

Family First

Reclaiming the
GOP's Forgotten
Constituency



AMERICAN
PRINCIPLES PROJECT

About the Authors



Terry Schilling

Terry Schilling is the Executive Director of American Principles Project and has extensive campaign management experience.



Frank Cannon

Frank Cannon is the President of the American Principles Project and a political consultant to Susan B. Anthony List.



Paul Dupont

Paul Dupont is the communications director for American Principles Project.

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INTRODUCTION

A Tale of Two Elections

Two elections, two very different results: In 2016, Donald Trump won the White House by forging a new coalition that included more blue-collar Americans in Rust Belt states. Trump’s populist-themed campaign was a bold one, and it seemed to lay the foundation for further electoral success. However, in the subsequent 2018 midterms, the Republican Party lost massive ground, despite a surging economy and after passing one of the largest tax cuts in modern memory. Even more shocking was where the GOP lost — primarily in wealthy suburbs, whose voters likely benefited the most from the party’s economic agenda.

So what should conservatives conclude about how to build a winning national political coalition from these last two elections?

The temptation among some Republican elites will be to blame President Trump — to cling to the vastly improbable assumption that a Mitt Romney or Jeb Bush at the helm would have, through their focus on traditional Republican economic policies and winsomeness of personality, pushed the GOP to victory in 2018. The great temptation, in other words, will be to refuse to learn from experience and to instead fall back on tired, disproven conceptual templates — because it is easier than facing some unpleasant

truths, engaging in hard new thinking about what a winning conservative coalition must look like, and recognizing that Trump’s 2016 victory pointed the way.

Indeed, early indications suggest a number of Republicans are already falling victim to this temptation. A quick survey of post-midterm reactions provides plenty of examples. Consider GOP strategist Sarah Chamberlain’s remarks on Hill.TV only days after the election that “the way to win back suburban voters is by focusing on key issues like the economy.”¹ Or consider Republican adviser David Winston’s Roll Call op-ed in December proclaiming that “the Republican economic message was a winning one, but because the suburbs didn’t hear it clearly, the GOP lost its advantage.”² Seemingly echoing these concerns in May, Congressman Tom Cole (R-Okla.) lamented to *The New York Times* that “the traditional issues are being eclipsed — because if ‘peace and prosperity’ worked, there would still be a Republican majority in the House.”³

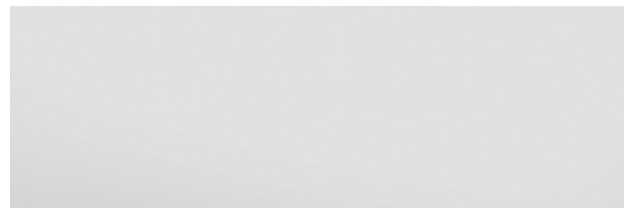
However, as we argued in our 2013 report, *Building a Winning GOP Coalition*, this standard Republican strategy relying on an economic message of tax cuts and “job creation” is a recipe for political failure. Developments since then have only strengthened our case. For example, recent

polling from the Heritage Foundation shows that, even amid our current booming economy, more than 45 percent of voters in battleground states — and a majority of voters in nine swing districts which voted for Trump in 2016 — believe the Republican economic agenda of tax cuts and de-regulation has actually hurt the middle class.⁴ And, as mentioned above, those who have benefited the most from the GOP's economic policies are increasingly leaving the party. In fact, as of the current Congress, 43 of the 50 wealthiest House districts are now represented by Democrats.⁵

So where does the Republican Party go from here? What lessons should President Trump and the GOP take from the last election in charting a path forward for the next one? In order to answer these questions, some additional evidence will be useful.

In November 2018, the American Principles Project commissioned a nationally representative poll of 5,285 Americans aged 20-65. We asked them about their votes in the 2016 and 2018 elections and also about their faith in the value of the free market and their views on abortion and marriage. From their answers, we discovered one crucial detail about the electorate which has been almost entirely overlooked in recent political discussion: one of the strongest indicators of holding conservative views and supporting GOP candidates — across race, gender, and income level — was being married and/or coming from an intact family. In other words, married and family-oriented voters are a crucial, and likely the most crucial, component of the GOP coalition.

For Republicans looking ahead to 2020, this point is of the utmost importance. If the GOP decides merely to pursue the suburban voters it lost, wooing them with a message of tax cuts



New Party of the Rich?
43 OF THE **50** WEALTHIEST U.S. HOUSE DISTRICTS ARE REPRESENTED BY **DEMOCRATS**
Source: GOBankingRates.com

A graphic featuring a grid of puzzle pieces. The majority of the pieces are blue and contain white dollar signs (\$). On the right side, several pieces are red and missing, suggesting a broken or incomplete picture. The background is dark.

and economic growth, it will fail. *Rather, the Republican Party's future is wholly dependent on a renewal of the American family, and it is on this goal that conservative leaders should be fully focused moving forward.*



PART ONE

Surveying America in 2018



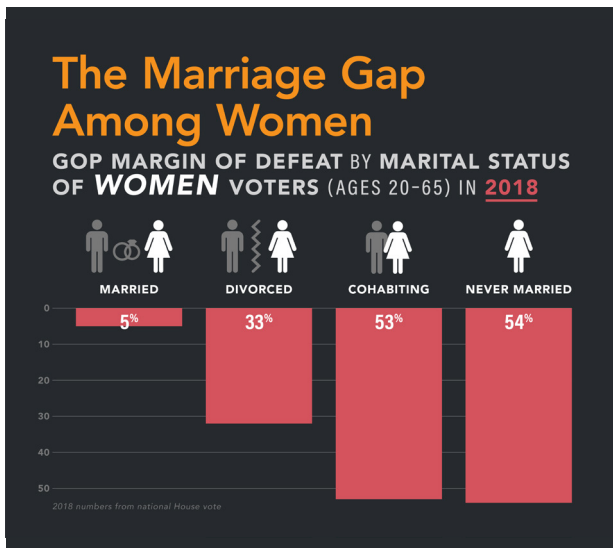
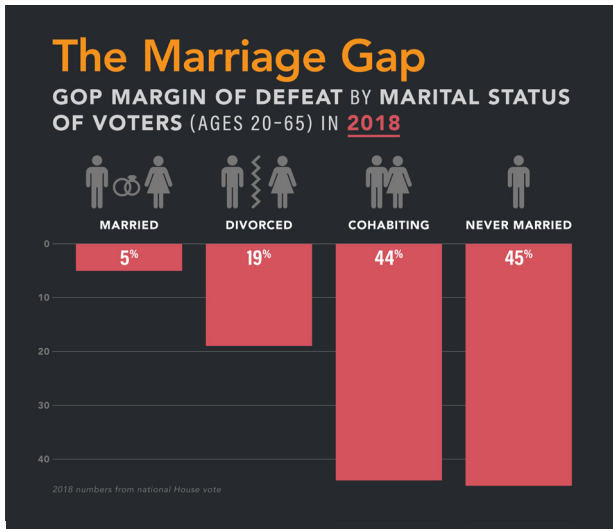
Fielded immediately following the midterm elections, the 2018 American Political and Relational Behavior (APRB) Survey – conducted by the Austin Institute on behalf of the American Principles Project – collected data on a wide range of issues. In addition to asking respondents about their political affiliation and voting behavior, the survey also gathered information on their attitudes on a myriad of economic and social issues as well as numerous details on their marital and family history. What we found was at once intuitive and yet remarkable: being married and coming from an intact family is significantly related to one's political activity and views.

Let's begin with the former – among the 20-65 age group, President Trump and Republicans performed far better among married voters than those with almost any other marital status. Although our survey indicated Trump lost this age group overall to Hillary Clinton, his deficit among married voters was only 1.6 percentage points. By contrast, he lost divorced voters by 5 points, cohabiting voters by 28 points, and never married (and not cohabiting) voters by a whopping 35 points. For Republicans in 2018,

the gaps were even worse. While they lost married voters in this age group by 5 points, they lost divorced, cohabiting, and never married voters by 19, 44, and 45 points, respectively.

Clearly, married voters are far more likely to vote for the GOP, and this effect is especially pronounced among minorities. In 2018, Black and Hispanic married voters were more than twice as likely as their divorced, cohabiting, and never married counterparts to vote Republican. The beneficial effect of marriage for Republicans also extends to children, as nearly twice as many minority voters from intact families voted for GOP candidates as those from other situations (30 percent to 16 percent).

Among women voters, marriage obliterated the much lamented gender gap faced by President Trump and Republicans. Again in the 20-65 age group, Trump won nearly 42 percent of married women in 2016, less than 4 points behind Clinton. However, Trump failed to surpass 37 percent support among any other group, losing divorced women by 18 points, cohabiting women by 33 points, and never married (and not cohabiting) women by a colossal 49 points.



In 2018, Republicans once again performed even worse in every category.

But not only are married voters among all classes, races, and genders more likely to vote Republican – they are also more likely to vote period. Over 80 percent of married respondents in our survey said they voted in the 2016 election and 76 percent said they voted in 2018, the highest figures in both elections among all marital status groups. By comparison, in 2018, only 71 percent of divorced respondents and only 61 percent of cohabiting and never married respondents said they showed up at the ballot box. Moreover, over 81 percent of married respondents said they planned to vote in 2020, while only 77 percent of divorced, 68 percent of cohabiting, and 66 percent of never married respondents said the same.

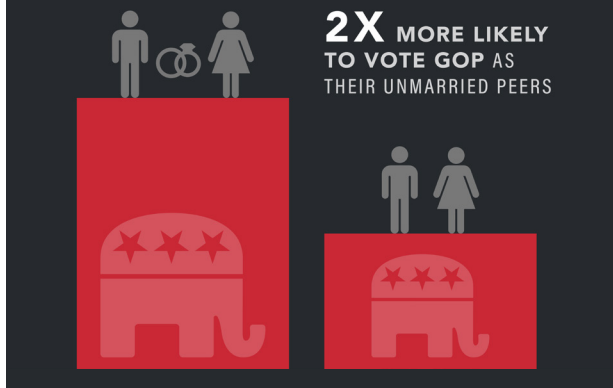
Beyond voting behavior, however, there is also a distinct relationship to be found between marital status and attitudes on various issues. For example, in our survey we asked respondents to rank where they stood between conservative and progressive views on a number of economic issues, including the value of free markets, government regulations, taxation, and income differences. On every issue, married

2018 APRB Survey: Key Facts

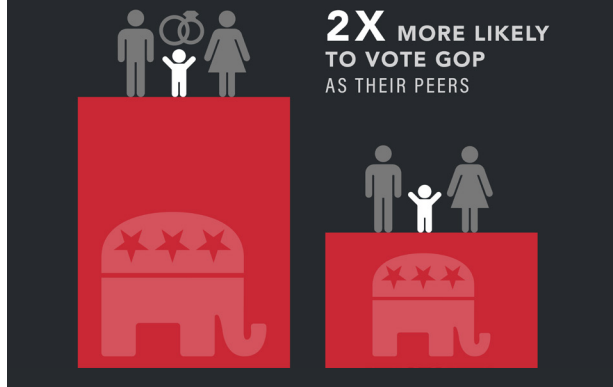
The American Political and Relational Behavior Survey was commissioned by APP immediately following the 2018 midterms to survey Americans on a wide variety of issues.

- » **WHO:** A nationally representative sample of 5,285 Americans, ages 20-65.
- » **WHEN:** November 9-15, 2018
- » **WHAT:** Over 50 questions relating to each respondents' past votes, political and ideological views, marital and family status, and other behavioral and attitudinal factors.

Black and Hispanic Married Voters

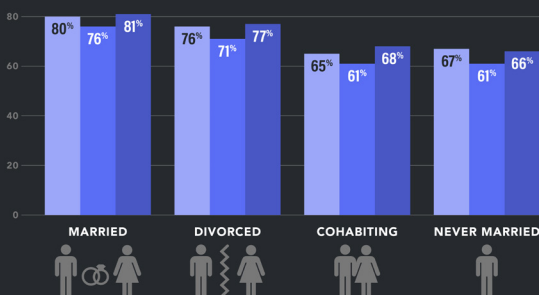


Children of Married Minority Voters



Married People Vote Most Reliably

LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING BY MARITAL STATUS (AGES 20-65) FROM 2016, 2018, & 2020*(PLAN TO VOTE)



respondents were more likely than average to hold conservative views, while divorced, cohabiting, and never married respondents were more likely than average to hold progressive ones.

On social issues, the story was the same. Naturally, married respondents were far more likely than their counterparts to oppose the idea that “marriage is an outdated institution” – 74 percent of them disagreed with this statement, while only 51 percent of never married and 46 percent of cohabiting respondents similarly did so. In addition, 33 percent of married respondents expressed clear opposition to abortion rights, a higher proportion than was found among divorced (29 percent), never married (24 percent), or cohabiting (15 percent) respondents. And on the question of whether adolescents should be given hormones or surgery to transition to the opposite gender if they identify as such, married respondents were once again the most conservative group. (Notably, cohabiting respondents were the only group more likely to agree than disagree that children should be allowed to transition.)

As with voting behavior, the effects of intact marriages on parents also appear to carry over to their children. On economic issues, respondents who grew up in intact families were more likely than average to hold conservative views on free markets, taxation, and income inequality, while those from broken homes (whose parents either divorced or never married) were more likely to hold progressive views. Respondents from intact families were also more likely to oppose abortion and to disagree that marriage is an outdated institution than their fellow respondents from broken families.

In summary, our survey data shows that the Republican Party is heavily reliant on voters who are married and/or come from intact fam-

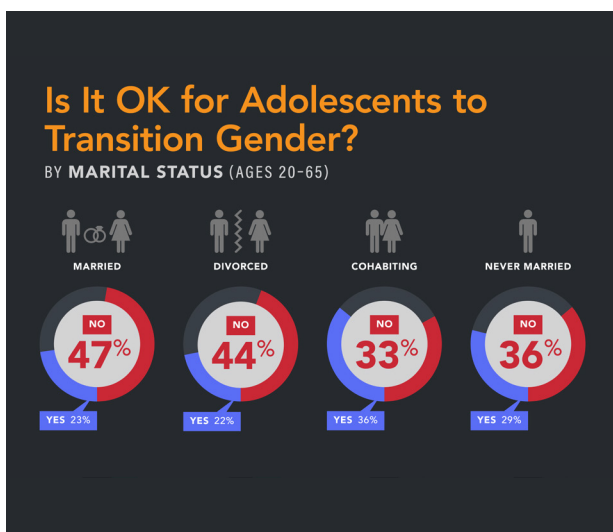
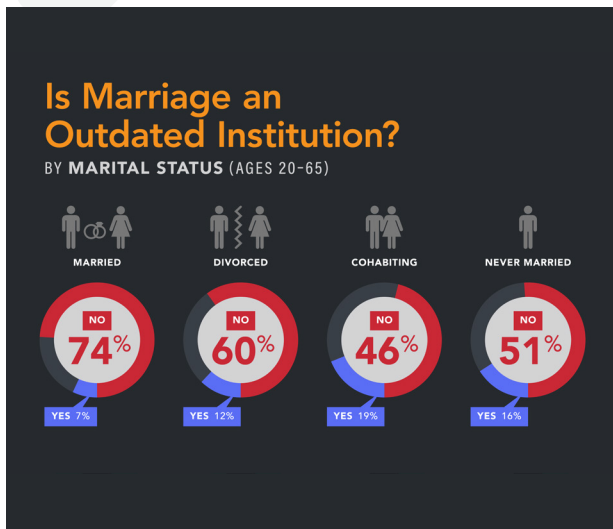
“ Communities where marriages and families are flourishing are likely to be places where both economic and cultural conservatism thrive.

ilies for political success. Communities where marriages and families are flourishing are likely to be places where both economic and cultural conservatism thrive and where the GOP can expect to find a strong base of support. And vice versa – in communities where broken marriages and families abound, progressivism and Democrats are likely to find much greater loyalty.

However, despite the seemingly obvious nature of these observations, in recent years this reality hasn't factored very heavily in GOP election strategy. In fact, for far too long many Republicans have been focused on the wrong political paradigm, chasing the unicorn of “socially liberal, fiscally conservative” suburban voters who research has shown are virtually non-existent.⁶ Indeed, our own survey shows that the proportion of respondents who reported being politically liberal and also supporting free markets was a measly 2 percent.

It's clear that GOP leaders need to instead adopt a new strategy – one which puts an emphasis on the socially conservative and economically pro-family policies which are likely to appeal to the current Republican base as well as attract new family-oriented voters, particularly minority voters, who don't normally vote Republican but otherwise agree on these issues. They also need to focus on promoting immediate policy changes which encourage more marriages and family formation to help grow their likely base of support, rather than settling for a libertarian agenda which at best maintains the status quo and at worst further erodes the American family and the social support it provides, sending more voters running towards big-government Democrats.

Fortunately, at least one GOP leader is already moving in the right direction, and his victory in 2016 has pointed the path forward for the party.



PART TWO

Building on the Trump Coalition



One of the few prominent Republican leaders to date who appears to have grasped both the political realities of the present moment as well as the opportunities available to the GOP is the President of the United States. Donald Trump won the White House in 2016 not by sticking to the standard Republican playbook but rather by embracing an entirely new platform which appealed directly to many of the voters described above.

In particular, Trump did two things which helped him to build a winning coalition (coincidentally, the very two things which we recommended in our 2013 Building a Winning Coalition report).

1 Trump refused to adopt a “truce strategy” on social issues, instead using social conservatism to his benefit.

Unlike Mitt Romney’s doomed 2012 campaign which took pains to deemphasize Romney’s position on social issues, Trump in 2016 recognized the potent appeal of social conservatism to a large portion of the electorate and acted

accordingly. In the lead up to Election Day, for example, he made an unprecedented pledge to pro-lifers, vowing to defund Planned Parenthood, sign the 20-week Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, and nominate pro-life justices to the Supreme Court.⁷ In the final presidential debate in October 2016, he memorably challenged



Hillary Clinton and Democrats over their radical position on abortion, pointing out that the Democrats' platform would allow abortionists to "rip the baby out of the womb of the mother" as late as the ninth month of pregnancy. And throughout his campaign, he also made religious liberty a consistent theme, promising to repeal the Johnson Amendment and notably pledging to sign the First Amendment Defense Act should it make it to his desk.⁸

All these issues allowed Trump to strongly contrast himself with Clinton and proved to be a powerful motivating factor for voters in the election.

2 Trump developed an economic platform which discarded traditional GOP messaging and instead focused on American workers.

The failure of the standard GOP economic message has by this point been well-documented. In 2012, Mitt Romney ran a campaign almost obsessively centered on the themes of "job creation" and economic growth, only to see voters choose Democrats as the party more likely to deliver a better economy by a nine-point margin (47 percent to 38 percent).⁹ Rather than replay this failed strategy, Trump championed a whole different set of economic issues, ones which appealed to working Americans directly.

Trump promised he would work to bring back manufacturing jobs to the United States — jobs that at one time formed the backbone of the American middle class and the loss of which has decimated so many communities in middle America. He vowed to renegotiate trade deals in a way which would put the interests of American workers first instead of dogmatically committing to the abstract principle of free trade. And he emphasized a toughened immigration

policy that would again place Americans' interests above all else.

This blend of cultural conservatism and economic populism proved a potent formula, and it led to the Republican Party's largest electoral college victory in more than two decades. Moreover, since being elected President Trump has largely strengthened his position in these two areas, showing his campaign promises were more than mere rhetoric. Although there were some missed opportunities to achieve policy successes, especially in his first two years with a Republican Congress, Trump has taken a number of significant steps to enact his economic platform, actively renegotiating trade agreements and toughening border security. His administration has also delivered a number of social conservative victories: ending taxpayer funding for abortion overseas, defunding Planned Parenthood through Title X, establishing explicit conscience protections for healthcare workers, and repealing the Obama transgender education edict. But most consequentially, with the help of Mitch McConnell and Senate Republicans, Trump has tipped the balance of the judiciary, appointing two conservative justices to the Supreme Court and restocking the federal bench with constitutionalist judges at every level. All of these first-term achievements should position him well as the 2020 campaign begins.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party since 2016 has opened the door even further for Republicans by lurching to the extreme left — especially on cultural issues.

Sensing a potential danger to *Roe v. Wade*, Democrats in states including New York, Vermont, and Illinois have moved to officially legalize abortion up until the moment of birth, while Democrats in Maine enacted a law allowing taxpayer funding of abortion through Medicaid.¹⁰

In a rare moment of candidness about the true nature of these laws, Virginia's Democratic Governor Ralph Northam explained to an interviewer that under such laws, if a woman in labor wished to have an abortion, "[t]he infant would be delivered. The infant would be kept comfortable. The infant would be resuscitated if that's what the mother and the family desired, and then a discussion would ensue between the physicians and the mother."¹¹ Although the firestorm surrounding these comments led Northam to later deny the obvious implication that he was endorsing infanticide, legislation protecting babies born alive after abortions have been blocked by Congressional Democrats and vetoed by two Democratic governors.

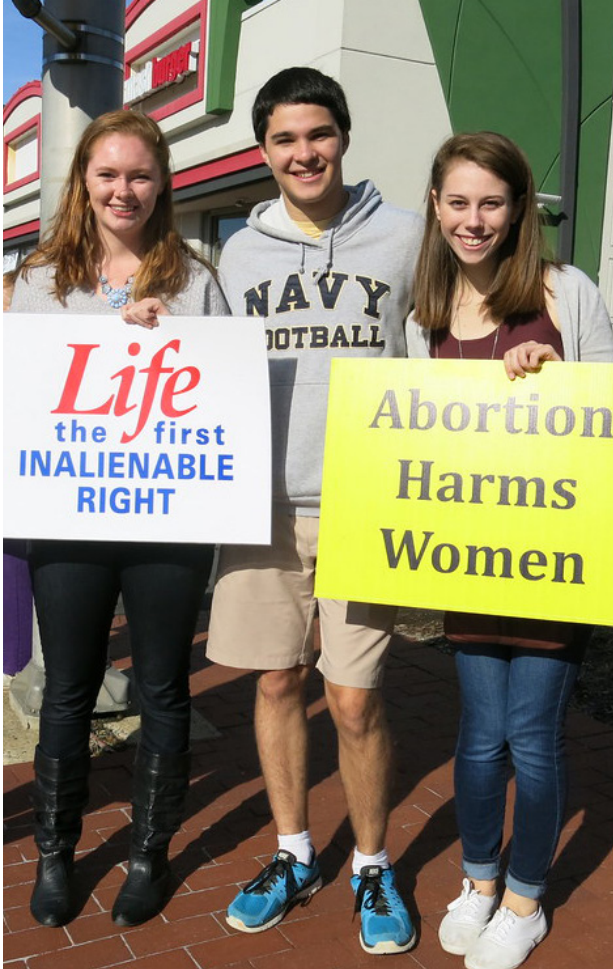
The national Democratic Party has also made advancing the ever more radical LGBT agenda a high priority. In May, House Democrats passed the Equality Act, a bill which would open up pub-

lic bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers to members of the opposite sex; mandate that public schools allow biological males to compete on women's athletic teams; force physicians to perform sex-reassignment surgeries against their consciences; effectively shut down faith-based adoption agencies, women's shelters, and other charities which refuse to compromise their traditional beliefs on sexuality; and overrule all religious freedom claims when LGBT issues are involved.¹² This mirrors many efforts Democrats have already undertaken at the state and local levels.

Incredibly, Democrats have continued to pursue these efforts despite the evidence that most Americans, including many within their own party, strongly disagree with them – and that these very efforts may be alienating voters from their side.

In January and February, for example, the Knights of Columbus and Marist College took

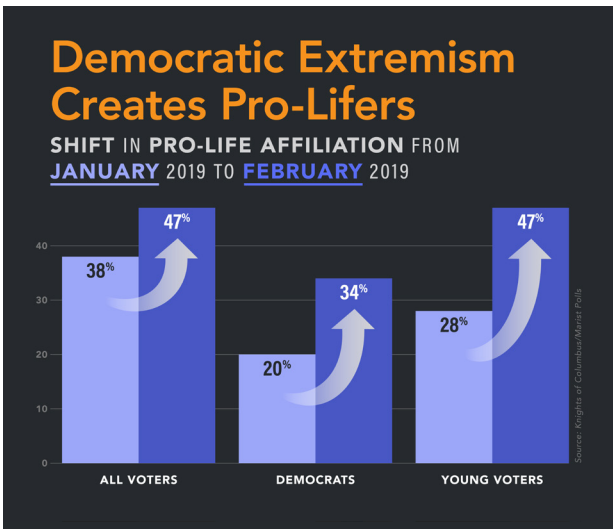




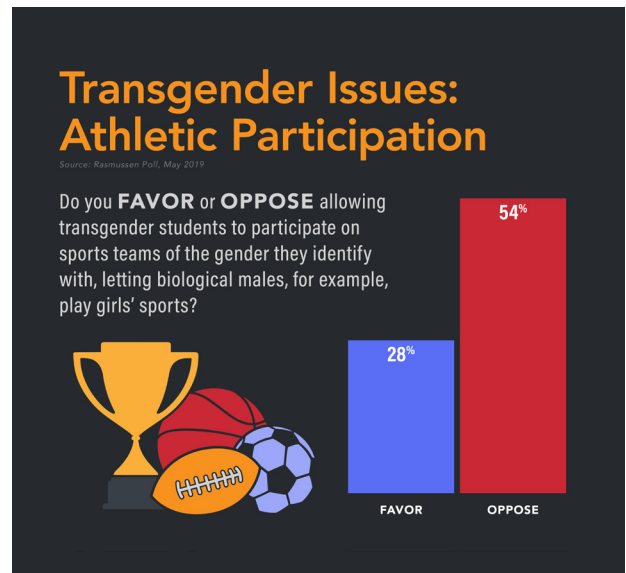
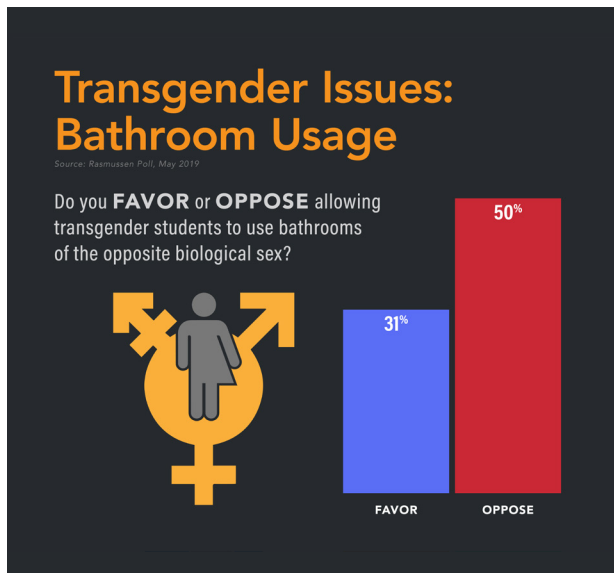
cent margin. By the next month, however, the “pro-life gap” had closed, with Americans now evenly divided between the labels, 47-47. This dramatic change was largely driven by a significant increase in Democrats choosing the pro-life label, from 20 percent to 34 percent, as well as a major increase in pro-life affiliation of younger respondents under age 45, from 28 percent to 47 percent.

And beyond mere labels, Americans’ views on when abortion should be legal also moved even further away from the official Democrat position. Already in January, a combined 75 percent of respondents had stated that abortion should be legally restricted to the first three months or even further, a far cry from the official Democratic Party view. By February, that number had ticked up to 80 percent. Moreover, 64 percent of Democrat respondents in the latter poll said they supported such abortion restrictions, as did 83 percent of independents. And a remarkable 48 percent of Democrats said they agreed with bans on abortion except for cases rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother, or that they did not think abortions should ever be permitted.

Unpopularity with the Democratic Party’s positions extends to LGBT issues as well. A May Rasmussen poll, for example, showed that half of Americans oppose “allowing transgender students to use the bathrooms of the opposite biological sex” versus only 31 percent support.¹⁴ On the question of school athletics, the gap was even more pronounced: 54 percent opposed “allowing transgender students to participate on the sports of the gender they identify with” while only 28 percent supported it. Gallup’s slightly more LGBT-friendly phrasing of the bathroom question in its own May survey still produced a majority in favor of restricting restroom access to “birth gender” over “gender identity” by



two consecutive polls measuring Americans’ views on abortion, with the latter being conducted after the explosion of controversy surrounding the passage of New York’s radically permissive abortion law.¹³ In January, respondents answered that they considered themselves “pro-choice” rather than “pro-life” by a 55-38 per-



a 51-44 percent margin, numbers which have held steady over the last four years despite the left's seemingly endless propagandizing on the issue.¹⁵

Indeed, given the fawning attention LGBT issues typically receive in the media and entertainment industries, it was even more shocking to see the pro-LGBT organization GLAAD admit that its 2019 polling found a decrease in LGBT acceptance among 18-34 year olds for the second straight year, falling from 63 percent in 2017 to 53 percent in 2018 and 45 percent this year.¹⁶ But while GLAAD was quick to indict the "discriminatory policies and targeted rhetoric" of the Trump administration for the change, it is just as easy to imagine that the publicity brought by the Democrats' own efforts to advance far-left policies such as the Equality Act might also be to blame.

In short, this confluence of the new direction opened by Donald Trump's pioneering 2016 campaign and the increasingly leftward plunge of the Democratic Party has created an enormous opportunity for Republicans in 2020. There are large numbers of family-orient-

ed Americans open to a socially conservative, economically pro-worker message, as Trump's victory illustrated, and in the time since then, Democrats have only made it easier to draw the contrast. By taking Trump's successful 2016 formula and reemphasizing its strongest points, Republicans stand an excellent chance of replicating that election's result.

But even more importantly, a platform combining social conservatism and pro-family economics promises to offer Republicans a far greater benefit than a mere short-term electoral victory. That's because these policies, if successfully enacted, aim toward reversing the breakdown of the American family over the long term — by overturning the progressive social agenda which has had a corrosive effect on traditional mores and institutions which encourage family formation and by eliminating economic obstacles which have made marriage and child-rearing a financial near-impossibility for many Americans. Such a result would have the effect of solidifying and even vastly growing the Republican voter base, improving the GOP's election prospects for decades to come.

PART THREE

A “Family First” Agenda for 2020



So what would such a “Family First” platform look like concretely?

On cultural issues, Republicans need to recognize and articulate the serious threat which progressive social policy presents to the family and also be able to offer a positive vision of how social conservatism is at its root directed toward strengthening American families and communities. And on economic issues, Republicans need to completely change their traditional reference point. Rather than prioritizing the interests of “job creators” (i.e. businesses) and emphasizing abstract measures of economic production like Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Republican candidates must instead outline a vision that prioritizes the needs of working families and focuses on alleviating the greatest financial obstacles to family formation.

The good news is that the GOP already embraces, at least to some degree, many ideas which can be packaged into a compelling platform for family renewal. We have collected what we believe to be the most important of these ideas below.

It is also crucial to note that each of the following issues is included not only for their practical

importance to a program of family revitalization but also for their political value. As mentioned above, the increasingly leftist extremism of Democrats has created an opportunity for GOP candidates to draw a favorable contrast in many areas. This is especially true for the issues below, each of which has strong support among voters and can be used by Republicans to bait their Democratic opponents into taking highly unpopular positions – or to further highlight radical proposals which Democrats have already endorsed.

Although there are undoubtedly other issues which could be added, here are the key components for a 2020 “Family First” agenda:

Parental rights

The ongoing fight over parental rights embodies the core difference between progressive and conservative ideology: whether the family is prior to government, or subject to it. Parents have a natural right and corresponding responsibility to direct the care and upbringing of their children. However, the threats to this fundamental right are myriad and growing most prominent in education and healthcare, as many progressive institutions

and activists have decided they know better than parents how to raise their children. Indeed, the left is actively weaponizing the state and the courts in many areas to step between parents and their children in order to “properly educate” children in socially liberal orthodoxy. In order to combat these trends, Republicans should consider adopting the following positions:

- » Support a federal Parents’ Rights Act explicitly stating that parents have a fundamental right to direct the care, education, and upbringing of their children — not the state. This legislation would put a thumb on the scale for parents across the country facing egregious family rights violations by the courts and leftist-dominated institutions.
- » Support legislation that explicitly protects the right of parents to direct their child’s medical care — such as Simon’s Law, a bill named after an otherwise healthy baby boy who died at the hands of doctors who, unbeknownst to his parents, deemed him incompatible with life and refused to treat his genetic condition.
- » Oppose at all levels of government any attempts to add “sexual orientation and gender identity” to existing law, which is the mechanism by which the left is eroding any meaningful distinctions between men and women, including in relation to access to private spaces and even women’s sports teams. These laws are an accelerated bypass of parental rights.
- » Support the nomination of judges who take seriously the harms posed to parental rights, as well as to women and children, when subjective characteristics like



“sexual orientation and gender identity” are elevated to a protected class akin to immutable characteristics like race. Judges should also take seriously the harms that current fashionable medical interventions such as puberty-blocking drugs and cross-sex hormones pose to children confused about their gender. Parents have not only a right but also good reason to resist these radical, life-altering treatments for their children.

- » Support providing parents the ability to opt out their children from sexual education classes in public schools. Moreover, the process by which any new materials dealing with sex education or the topic of gender identity are introduced into the classroom should be subject to a heightened level of scrutiny and involvement by parents.

Education

In addition to the parental rights issues we face in our current education system, families are also dealing with systematic attempts to put their children into a one-size-fits-all box. Through projects like Common Core, the federal government (under progressive influence) has tried to impose failed education theories on all schools, creating a mess of dumbed-down curriculum across the public school system. Moreover, Republicans have long been divided on the issue, likely explaining at least in part why Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has made relatively little progress in resolving this problem since her appointment in 2017. As a result, GOP candidates should consider adopting the following positions:

- » Support school choice initiatives, giving parents the freedom to explore better education alternatives for their children, such as private charter schools, religious schools, and homeschooling. This is especially important for lower and middle income parents who otherwise could not afford quality education for their children.
- » Support expanding 529 tax-advantaged savings accounts, allowing parents to use them for homeschooling and a wide variety of costs related to K-12 public or private education.
- » Support empowering states and local communities to fix curriculum in the public schools so that those students who do attend public school can receive a fulfilling education.

Abortion

The legalization and mass proliferation of abortion since *Roe v. Wade*, often promoted and/or funded by government entities, has devastated the American family. Indeed, the evidence for this

was clear as far back as 1996, when the future Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen along with two colleagues authored a paper arguing that the decline of marriage rates and explosion in out-of-wedlock births since the 1970s can be tied primarily to the widespread legalization of abortion and contraception.¹⁷ Thus, addressing the issue of abortion ought to be a crucial component of any pro-family agenda. Republicans should consider adopting the following positions:

- » Support laws which recognize that children in the womb have a right to life. Polls show that legislation barring late-term abortions, such as the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, have especially high support among voters.
- » Oppose government funding of Planned Parenthood, which has played a central role in spreading the scourge of abortion and its effects nationwide.
- » Support truly pro-life measures such as the unborn child tax credit, which recognizes and helps to alleviate the financial pressures that working men and women face as they prepare to become parents — planned or unplanned.

Pornography

Since 2016, fifteen states have passed resolutions declaring pornography a public health crisis. They have plenty of reason to, given that there is a large body of research linking pornography use to a host of negative effects including sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, increased sexual violence against women, addiction, harmful impacts on male sexual health and relationships, and an increase in early sexual activity among children. The ready availability of pornography through our increasingly tech-connected world presents families with a challenge that our own parents and



grandparents never had to face. Given this new reality, it is of great interest to society that we recognize it as a public health crisis and address it as such. Republicans should consider adopting the following positions:

- » Support empowering the FTC to require internet service providers give all households by default an “opt-in” option to receive obscene content, as opposed to merely allowing them to voluntarily “opt-out.” Policies like those in the United Kingdom and Australia offer good models to follow.
- » Support all efforts to restrict and punish distributors and aggregators of child pornography, so-called “revenge” pornography, and “deep fake” pornography.

Commercial Surrogacy

The demand for women who will rent out their wombs to carry someone else’s baby is another way in which technological advances hurt women in the name of “liberty.” Commercial surrogacy

is not an example of the free market at work for good, because it creates an underclass of victimized women through this dangerous practice and turns children into commodities that can be solicited, purchased, and permanently separated from their biological parents and birth mother. For the women serving as surrogates, there are serious health risks associated with this practice. And in many cases, commercial surrogacy robs children of the fundamental right to know their biological mother and father — ironically, in the name of creating families. Republicans should consider adopting the following positions:

- » Oppose all efforts to legalize commercial surrogacy. As a recent successful movement to defeat a surrogacy bill in New York showed, many Americans oppose the practice, including non-traditional allies such as radical feminists. The blueprint for building an effective coalition to fight commercial surrogacy already exists, and should be taken advantage of.

Sound Money

The Federal Reserve's aggressive micromanagement of the economy by dampening price signals and targeting financial asset prices has not benefited America's working families. To address this issue, Republicans should consider adopting the following positions:

- » Support regulatory and monetary policies that facilitate the re-monetization of gold. Enabling Americans to use gold as money would subject the Federal Reserve to greater market discipline and re-empower working families.

Pro-Family Tax Policy

On tax policy, politicians have long placed too high an emphasis on the needs of corporations rather than those of working families, likely at least in part because corporations can easily expatriate while families cannot. A recent example of this principle in action was the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, in which Congress made the cut to the corporate tax rate permanent while the cuts to individual rates were set to expire after ten years. This not only demonstrated misplaced priorities but also handed the Democrats an excellent talking point — which they used successfully in the 2018 midterms. The truth is that strong, intact families are just as critical to the economy as corporations, if not more so. Therefore, Republicans should consider adopting the following positions:

- » Support taxing families and corporations at the same rate. This would send a mes-

sage that the government sees the well-being of families as equally important to that of businesses.

- » Support permanently cutting individual tax rates — with an emphasis on the lower and middle brackets — and incentivize family formation and aid existing families by further increasing the child tax credit and writing new and creative tax deductions into the tax code to help alleviate the skyrocketing costs of raising a family.

Paid Family Leave

While the Family and Medical Leave Act guarantees families the right to maternity or paternity leave from work, it does not make it an affordable option for families living paycheck to paycheck. Thus, families in difficult economic situations have been conditioned to believe that having children is a luxury they cannot afford. Paid family leave would offer parents valuable financial flexibility to spend time away from work with their newborn children, thus removing a disincentive to growing families and promoting stronger familial bonds. Republicans should consider adopting the following positions:

- » Support a budget-neutral paid family leave plan. Possible ideas include legislation like the CRADLE Act, New Parents Act, and Cassidy-Sinema plan, all of which represent fiscally sound proposals to give parents the needed financial cushion to take a couple months off from work to stay at home with their new child.

A person is seen from behind, carrying a young child on their back. They are standing in a field of tall, golden grass. The background is a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Conclusion

If many of the above prescriptions sound vaguely familiar, it's because they should — many of them mirror and expand on positions President Trump already ran on in 2016. By building on and refining those positions to focus on the defense and revitalization of the American family, Trump and the Republican Party can create a formidable platform which will both strongly appeal to family-oriented voters in the 2020 election — especially those turned off by the comparative extremism of Democrats — and further expand the GOP's base in elections to come.

Given present demographic and social realities, adopting and featuring a pro-family agenda for 2020 and beyond offers the best, and perhaps only, path for Republicans moving forward. The future of the GOP, and indeed of the country as a whole, is inextricably tied to the future of the family. If this great American experiment is to continue, we must once again put the family first.

ENDNOTES

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About American Principles Project



When our Founders put this country together, they clearly articulated the essence of human dignity: that all are created equal, endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

At APP, we believe these principles are central to what makes the American experiment so unique. We also believe that human dignity has often been overlooked in present-day policy debates. Therefore, we strongly affirm the following as fundamental to the flourishing of this country:

- » **Respect for human life** from conception to natural death
- » **The union of one man and one woman** as the definition of marriage
- » Recognition of the reality of human beings as divided into **two distinct and complementary biological sexes**
- » **The freedom to practice and proclaim religion** in the public square
- » **An economy** which authentically benefits all American families
- » **Education** which serves the comprehensive development of the person
- » **The preservation of citizen-directed government** as manifested under the Constitution

APP strives to put these values into action through our work in impacting key elections, promoting strategic legislation, and conducting groundbreaking research. We stand with all those Americans who believe, as we do, in re-establishing human dignity as the basis for American society.

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AMERICAN
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2800 Shirlington Road, Suite 1201
Arlington, VA 22206
202.503.2010
www.americanprinciplesproject.org