINALIZING ABORTION

84 77 90

Do NOT make abortion a crime before fetal viability

62 53 67

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

69 51 87

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

72 53 91

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

70 51 89

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

72 62 83

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

86 82 90

Have net neutrality regulations

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)



Over the last few years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has advanced rapidly, and its usage throughout society has greatly increased. Developments in AI have brought numerous benefits, as well as many concerns about the effects of its current usage, and future potential for harm.

What role, if any, the Federal government should have in regulating the development and deployment of AI programs in the US, and internationally, has been the subject of much debate.

BRIEFING

The immediate concerns that AI programs present, and which can be regulated domestically by the government, were presented as follows:

First, we will address immediate concerns about AI programs that are already being used. For example, some AI programs have:

- *violated regulations, though they were not instructed to do so*
- *provided incorrect information*
- *made flawed recommendations or decisions*
- *unintentionally treated some groups in a biased way (e.g. by race or gender)*

AI programs have also been purposely used to:

- *create misinformation very quickly and on a large scale,*
- *create fake videos of people or events that appear very real which have misled people or damaged reputations*
- *steal private data*

AI programs have also been hacked and used for harmful purposes. Some of these concerns can be addressed at the national level, by the federal government. We will explore proposals for what the government might do.

Several of the proposals for regulating AI are based on taking a preventative approach, and so respondents were introduced to that idea, as follows:

As mentioned, there is debate about what role the government should play in regulating AI companies and AI programs. There are two general approaches that the government can take:

1. *One approach is for the government to take action only after a company has sold a product or service, something has gone wrong, and the product has harmed consumers in some way.*
1. *Another approach is for the government to more actively intervene in advance to try to prevent harm from happening. This is called a preventative approach. This approach is used by the government in some areas, such as in healthcare, whereby the government requires new drugs to pass a series of tests before they can be put on the market.*



REGULATING DECISION-MAKING AI PROGRAMS

81 76 88

Require new AI programs which make decisions that significantly impact people's lives to pass a government-run test before they can be deployed

77 74 82

Allow the Federal government to regularly audit decision-making AI programs, and require any problems be fixed

72 67 81

Require AI companies disclose the training data for decision-making AI to the Federal government



REGULATING DEEPFAKES

83 83 85

Require deepfakes to be labeled clearly as such

84 83 86

Prohibit political campaign advertisements from using deepfakes

86 85 87

Prohibit the publication of pornographic deepfakes without the consent of the individuals being depicted



FEDERAL AGENCY

74 68 81

Create a new Federal agency to enforce regulations on AI, oversee AI developments, and provide guidance on AI policy



INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

81 77 85

The US actively working to create an international treaty to ban the development and use of AI-powered weapons that can fire on targets autonomously

77 71 84

The US actively working to create an international organization to regulate and monitor large-scale AI programs



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.



HELPING LOW-INCOME WORKERS



Raise the federal minimum wage to \$12



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

OTHER POSITIONS



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)

SOCIAL SECURITY



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%)

73 70 78

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

81 79 88

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

INCREASING BENEFITS

64 59 71

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%)

53 53 56

Supplement benefits of those 85 and over by five percent (increases shortfall by 5%)

COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS (COLAs)

55 55 59

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

IMMIGRATION



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

74 55 86

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

80 69 86

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

69 68 75

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

DETERRING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

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

77 66 87

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 86

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

DEALING WITH REFUGEES

93 90 96

Increase personnel to process asylum seekers' claims faster (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

58 53 62

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

59 52 65

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

61 56 68

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.



HAVING INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

63 84 93

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

72 55 88

Have a free trade agreement with Mexico and Canada

72 54 89

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 86 93

Include enforceable labor standards in new trade agreements

86 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 87

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

83 84 83

Continue to have arms control treaties with Russia

82 77 89

Extend New START

87 85 90

Continue to abide by the moratorium on nuclear testing

66 55 77

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

NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPACITIES

85 94 79

Have enough nuclear weapons to fulfill a minimum retaliatory capability

61 53 69

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

FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

68 59 74

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

79 77 81

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

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

82 77 89

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

83 77 90

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

83 77 90

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

85 76 91

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

87 86 89

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

87 88 87

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

69 **55** **87** Continue to provide military aid to Ukraine

80 **72** **92** Continue to provide humanitarian aid to Ukraine

73 **63** **86** 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.



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