

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Global Strategy Group & Hart Research Associates
DATE: October 31, 2017
RE: Battleground State Tax Plan Survey Results

OVERVIEW

Advocates for a fairer tax system have a clear opportunity to shape – and win – the debate about Donald Trump and Republicans’ tax plan, as voters in key battleground states currently know little about the plan and have strong, negative reactions to it when they are exposed to information and messaging.

Key findings from Global Strategy Group and Hart Research Associates’ recent survey of 1,561 likely 2018 voters across 15 battleground US Senate states are below. These findings demonstrate a clear path to move voters against the plan even in conservative-leaning electorates, as voters in this sample who participated in the November 2016 election voted for Trump by a 13-point margin (52% Trump/39% Clinton).

KEY FINDINGS

Awareness of the Trump/GOP plan is low. Just 16% of voters in battleground states say they have heard “a lot” about the tax plan proposed by Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress.

Battleground voters support some specific elements of the plan, but this support is outweighed by overwhelming opposition to elements that benefit the wealthy and corporations or increase taxes on the middle class. A broad majority (84% support/16% oppose) support increasing the child tax credit from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per child. Reducing the number of tax brackets from seven to three enjoys support from 62% of voters.

The most unpopular elements of the plan include:

- Eliminating the \$4,050 personal exemption allowed to each taxpayer for their self, spouse, and each dependent child (25% support/75% oppose)
- Raising the lowest individual income tax rate from 10% to 12% (32% support/68% oppose)
- Reducing the tax rate corporations pay on existing offshore profits from 35% to 10% (32% support/68% oppose)
- Cutting the corporate tax rate (38% support, 62% oppose)

There are several crucial facts we can tell voters about the plan that make them feel much more negatively about it. Facts about the plan that are most likely to make voters feel unfavorable toward it include:

- The budget that includes this tax plan cuts \$500 billion from Medicare and a trillion dollars from Medicaid (71% less favorable, including 54% much less favorable)
- 80% of the total tax cut goes to the wealthiest 1% of taxpayers (70% less favorable, 52% much less favorable)

- The plan gives \$2.6 trillion in tax cuts to corporations, but raises taxes on individuals by \$500 billion (71% less favorable, 52% much less favorable)

Before any messaging, voters are primed to believe the Trump/GOP tax plan will disproportionately benefit the wealthy. A clear majority of voters (59%) believe the wealthy will benefit more from the tax plan than the middle class, including 46% who believe the wealthy will benefit “much more” than the middle class. Just 22% of battleground voters believe they will personally pay less in taxes under this plan.

Top-testing messages against the tax plan focus on how everyday Americans will lose out while the rich and well-connected will benefit. Several different messaging options raise “major doubts” (defined as 9-10 on a 1-10 “doubts” scale) about the plan among at least one-half of voters. These most resonant messages for tax fairness advocates to use include:

- The plan raises taxes on seniors living on fixed incomes, increasing taxes on the people who can least afford it (54% major doubts)
- To pay for the tax cuts Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress propose, their plan will cause deep cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, public education, and job training (54% major doubts)
- The plan would let Donald Trump personally profit, giving billions of dollars in new tax breaks to him and his family (54% major doubts)
- The plan creates a special low tax rate for lobbyists, corporate lawyers, and other wealthy business owners, but people who work for a salary or hourly wage aren't eligible for this new low rate (54% major doubts)
- The plan creates a new loophole that will allow Donald Trump and other wealthy business owners to avoid paying their fair share of taxes by slashing the tax rate they pay on their business income from 40% to 25%. This loophole is specially designed for Trump himself, who owns over 500 pass-through businesses (53% major doubts)
- The plan would provide trillions of dollars in tax cuts for the top 1%, but the rich and well-connected should not get one penny in tax cuts because it will only make the system even more unbalanced in their favor (50% major doubts)

METHODOLOGY

Global Strategy Group and Hart Research Associates conducted an online survey among 1,561 likely November 2018 voters across 15 U.S. Senate battleground states from October 17-25, 2017.

At least 100 interviews were conducted in each of the following 15 states: Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. States were weighted equally rather than by population, to reflect their voting strength in the US Senate.

Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the electorates are properly represented based on past voter turnout statistics.