

Toward a new American majority and 2018 wave

Report from RAE+ Web Panel

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The *Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund's* ongoing web-panel of persuasion and turnout targets conducted by Democracy Corps provides progressive leaders and allies with credible tools to turn 2018 into a disruptive, wave election.¹ WWVAF is developing these tools because it is determined to build a new American majority by winning much deeper support in working America, above all with working women. That is the dominant identity and reality for African American and Hispanic, millennial, unmarried and white working class women who today face unique challenges. For instance, the majority is unmarried, making them the most financially and socially pressed voters in our country.

The stakes could not be higher. Each day, President Donald Trump and the Republican Congress seek to destroy the country's social protections and to empower the very richest. The GOP health care bill is not merely the repeal of the Affordable Care Act: it ends the government guarantee of health care for even the poorest. The trickle-down tax cuts at the center of the GOP's health care and budget policies would be even larger than Ronald Reagan's. That is why, for the RAE+, progressives must aim to win control of the House of Representatives, the Senate and many state houses.

Wave elections come when one party is fully consolidated, reacting with intensity and turning out disproportionately; when the other party is divided and demoralized; and when independents react against that party's overreach. The potential for such conditions is already strongly evident in this first wave of research:

- The Democratic house margin of 7-points is very close to what's needed for control, but likely needs to reach 10 points.

¹ This is the first in a series of three waves of 1,000 national registered voter phone surveys with accompanying 4,000 registered voter web-surveys among a panel of minorities, millennials, unmarried women and white non-college educated women (the RAE+). The national phone survey of 1,000 voter-file matched registered voters with 65 percent of respondents reached on cell phones was conducted May 21-June 5, 2017. The voter-file matched RAE+ panel of 4,000 registered voters was conducted online May 31-June 13, 2017.



- Democrats and key parts of the Democratic base – African Americans, Hispanics, unmarried women and millennials are intensely hostile to Trump and are supporting Democrats for Congress with impressive margins and certainty.
- Independents are deeply opposed to the GOP health care bills and Trump and break heavily for Democrats in the congressional ballot after supporting Trump and Republicans in past years.
- Republicans are not supporting Trump or their candidates with the same level of intensity and 20 percent of RAE+ Trump voters think he is out of touch with working with people.
- Critically, battling against health care with the strongest arguments and for an economy that works for the middle class, with clarity about our values, widens the gap on intention to vote and intensity of support between those voting for the Democrat and those voting for the Republican.

Maximizing support and participation requires understanding their lives and values and incorporating that into WVWVAF's programs and the work of all progressives. To achieve that, WVWVAF has fielded the first of three waves of national phone surveys among 1,000 registered voters – and designed to achieve full participation of more rural and white working class communities – with accompanying 4,000 registered voter web-survey among a panel of minorities, millennials, unmarried women and white non-college educated women (the RAE+) to be re-interviewed two more times this year. Conducting the RAE+ web panel simultaneously with the national phone survey provides a point of comparison for weighting that enables us to minimize the cultural biases in web surveys. The large sample enables us to conduct message experiments, including those that test the effectiveness of incorporating values language, and to learn more about the psychological stresses and cultural perspectives that impact voters' judgment and behavior and to identify targets for persuasion and turnout. Conducting future web-surveys with the same participants enables us to concretely identify who is shifting, on what metrics and with what potential over the course of the year.

Voters are paying close attention to Trump, Ryan and McConnell's radical policies. That has already impacted the preferences of the off-year electorate, but major shifts in the composition of the midterm electorate and further consolidation are possible if progressives levy their most powerful attacks on the GOP health care bill, articulate their shared values, and finally, deliver a strong economic message. Here is what makes the biggest difference.

With Republicans cutting fundamental protections provided by the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid, voters respond strongest to an attack that mentions the CBO's findings on pre-existing conditions, that says, "more people will go without medical treatment because of costs and some will die," and makes reference to the shared value for human life:



LIFE [+ VALUES] *Their new plan allows insurance companies in some states to push people with a history of cancer or a pregnancy into a high risk pool and to substantially increase prices for people with pre-existing conditions. That means more people will go without medical treatment because of costs and some will die. [This plan is unacceptable to anyone who respects and cherishes human life.]*

But progressives will not realize their potential with the RAE+ unless they articulate an economic message. March focus groups for WVWVAF revealed just how vacuous is the Democratic brand when it comes to the economy and probing revealed no positive associations with a strong economy or jobs at a time when so many are struggling. A precondition for maximizing support and turnout is progressives getting heard on the economy. Specifically, voters need to hear this indictment of an economy that works for the elites and pledge to put the middle class first again:

FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS, NOT ELITES [+ VALUES]: This country has to work for everyone again, not just for the elites and the richest. The game is rigged against the middle class. The big companies, lobbyists and big donors get to write the rules and politicians work for them, not us. As a start, we should ban secret campaign donations and ask the richest to pay their fair share of taxes. *[It's time we start keeping our promises to those who do the right thing and treat people equally.]* This will put us on a path to an America that can grow the middle class again.

That economic offer is further strengthened by an attack on Donald Trump for failing to live up to his campaign promise to cut middle class taxes and instead proposing a plan where half the cuts go to the richest 1 percent alone, including a \$4 billion break for the Trump family.

With trickle-down and austerity on the defensive, the Republicans' small government, low tax and economic nationalist messages prove dramatically weaker than progressive messages. The battle of ideas produces marked shifts towards the Democrats in terms of intensity of vote choice and in participation. That is how you get to the wave that disrupts the Trump-Republican assault on government and reassertion of trickle-down economics.