

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoff Garin, Jay Campbell, and Corrie Hunt
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RE: Key Poll Findings on “Build Back Better” Clean Energy Investments

Our recent survey, conducted February 2 to 7 with a nationally representative sample of 1,008 voters, provides an in-depth assessment of voters’ reactions to the Build Back Better Recovery Plan, which will be a key centerpiece of President Biden’s policy agenda after the American Rescue Plan is enacted. In addition to the national findings, we conducted 636 interviews across nine battleground states (AZ, FL, GA, NC, NH, NV, OH, PA, WI) where the votes of senators will help determine whether BBB passes.

The bottom line of the research is that a significant majority of voters respond favorably to President Biden’s Build Back Better proposal, with over two-thirds of voters nationally and in battleground states saying that Congress should pass it. Support for the plan is durable and withstands the attacks that are most likely to be made against the plan. The plan’s emphasis on investments to expand the use of clean energy is a key driver of support for Build Back Better—with positive responses both to the new, good-paying jobs these investments will create and to the role these investments would play in combating climate change.

Key Findings

1. When we provide respondents a brief initial description of the Build Back Better Recovery Plan, 60% of voters nationally are favorable to it, 17% are neutral, and just 23% are unfavorable. Here is the short description we tested:

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President Biden's Build Back Better Recovery Plan would make historic investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, and clean energy such as solar and wind power. It would include funding for research and development to support innovation and new technologies. By investing in America, American products, and American workers, Biden's plan will create millions of additional good-paying jobs, combat the climate crisis, and build our economy back better than before.

The plan receives a favorable response from 92% of Democrats, 60% of independents, and 26% of Republicans. Fewer than half of Republicans (46%) are unfavorable and 28% are neutral—a lower level of partisan backlash than we see for many proposals associated with a president of the opposing party. In battleground states, 56% are favorable and 23% are unfavorable to the plan.

2. After getting reactions to specific aspects of the Build Back Better plan, including a cost of \$2 trillion or \$4 trillion (these amounts were split sampled, with no difference in results), we asked voters whether or not Congress should pass President Biden's proposal. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of voters nationally and 68% of voters in battleground states say they want Congress to pass the proposal. Supporters of passage include 98% of Democrats, 73% of independents, and 36% of Republicans. While very conservative Republicans oppose the plan by a wide margin, all other Republicans (those who describe themselves as somewhat conservative or moderate) are evenly divided over it. There is significant intensity in the support of Democrats, 72% of whom say Congress should definitely pass it. There is overwhelming support for the plan among both liberal Democrats and moderate Democrats—this is a plan that should unite the party.

3. Voters value the array of job-creating investments that are a part of President Biden's Build Back Better Plan—the investments in modernizing America's infrastructure, the investments in rebuilding and retooling American manufacturing, and the investments in clean energy. Indeed, 66% of voters nationally and 64% in battleground states are favorable to the fact that the Biden plan "would create new, good-paying jobs by making major investments to expand the use of clean energy, including solar power and wind energy."

Seven in 10 voters say the plan's emphasis on clean energy investments makes them more likely to support it, including four in 10 who are much more likely to support it because of its emphasis on clean energy.

4. While the jobs and economic growth benefits of clean energy investments are front-and-center for voters, especially for swing voters, it is also the case that 60% of voters consider climate change to be either a crisis or a very serious problem. These voters feel a strong imperative to act on climate change, and it is compelling to them that by moving to clean energy we can reduce the prospect that "our kids will inherit a future of more droughts, fires, flooding, disease, and food shortages."

5. Recognizing that congressional Republicans and their allies, including fossil fuel companies, will strenuously attack the Build Back Better Recovery Plan, we pressure-tested support for the proposal by asking voters to react to eight hard-hitting criticisms of it. While some of these attacks will require a strenuous defense, the fact is that, even after these attacks, support for President Biden's proposal is durable—with 66% still saying that Congress should pass it, and 66% continuing to say that the emphasis on clean energy investments makes them more likely to support the plan.

Notes on Messaging and other Strategic Considerations

1. Many recent surveys by our firm and others have shown that Democrats lag behind Republicans in terms of who voters trust on issues of jobs and economic growth. One reason for this is that, while Democrats are widely seen as advocates for economic fairness, voters do not associate the Democratic Party with a "big idea" for creating good-paying jobs and promoting economic growth. The Build Back Better Recovery program is an opportunity for Democrats to redress this, and it is essential that Democrats seize the opportunity while the iron is hot. And doing so makes it imperative to talk about Build Back Better through the prism of jobs and growth, first and foremost.

2. The economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis creates an urgency to move forward with Build Back Better's investment in new job creation. In a recent survey, 69% of voters recorded the highest level of concern about the job losses and business closures that are occurring in the country. In this survey, messaging that connects with the urgency of the COVID-19 crisis adds to the impact of the case for Build Back Better.

3. A majority of voters intuitively understand that investments to expand the use of clean energy would help to create new, good-paying jobs. However, it is helpful to be specific about the kinds of jobs that these investments would create, including jobs for electricians, welders, roofers, pipefitters, plumbers, and engineers. Six in 10 voters say these kinds of jobs would help people in the community where they live, and appeal to white non-college educated voters who often do not see a self-interest in supporting other Democratic policy proposals.

4. On a related point, one of the important appeals of Build Back Better that should be highlighted in talking about it is "it would create jobs that benefit areas and workers who too often have been left behind—including workers in rural communities and blue-collar workers." One provision that engenders strong support is expanded training for workers so they have the skills to get good jobs in clean energy industries.

5. There also is a high degree to appeal to the fact that Build Back Better is designed to ensure that "all communities, including low-income and communities of color, benefit from these investments." This aspect of Build Back Better is broadly supported but it is especially important to African-American voters, who also respond avidly to a clearly stated commitment to environmental equity and racial justice.

6. There is a clear benefit to accentuating the investments in solar energy and wind power in Build Back Better, but those are not the only aspects of the proposal that speak to voters' desire to create jobs in a way that is consistent

with a clean and healthy environment. For example, we find broadly positive responses to:

- Modernizing and expanding the nation's electricity transmission system so it is more efficient, more reliable, and better able to support and connect to sources of clean energy power
- Increasing research and development to create new clean energy technologies that will produce and store clean energy at a larger scale and lower cost
- Investments to help American manufacturing be the leader in making cutting-edge products like advanced batteries, zero-emission vehicles, and energy-efficient electric appliances

The first of these points is particularly notable and timely. As the electricity crisis in Texas has demonstrated, there is a need for transformational investments to modernize the electrical grid and harden it against the impacts of extreme weather. Even before this horrific situation, which dominated the national news for days, voters already expressed wide support for this element of Biden's plan.