

To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group

Date: June 2020

Re: New Survey Analysis Reveals Gun Policy Can Trigger the Emotional Reactions Needed to Dissuade Voters from Trump

From the outside, Donald Trump's presidency would appear to be an endless series of missteps. And at each step, media personalities, voters, and his fellow elected officials have wondered aloud whether his favorability ratings would come crashing down. But through his comments about John McCain and Gold Star families, his setting off the longest government shutdown in history, his mishandling of a global pandemic, and even his tear gassing of protestors just weeks ago, the president's popularity has stayed remarkably steady, never veering more than a few points from where he started. Fact after fact, failure after failure have barely changed minds.

Now, new research conducted on behalf of Giffords reveals that if Democrats are to win in November, they must communicate about Trump in an emotionally resonant way – helping potentially gettable voters move from a place of hope for Trump to a place of disappointment.

- They need to *feel* he is not the strong leader they hoped he was and is just another disappointing politician who does more for donors than the people.
- There is a massive information gap between the reality of Trump and belief about Trump on gun safety – background checks in particular. Voters need to be educated about Trump's real views and stance on gun laws.
- This new research finds that the president's flip-flop on and opposition to a universally popular background check policy after talking to his NRA donors can help drive the emotional journey necessary to move voters.

There are still voters who can be persuaded to feel differently about Trump. Poll after poll suggests Biden has a lead, but with over four months to go, much can change. That's why Giffords focused in on "swayable" voters: the quarter of the likely voter electorate who are neither very favorable nor very unfavorable toward Trump and whom Trump must win. While these swayable voters are generally still somewhat favorable toward Trump, they also acknowledge he is not perfect, and after learning about his flip on background checks, they are three points less likely to support him.

But to move them, communications must make voters feel disappointment. Voters in both focus groups and the survey expressed a number of emotions about Trump's time in office – both positive and negative. But of the ten emotions tested in the survey, statistical regression analysis (mathematically determining the relationship between two variables) reveals that only two actually drive how voters feel and whether they are willing to change their vote: hope and disappointment. Dispelling any sense of hope or pride in Trump and replacing that with disappointment moves voters away from him and toward Biden. Gun violence prevention is a key issue that can be used to take swayable voters on this emotional journey.

Based on our research, Trump's most obvious negatives don't move these voters. While swayable voters clearly believe Trump is self-absorbed (77% say this describes him well), delivers for the wealthy (62%), and ignores the experts when it matters most (53%), this research shows believing these and other traits that apply (full list in appendix) don't dictate how Americans will vote come Election Day.

Showing these voters that Trump is not the strong leader they elected drives them to reconsider their vote for him. Statistical regression analysis suggests communications should show voters that Trump is “not the strong leader they thought” and “no longer represents change for the better,” emphasizing that he “does more for his donors than the people he represents.” Voters who are made to feel that these statements apply move away from Trump on the vote.

Swayable voters do not yet know that Trump isn’t with them on background checks. These swayable voters, like voters at large, overwhelmingly support background checks on all gun sales (93% support/7% oppose), and **only a paltry 15 percent know Trump does not.** In a world where voters are rarely surprised, Trump’s opposition to and flip on a position as popular as background checks shocks, surprises, and importantly, disappoints. Given that Trump is one of the most well-defined, over-exposed politicians ever, there is rarely ‘new’ information you can provide swing voters which they find convincing. Messaging around his record on background checks is one of those things.

His flip on background checks helps drive disappointment and show he’s not the strong leader they expected. After voters read a fact-based statement about how Trump went from saying “I support strong, meaningful background checks” in the wake of the El Paso and Dayton shootings, to threatening to veto bipartisan background check legislation after a single conversation with his donors at the NRA, swayable voters are four points less likely to feel hopeful about Trump. Further, they are seven points more likely to feel disappointed and 11 points more likely to say he does more for his donors than for the people he represents. In an election where emotion is key, gun violence prevention can be a difference maker with the groups Trump needs desperately to win.

ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted six focus groups among swing voters in Denver, CO, Grand Rapids, MI, and Charlotte, NC, between March 10th and March 12th, 2020. Global Strategy Group also conducted a nationwide survey of 804 likely voters and 1,000 “swayable” voters (voters who are not very favorable or very unfavorable to Donald Trump) between April 28th and May 5th, 2020. All interviews were conducted via web-based panel. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the sampled electorate are nationally representative. Statistical regression analysis was conducted on all traits and emotions before and after respondents read a statement on Trump flipping on background checks to analyze the impact of each on the vote.

Appendix

All voters were asked how well 24 different traits described President Trump and how well 10 different emotions described their own feelings about President Trump’s time in office both before and after reading a statement about President Trump’s flip on background checks. The statement they read, as well as the results of those tests are below, along with results of regression analysis that 1) determined which emotions/traits drive current vote choice; and 2) determined whether movement on each trait actually drove movement away from Trump.

THE KEY STATEMENT

President Trump pledged to support background checks on all gun sales on more than a dozen occasions, including after 31 Americans died in the El Paso and Dayton shootings in just 24 hours last August, when he said, “I support strong meaningful background checks.” He even added that “we are going to get [background checks] done” and “it’s not going to be talk like it has been in the past.”

But after speaking with and listening to lobbyists from the NRA - an organization that spent \$30 million helping to elect Trump in 2016, which is more than any other outside group - Trump immediately reversed his stance. Now he opposes background checks on all gun sales and has threatened to veto background check legislation, even if it passed the House and Senate.

Emotions:

	Pre-Statement	Post-Statement	Difference	Regression: drives vote choice <u>before statement</u>	Regression: drives vote movement away from Trump <u>after statement</u>
Emotion	Well	Well	Well		
Concerned	63%	66%	3%		
Confused	51%	56%	5%		
Uncertain	57%	61%	4%		
Disappointed	44%	51%	7%	****	***
Distrustful	43%	50%	7%		*
Exhausted	48%	53%	5%		
Excited	46%	46%	0%		
Proud	52%	53%	1%		**
Secure	59%	58%	-1%		*
Hopeful	68%	64%	-4%	****	***

Pre-statement: respondents were asked how well each word describes how they feel about President's Trump's time in office before reading any information.

Post-statement: respondents were asked how well each word describes how they feel about President's Trump's time in office after reading the background checks statement.

Regressions: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001. **** is most meaningful.

Traits:

	Pre-Statement	Post-Statement	Difference	Regression: drives vote choice before statement	Regression: drives vote movement away from Trump after statement
Trait	Well	Well	Well		
Looks out for special interests first	44%	51%	7%		
Does more for his donors than the people	42%	53%	11%	**	**
Delivers for the wealthy	62%	62%	0%		
More focused on riling up his base than getting things done	45%	51%	6%		
Puts himself first	57%	63%	6%	***	
Self-absorbed	77%	75%	-2%		
Listens to the wrong people	45%	53%	8%		
Ignores the experts when it matters most	53%	55%	2%	***	
More focused on getting re-elected than getting things done	43%	49%	6%		*
Listens to whomever is in his ear at that moment	48%	58%	10%		
Went in a businessman and came out a politician	50%	51%	1%		
Just another politician	36%	44%	8%		
Doesn't take a stand on the things that matter most	33%	43%	10%		
Wishy washy	46%	55%	9%		
Isn't the strong leader we elected	36%	42%	6%	*	***
Puts people at risk	43%	48%	5%		**
Isn't doing enough even as people suffer	39%	43%	4%		
Plays politics while people suffer	40%	47%	7%		**
Dealmaker	79%	81%	2%		
Independent thinker	76%	69%	-7%		
Puts America first	78%	72%	-6%		
Honest with the American people	58%	54%	-4%		
Takes our safety seriously	73%	65%	-8%		
Not perfect, but does represent change for the better	74%	68%	-6%	****	***
Effective	70%	65%	-5%	***	**

Pre-statement: respondents were asked how well each trait describes President Trump before reading any information.

Post-statement: respondents were asked how well each trait describes President Trump after reading the background checks statement.

Regressions: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001. **** is most meaningful.