

To: National Partnership for Women & Families

From: Brian Nienaber

Re: Key findings from a national Election Eve and Night voter survey on Working Families' Issues

Date: November 18, 2016

Summary of Key Findings on NPWF Issues

- Eight in ten voters (82%), including 70% of Republicans, say it is important for the next Congress to address issues of importance to working families, including enacting laws to guarantee paid sick days and paid family and medical leave.
- More than three-quarters of voters (78%) support a national paid family and medical leave law, including two-thirds (66%) of Republicans.
- Although paid leave is not a voting issue for Republicans in the same way it is for Democrats, there is no harm to Republican lawmakers for supporting a national law that provides 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave.
- There is an opportunity to educate voters about paid family and medical leave as a policy that will help address the financial hardships that 71% of voters anticipate they would have if a serious family or medical need were to occur.

Electoral Outcome Analysis

Republicans and Donald Trump won this election because Republican voters were more enthusiastic about their candidates. This enthusiasm advantage led to increased turnout among GOP voters. This turnout advantage, coupled with the struggles that Hillary Clinton and the Democrats had with motivating their base supporters, created the surprising outcome last week.

On this survey, Republicans had the advantage (+6%) over Democrats in being almost certain to vote on Election Day. The Democrats had the advantage on having voters who utilized early voting, but this advantage (+7%) was not as wide as many Democratic campaigns believed it was. Republicans often win the Election Day vote in states with a strong early voting culture, but this cycle the GOP also closed the gap on the traditional Democratic advantage on early voting.

Of note, the non-Election Day vote nationwide is staggering. A majority of all voters (52%) and Republicans (51%) indicate that they cast their vote prior to Election Day. This shift in voter behavior is a strong asset for issue campaigns. These non-Election Day voters are often easy to find and target for issue persuasion. These voters also receive a strong focus from political campaigns

at every level. Every campaign wants to locate, persuade, and turn out supporters with a proven record of voting.

So, if your campaign is able to target these voters and turn them into advocates for your cause, this will yield substantial dividends. Political campaigns will be courting the support of these voters and if these campaigns determine that your cause will help them win the support of these voters, your cause will receive serious consideration from the campaign.

In a similar way, a majority of all voters (56%) and of Republicans (58%) indicate that they decided on their vote more than three months ago. For many voters, their decision was already made once the candidates were decided. So, early advocacy to enter this concern into the matrix of voter attitudes will be valuable. If politicians think they win the support of hardened partisans via support of a key issue to those voters, this issue will be given careful examination.

The Presidential ballot illustrates the intensity advantage among Republican voters and the turnout advantage among GOP oriented voters. Trump has a 3-point advantage on support from Republicans versus the support that Clinton has from Democrats. In addition, Trump has a 5-point advantage on support among Independents. These demographics are daunting for any candidate to overcome, much less one who is also burdened by a decreased enthusiasm among her base voters.

A similar trend is seen on the generic Congressional ballot. The parties deadlock at 43% on this ballot. However, given the institutional advantage Democrats have in supermajority Congressional Districts, a tie actually represents a notable advantage for Republicans. As with the Presidential ballot, Republicans have an advantage on their level of partisan support for the GOP (+4%) and the have a 7-point advantage among Independents. These advantages allowed Republicans to maintain control of the House and the Senate, despite the significant advantages the Democrats had in US Senate races.

In looking at how to interpret the views of Republicans from this cycle, the issue matrix offers valuable guidance. Republicans have broadly dispersed views about the top issue shaping their vote – the economy/jobs (28%), terrorism/national security (28%), health care (22%), and dysfunction in government (19%) – all are selected by a significant number of Republicans. However, it is the issue of dysfunction in government that looms over all of these. Our other research has indicated that voters who feel economically powerless or frustrated with the status quo tended to be Trump voters. Republican elected officials at all levels are going to want to produce results. They will want to demonstrate to voters that they understand the feelings of frustration that fueled Trump's political rise. The best demonstration of that understanding will be to produce policy changes that provide solutions in the lives of everyday voters. If you can find a way to distill your issue into a tangible policy change that an ambitious politician can champion, your odds of a legislative success will increase dramatically.

National Partnership for Women & Families

Voters of all political persuasions did not hear “a lot” about issues related to women and working families like equal pay, paid sick days, and paid family/medical leave, although nearly two-thirds say they heard at least “some”. Just 23% of all voters indicate they heard “a lot” about these issues while just 17% of Republicans say the same. This is somewhat surprising as both Secretary Clinton and President-elect Trump had high profile events to roll out their policy proposals on these issues.

Indeed, some of this lack of awareness from voters may have been from lack of attention. Asked the impact on their vote of having candidates address these issues, a majority (56%) of voters indicate these discussions make them more likely to support a candidate. However, this impact is driven by 77% of Democrats indicating this focus makes them more likely, along with 53% of Independents. In contrast, just 39% of Republicans feel the same way; the majority of Republicans say candidate’s discussion of these issues doesn’t make a difference (53%) and just 7% have negative views.

This lack of awareness and divide over the importance of these issues among the electorate provides a strong opportunity for the National Partnership. Voters across the political spectrum grasp the reasoning behind these policy proposals. Asked if a major life event would impose a serious financial hardship, 71% of voters and 66% of Republicans say it is likely that this event would negatively impact their finances. Voters understand that these events can be financially devastating, but they have not yet heard many proposals about how to protect against these crises and many are not yet motivated to make this a vote deciding issue. There is a real opportunity here for the National Partnership to reach out to Republicans and Independents on the looming crisis of these issues and to motivate these voters to back appropriate policy solutions.

When presented with two potential policy solutions for these issues, these policies are met with strong approval from voters of all political affiliations. Having the President and Congress consider the proposal for earning paid sick days and for creating a paid family and medical leave insurance policy is ranked as 82% very or somewhat important for all voters and 70% of Republicans hold the same views. A national 12-week paid family and medical leave proposal has 78% support from all voters and 66% support from Republicans (including 72% overall support and 52% strong support from Republican women). After considering the impact of these issues, voters are open to proposals that would provide relief to those facing these problems.

However, this is an issue that must be won on the policy side and not on the politics side for Republican voters. Asking the vote impact of these issues from both perspectives yields a middling impact, particularly among Republicans. Just 41% of all voters and 30% of Republicans indicate they would be less likely to vote for their member of Congress or U.S. Senator if that lawmaker opposed a paid family and medical leave insurance bill. Asking about this in the affirmative, 58% of all voters and 41% of Republicans say they would be more likely to support their Senator or member of Congress if that lawmaker supported this proposal.

For Republican voters, a sustained political attack for enemies or affirmation for allies may not be effective in attracting or repelling -- about four in ten Republicans say support (41%) or opposition (38%) would make no difference in their vote. Among those Republicans who do have views, they are more likely to support than oppose a pro-paid family leave candidate (41% more likely to vote, 14% less likely to vote).

A similar trend is seen on the consumer impact question. While a majority of voters (58%) say they would be more likely to support a company with a generous paid family and medical leave policy, this support is driven by overwhelming support among Democrats (74%). Just 44% of Republicans say they would be more likely to support this company. There is likely public relations value in having companies strive to be applauded as being pro-family, but the business impact of this certification would largely be increased support among existing discerning consumers.

In sum, the lack of voter awareness on these issues and the lack of Republican voter interest in making paid family and medical leave a vote deciding issue are actually great opportunities for the National Partnership. When prompted, all voters grasp the hardships that illness or having a child can impose. All voters favor having Congress consider these issues and favor establishing a 12-week paid family and medical leave policy. Most Republicans are not ready to impose punishment on an elected official or companies who fail to address this problem. So, the win here will come on the policy side. Presenting Congressional allies with information on how aware voters are of this problem and how supportive they are of this solution and offering strong support in their efforts to champion these policies will be substantially more impactful than attempting to impose a political cost on opponents of these policies.