

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoff Garin and Guy Molyneux, Hart Research Associates
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RE: Survey on DACA and Potential Government Shutdown

Our newly completed survey of voters across 12 key Senate battleground states shows that there is both strong support for including DACA protections for Dreamers in legislation to fund the government and strong opposition to including spending to build President Trump's proposed wall on the Mexican border. Significantly, these voters are inclined to blame President Trump and Republicans in Congress if there is a government shutdown, even though the survey was conducted before Trump rejected the bipartisan compromise on the Dream Act. The survey also shows that voters care more about getting a deal that reflects their priorities on immigration and other issues than about simply getting any deal that keeps the government open. But if there is a government shutdown, those voters most opposed to a shutdown are also especially inclined to say they will blame Donald Trump and Republicans for the impasse.

The findings are based on telephone interviews conducted January 7-9, 2018, among representative cross sections of voters in Florida, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. We conducted 67 interviews in each state, reflecting their representation in the U.S. Senate. The sample was selected to reflect the electorates that cast ballots in the 2016 election; 52% of respondents report having voted for Donald Trump and 41% report having voted for Hillary Clinton, closely matching the actual results of the election in these 12 states.

DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

1. If there is a government shutdown because of an impasse over the government funding bill, most voters' instincts will be to blame President Trump and the Republican majority in Congress.

As a potential government shutdown looms, President Trump and his Republican allies are at a severe disadvantage: by an 11-point margin, voters believe intuitively—even before hearing any specific policy disagreements—that Donald Trump and congressional Republicans (42%) will be more to blame than Democrats (31%) if a shutdown occurs. Considering that Donald Trump carried these states by an average margin of 11 points, this extraordinary result reflects voters' understanding that Trump and Republican leaders are far more willing than Democrats to cause a shutdown. Democrats' advantage is even larger among independents (16 points) and undecided 2018 voters (19 points). These

margins may well be even larger today, in the wake of Trump's decision to reject a bipartisan immigration agreement and the inflammatory language he used in doing so.

A majority (54%) believe passing a funding bill that reflects their priorities is more important than avoiding a government shutdown, but a substantial 37% care more about avoiding a shutdown. Significantly, voters who are most shutdown-averse are also especially likely to cast blame for a prospective shutdown on Donald Trump and congressional Republicans (51%) rather than Democrats (24%). They also support Dreamer protections (89%) more than the overall electorate, while voicing less support for Trump's wall (32%). Thus, if a budget agreement is not reached, Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to receive blame from those voters most angered by a shutdown.

2. There is a broad consensus that a government funding bill should include DACA protections for Dreamers.

Fully 81% of battleground voters say a budget agreement should prevent the deportation of Dreamers by granting them legal status to remain in the country. This sentiment is especially strong among independents (85%) and undecided 2018 voters (88%), and even 68% of Trump voters (and 68% of Republicans) concur. Support for protections is nearly as strong in red states, which voted for both Romney and Trump (79%), as in purple states that went for Obama and Trump (82%).

The survey also finds 73% having a favorable opinion of the Dreamers, compared with just 23% who have an unfavorable view. The favorable proportion exceeds seven in 10 in both red (71%) and purple (76%) states. Trump voters are favorable to Dreamers by 57% to 38%.

3. Most voters oppose inclusion of spending for a Mexican border wall in a bill to fund the government, and they reject Trump's insistence on funding for the wall in exchange for approving protections for Dreamers.

A solid 57% majority oppose including funding for President Trump's proposed wall on the Mexican border in a budget agreement, while just 41% favor it. Opposition is strikingly strong among key swing voter groups, including independents (62% oppose, 34% favor) and 2018 undecided voters (64%, 29%). And when voters learn that Trump's wall has a price tag of \$18 billion, support for it slips to just 38%, with 58% agreeing with Democrats that a budget deal should fund increased border security but not the wall.

Even in a sample dominated by states won by Trump, 55% of voters disapprove of the Trump-GOP insistence on funding the border wall as a precondition for providing DACA protections. Conversely, by 51% to 45% voters approve of

Democrats' making their support for a final deal contingent on DACA protections and increased funding of border security, with no funding for the border wall.

4. When battleground voters consider an extended debate over which side would be more responsible for a hypothetical shutdown, the survey results suggest that Dream advocates have much stronger arguments to make than their opponents. This debate also expands the proportion of voters blaming Trump and the Republicans for a shutdown by seven points.

Four messages critical of Republicans' immigration stance elicit strong agreement (rating of seven to 10 on a zero-to-10 scale) from a clear majority of battleground voters:

- *Donald Trump said "If we have to close down our government, we're building that wall." It is irresponsible for Trump to provoke a government shutdown just to get his wall (57%).*
- *It is wrong for Donald Trump and his Republican allies to shut down the government over building a wall with Mexico, which is a wasteful \$18 billion boondoggle that many Republican voters oppose (55%).*
- *President Trump and Republicans should keep their promise and work with Democrats to protect the Dreamers from deportation, instead of using the Dreamers as a bargaining chip and shutting down the government over them (55%).*
- *Thousands of Dreamers, hard-working young people who arrived here through no fault of their own, become at risk for deportation every day that Congress fails to act. Congress should take action now to protect these Dreamers from mass deportations (53%).*

By contrast, not a single pro-Republican message that we tested met with strong agreement from a majority of voters.

Finally, hearing this debate increases the proportion of voters who think Trump and congressional Republicans would be responsible for a government shutdown. Whereas 42% were inclined to blame Republicans at the start of the survey, this proportion increases seven points to 49% after voters hear messages from both camps. The proportion blaming Democrats also goes up, but by only four points (to 35%), resulting in Democrats' net advantage expanding from 11 points to 14 points. So, beyond beginning any shutdown debate with a big initial credibility disadvantage, President Trump and Republicans also have a weak hand to play in terms of the parties' substantive disagreements about a spending deal. It is difficult to see how a shutdown could have any political impact other than increasing the likelihood of Democratic victories in these battleground states.