New research for Priorities USA shows opportunity for Democrats among those voters who were decisive in the 2016 election

Priorities USA commissioned Global Strategy Group and Garin Hart Yang to conduct polling and focus groups among two key groups decisive in the recent 2016 election – “swing voters” who voted for Barack Obama in 2012 and Donald Trump in 2016 and “turnout voters” who are Democratic-leaning voters, including African-American and/or Millennial voters, that voted in 2012 but did not show up to vote in 2016. The research included an online survey among 801 Obama-Trump voters and three sets of focus groups in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Florida covering both groups. This is the first phase of Priorities USA’s Project Blueprint, a comprehensive research effort to develop a path forward for Democrats.

Effectively communicating to both groups will be critical to the party’s success and our research found opportunity for Democrats to win back these voters as the party seeks to move forward towards more successful electoral efforts in 2017, 2018, and 2020. While each group has its own unique demographics and challenges, we also found areas of commonality between Obama-Trump voters and “turnout voters,” providing an opportunity for Democrats to seek out a broad, unifying message as we seek to build a stronger electoral coalition. Key findings from the research are as follows:

DEMOCRATS HAVE A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO WIN BACK MANY OBAMA/TRUMP AND SWING VOTERS

- There is a real opportunity for Democrats to win back many voters who switched from Obama to Trump, as half (50%) say they had mixed feelings about voting for Trump. Just 35% of these “soft” Obama-Trump voters have confidence that Donald Trump will do a good job as President and reaching these voters will be a key focus of Priorities USA’s efforts moving forward.
- In particular, non-college women present a key opportunity. Non-college women make up the largest proportion of Obama-Trump voters with mixed feelings about voting for Trump and thus present a particularly promising opportunity for persuasion efforts.
- Obama-Trump voters feel especially squeezed economically and expect an economic and tax agenda from Trump that will benefit the middle class – not wealthy and corporate elites. More than half (58%) of soft Trump supporters feel their income is falling behind the cost of living. As such, Obama-Trump voters support reducing taxes on the middle class, but also support ensuring corporations pay their fair share of taxes.
- Soft Obama-Trump backers were drawn to Trump because of his business persona and the perception he is not a typical politician. Undercutting that appeal will be key to winning them back. These voters are particularly concerned that Trump will break his promise of “giving power back to the people” and that he will put the interests of wealthy elites and big businesses first.
Congressional Republicans are not popular with Obama-Trump voters and Trump’s alignment with the Congressional Republican policy agenda is a key vulnerability for the President. Voters with mixed feelings about voting for Trump are far less favorable to the Republican Party (36% favorable) than they are to Trump (63% favorable).

**Turnout Voters Are Ready for a Strong Message From Democrats**

- Turnout voters – those who voted in 2012, but not 2016 – are disillusioned about politics, but extremely unhappy about the idea of a Donald Trump presidency. They were surprised about the 2016 outcome and are distraught about the prospect of four years under Trump. They will make up the second key target for Priorities USA’s efforts going forward.
- Like Obama-Trump voters, turnout voters are also struggling economically. Turnout voters are looking for their leaders, and the Democratic Party, to speak more directly to their economic concerns.
- Turnout voters want Democrats in Congress to stand up to President Trump on the issues they care about most including education, student loans, health care, and wages. These voters fully expect the Democrats to stand their ground and fight Trump on this important issue set.
- Turnout voters are also concerned about how Trump may unravel core protections that they value. Drop-off voters are concerned Trump will undermine women’s rights, do serious damage to the environment, and promote a divisive agenda.

**Alignment Between Swing and Turnout Voters Present Real Opportunities in 2017, 2018, and 2020**

- There is alignment between Obama-Trump “swing voters” and turnout targets on the concerns they have over a Trump presidency. Both groups are concerned that Trump’s temperament will get us into a war, that he will fail to help the middle class and hurt the economy, and that he will make cuts to important government programs, including Medicare and Medicaid.
- Both groups are concerned about a Trump-Republican tax agenda that favors the wealthy, leaving an opening for Democrats to re-establish themselves as the party of the middle class. Both groups are concerned about Trump and the Republicans putting the interests of wealthy Americans and corporate executives first. Soft Obama-Trump voters are also very concerned about the proposed large tax on imports that will raise the costs of products that Americans buy.
- The Republican Party’s health care agenda – Medicare privatization, cutting Medicaid, and repealing Obamacare with no replacement – is also a key vulnerability among both turnout voters and soft Obama-Trump voters. These policy items are among the top concerns for both groups about the Trump-Republican agenda and a majority of Obama-Trump voters say cutting spending on Medicaid and Medicare would be “bad for people like them.”
- Democrats should not shy away from talking about the situation the Republicans have put themselves in regarding the Affordable Care Act: repeal with no replacement is a real concern. Ensuring all Americans have access to affordable insurance is at the top of these voters list of priorities, and nearly half (46%) of Obama-Trump voters with mixed feelings say repealing Obamacare without a replacement in place is a major concern about Trump.
• Both groups also support increased spending on infrastructure and providing paid leave to new mothers. This leaves the Democrats an opportunity to spotlight failure on these Trump campaign promises when the Republicans fail to deliver on them.

• Non-traditional media sources may be the best and most effective way to break through to Obama-Trump and base drop-off voters, who operate in news environments dominated by their own networks. In both our persuasion and low-turnout groups, many of these voters listed Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and other online news sources as top sources of information about politics and current events.