



AMERICAN
PRINCIPLES PROJECT

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Jon Scheppele, Policy Director, American Principles Project

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SUBJECT: Polling on Abortion, Child Tax Credit Expansion, and Paid Family Leave

MEMO ON APP ISSUE POLLING

As part of an effort to understand what motivates swing voters in a critical election year, we partnered with The Clapham Group and asked SPRY Strategies to conduct a poll in six states with races for open Senate seats, including Alabama, North Carolina, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania. The poll was conducted by IVR, live landline, and online mobile interviews from September 17 - 20 among a random sample of 1329 registered voters in these six states. The survey sample targeted for interviews included 35,000 likely voters from each state who voted in at least 2 of 4 general elections considering 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020. Additionally, newly registered voters were included in the sample. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 2.7 percentage points. Results are weighted.

The purpose of this poll was less about the partisan state of things – we found a 45-39 Republican generic ballot advantage in these six states – and more about learning what motivates swing voters and how they feel about certain issues, including abortion, child tax credit expansion, and paid family leave.

1.) Voters are very worried about rising prices

Our poll found that above all other issues, voters were most concerned about the higher cost of living. We asked:

Which of the following issues is the most concerning to you and your family today?

Which of the following issues would be the second most concerning to you and your family today?

Combined top two issues of concern:

“Higher Cost of Living”	26.2%	“Crime and Public Safety”	22.2%	“Higher Cost of Living”	40.7%
“Abortion”	19.4%	“Higher Cost of Living”	14.5%	“Crime and Public Safety”	37.3%
“Crime and Public Safety”	15.1%	“Abortion”	13.1%	“Abortion”	32.5%
“Immigration”	11.0%	“Immigration”	12.2%	“Immigration”	23.2%
“Election Integrity”	8.3%	“Education”	9.1%	“Election Integrity”	15.2%
“Education”	5.6%	“Gas Prices”	8.0%	“Education”	14.7%
“Gas Prices”	3.9%	“Election Integrity”	6.9%	“Gas Prices”	11.9%

Voters who ranked “higher cost of living” as the issue most concerning to them chose the Republican over the Democrat 54% to 24% on the generic ballot. Republicans maintained strong support, 50% to 31%, among voters who ranked “higher cost of living” as their second most important issue.

Similarly, voters who ranked “gas prices” as their top priority supported the Republican over the Democrat 53% to 30% on the generic ballot. That Republican advantage improved to 57% to 16% among voters who ranked “gas prices” as their second priority.

2.) Abortion is still a big deal to midterm voters

Citing Google search data, a recent Axios [story](#) suggested that voters might be less concerned about abortion than conventional wisdom suggests. Many Republicans in D.C. have been circulating this data as evidence that the party’s strategy of ignoring abortion in favor of inflation, crime, and immigration is working. However, our poll found that abortion is still very much on the minds of voters.

19.4% of voters ranked “abortion” as the issue most concerning to them. An additional 13.1% of voters ranked it as their second priority.

3.) Most midterm voters disagree with the Democrats on abortion

The Democratic Party has embraced an extreme position of supporting abortion on demand, without exception, up until the moment of birth. This is completely out of step with the American voter. We asked voters to most closely describe their position on abortion:

- 75.8% of voters indicated support for at least some restrictions on abortion.
- 64.6% of voters indicated support for at least prohibiting abortion after the first trimester.
- 52.5% of voters indicated support for either a ban on abortion at any stage of pregnancy with certain exceptions, or a ban on abortion with no exceptions
- ***Only 19.3% of voters agreed with the Democrats that abortion should be legal in all circumstances up until the moment of birth.***

Republicans shouldn’t be trying to run away from the issue of abortion. It won’t work, and it’s not helpful. Instead, they should be engaging the debate and highlighting the Democrats’ radical position. The alternative is a recipe for disaster – not only do the Democrats get to mislead the voters about what Republicans believe about abortion without consequence, but they escape any political liability for holding a tremendously unpopular viewpoint that less than 20% of voters agree with.

Republicans also need to acknowledge, especially for swing and undecided voters, that restricting abortion will result in an increase of babies who might otherwise have been aborted. It is therefore incumbent on us as a society (and as pro-life leaders) to promote policies that will provide the resources to help care for them and care for their mothers.

4.) Pro-family economic policies are popular

We asked voters how they felt about a number of pro-mother, pro-child policies that Congress could enact following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Many of these proposals polled extremely well:

- 85.8% of voters wanted Congress to make adoption more accessible, acceptable, and affordable.
- 77.6% of voters wanted Congress to make healthcare more affordable and accessible for both pregnant women and the child in the first 1,000 days of life, starting with conception.
- 77% of voters wanted Congress to ensure that the State Children's Health Insurance Program covers prenatal care expenses.
- 74.8% of voters wanted Congress to pass the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which requires businesses to accommodate the physical needs of pregnant workers.

We also asked voters if they would support an "increase [to] the child tax credit above the current \$2,000 per child amount that is in law."

- 66.4% of voters would support (38.3% would strongly support) a child tax credit expansion
- 23.7% of voters would oppose (11.7% would strongly oppose) a child tax credit expansion.

We know that economic and quality of life concerns often drive pregnant women to consider abortion. It's important for pro-life Republicans to embrace policies that can help alleviate those concerns. Additionally, with swing and independent voters, these policies are both popular and helpful in demonstrating that Republicans do care for pregnant women and their babies.

5.) Establishing a federal paid family leave plan is popular

There's been a lot of talk in Congress about creating a federal paid family leave plan, but would a government solution really be popular? The answer is a resounding yes. We asked voters:

"While federal law allows for new parents to take up to 12 weeks off work unpaid, many parents do not have the financial resources to do so. Some have proposed that Congress should establish a paid family leave plan to give all new parents regardless of income the ability to take at least two weeks off work without putting their financial security at risk. Do you support or oppose such a law?"

- 71.8% of voters said they would support (47.9% would strongly support) a federal paid family leave plan.
- 22.4% of voters said they would oppose (9.9% would strongly oppose) a federal paid family leave plan.

We also asked:

“Should there be a guaranteed, limited amount of paid time off for new parents?”

- 69.3% of voters agreed (39% strongly agreed) that there should be a guaranteed, limited amount of paid time off.
- 23.8% of voters disagreed (10.8% strongly disagreed) that there should be a guaranteed, limited amount of paid time off.

Finally, we asked about paid sick leave:

“Now that United States workers are going back to work, there is currently no funding for paid sick leave, either for themselves or a family member. Do you support requirements for employers to provide paid sick leave?”

- 74% of voters agreed (45.9% strongly agreed) that employers should be required to provide paid sick leave.
- 19.9% of voters disagreed (8.9% strongly disagreed) that employers should be required to provide paid sick leave.

ANALYSIS:

In *Dobbs v. Jackson*, the Supreme Court decided to empower the people and their legislatures to make decisions about how to regulate abortion. It was an enormous victory for the pro-life movement and for the rule of law. But the politics have certainly been messy in the short-term: Republicans haven't quite figured out how to talk about the abortion issue in an environment where their proposed policies are no longer merely theoretical.

We believe Republicans need to do the following:

Support and Pass the Right Laws

Republicans have enthusiastically supported laws like the Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act (a 20-week ban) and various Heartbeat Bills (6-week bans) in the past. There's no reason for that to change now.

Ultimately, voters need to hear from Republicans about what laws they are willing to support. When Democrats run millions of dollars in pro-abortion propaganda, and Republicans go silent in response, voters end up believing the lies they're hearing in the ads – that Republicans want to jail rape victims and let women with ectopic pregnancies die on the operating table.

Republicans should support the most aggressive, politically viable laws they can in every state and at the federal level – and they should emphatically defend those laws, as Sen. Lindsay Graham has done in recent weeks, by contrasting their reasonable, popular pro-life position with the extreme 40-week position of the Democrats.

Expose the Extreme Democrats

It's not rocket science. As our poll shows, only a small percentage of the population supports the Democrats' extreme support for abortion on demand, without exception, up to the moment of birth. And this is an issue millions of voters care about passionately – when they learn about the Democrats' extremism, independents and even soft Democrats suddenly get queasy about supporting such a radical party.

The Democrats are a paper tiger on this issue. They don't want to talk about their support for late-term abortion because it's an obvious political vulnerability for them – it's why Hillary Clinton lost in 2016! When Republicans fight back on abortion, they win.

Embrace Pro-Family Economics

We won't win the fight and end abortion until we create a culture of life, and we can't do that without rethinking our approach to economic policy. Many Republicans seem to instinctively understand this: especially after *Dobbs*, we need to be able to point to policies we support that will help women with unplanned pregnancies and ensure that they are able to thrive and provide for their children.

The two obvious starting points that we polled and highlighted in this memo are increasing the child tax credit and establishing a federal paid family leave plan. We believe Republicans should prioritize getting these two things done in 2023 when they (hopefully) take back the House and Senate. Both of these policies will promote family formation and even save lives.

But more is needed. We encourage Republicans in Congress to start thinking about families the same way they think about other important special interest groups. If a policy hurts families, it should be unflinchingly opposed. And if a policy helps our core constituency – even if it flies in the face of recent dead consensus orthodoxy – maybe it's worth a second look.