2018 Targets in Trump's GOP

The Trump presidency has created serious opportunities for agile progressives to target and deliver messages to a fractured and demoralized GOP. This is the conclusion of *Democracy Corps'* new national online message test of 1,200 Republican registered voters, numerous *Catalist* voter-file matched phone surveys, and focus groups among the factions of the GOP.[1]

Fully 40 percent of the GOP base are part of factions that are unenthusiastic about President Trump and one-quarter may be targeted in these final 60 days before the midterm. These targets may be identified by demographic variables, partisanship, and ideological identity – including by the existing models available to progressives on *Catalist*'s voter-file. They want leaders who will be a check on Donald Trump and are responsive to messages demanding a less divisive politics.

The Trump enthusiasm gap opportunity

President Trump has produced an enthusiasm gap between Democrats – who are united and mobilized against him – and Republicans – who are divided into the highly defensive Trump loyalists and the less enthusiastic GOP put off by Trump's base strategy. This has been confirmed in our phone surveys and focus groups among the factions of the GOP base, and persists in this new web-survey. It is time to act on this huge opportunity.

The unenthusiastic faction of moderates and secular conservatives are 41 percent of self-identified Republicans (23 percent and 18 percent, respectively) and their lack of enthusiasm for Trump, their desire for a check on his presidency, and their low interest in this election are flashing lights.[2]

- One-third of moderates and nearly one-quarter of secular conservatives disapprove of Trump. Three-quarters of moderates either disapprove of his performance or approve

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[1] Democracy Corps and Greenberg Research conducted a web-survey of 1,200 Republican and Republican-leaning independent registered voters nationally between August 21-26, 2018.

[2] The GOP base may be broken into 5 five factions – moderates, secular conservatives, Catholic conservatives, Tea Party GOP and Evangelicals. Detailed overviews of each of these factions of the GOP are available in survey and focus group reports on our website.

weakly. That contrasts with the 60 percent of Evangelicals and Tea Party GOP who strongly approve of Trump's performance.

- Almost half of moderates and 3-in-10 secular conservatives want to vote for leaders who will be "a check on President Trump."

- These voters are evidencing their views by their electoral pull back. Only one-third of moderates and 37 percent of secular conservatives give the maximum level of interest on a 1 to 10 level of interest scale – dramatically below the 53 percent of Evangelicals. The highest interest drops to 30 percent with secular conservative women and just 21 percent with moderate women. That's a statement!

- Half of moderates and secular conservatives say the election is no more important or less important than past elections. They do not join the Tea Party Evangelicals who want to vote to defend the Trump presidency.

Progressives should not assume that these voters are inaccessible because of the way conservatives reach their base. The Trump rallies and *Fox News* may not reach them. *Fox News* is viewed negatively by the unenthusiastic faction of the GOP base, including half of moderates and a plurality of secular conservatives. In the focus groups *Democracy Corps* conducted with the different factions of the GOP base, about half of the participants were uncomfortable watching a video segment of President Trump speaking to a rally. That was particularly true with moderates and secular conservatives.

Identifying the targets for fracture

It is possible to target Republicans who are pulling back from Trump based on their partisanship and ideology and further by demographic variables. Critically, many of this can be achieved using voter-file scores available to progressives.

Even though Donald Trump is not a typical Republican, his strongest support comes from the 50 percent of the GOP base that identify as strong Republicans. Weak Republicans and Republican-leaning independents – the other half of the GOP base – are much less supportive of the president and less enthusiastic about voting. Analysis of *Democracy Corps*' voter-file matched phone surveys, nationally and in the battleground, confirms that there is significant overlap between self-reported strong Republicans and Republican base voters on *Catalist*'s partisanship score.

Big drop off in support for Trump & GOP in 2018 among weak GOP

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?

Thinking about the election for Congress in your district in November, will you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?

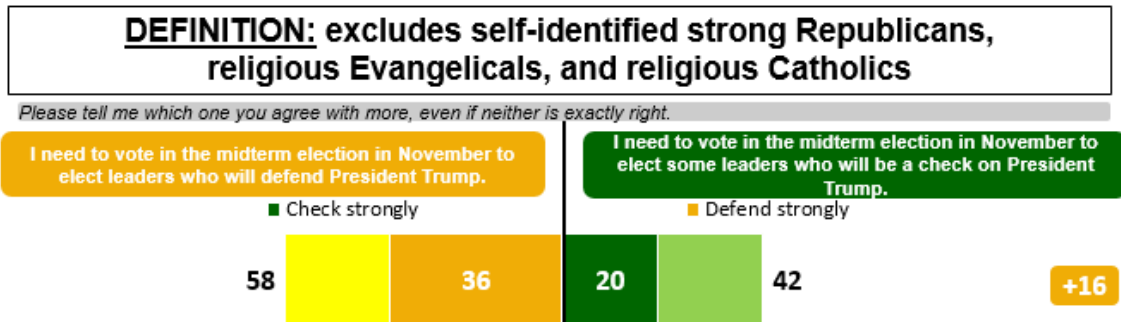*Please rate your interest from 1 to 10, with 1 meaning that you have no interest in this election and 10 meaning that you are extremely interested.*

TRUMP APPROVAL

■ Approve strongly   ■ Disapprove strongly

Strong GOP	Weak GOP	Ind. Lean GOP
+86	+38	+56
93	69	78
67	22	37
7	10	9
	31	22

CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT

■ Strong Republican   ■ Strong Democrat

Strong GOP	Weak GOP	Ind. Lean GOP
+95	+67	+67
97	79	79
88	40	45
2	12	12

% 10 INTEREST IN ELECTION

Strong GOP	Weak GOP	Ind. Lean GOP
55	27	43

Most operationally, excluding Evangelicals and Catholics and strong Republicans produces a target group that form 26 percent of the Republican base. These are the voters who most want a check on Trump and express their lack of enthusiasm in lower intention to vote in the off-year elections. As you will see, they respond to a message about divisiveness.

GOP target group = 26% of GOP

DEFINITION: excludes self-identified strong Republicans, religious Evangelicals, and religious Catholics

Please tell me which one you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right.

I need to vote in the midterm election in November to elect leaders who will defend President Trump.

I need to vote in the midterm election in November to elect some leaders who will be a check on President Trump.

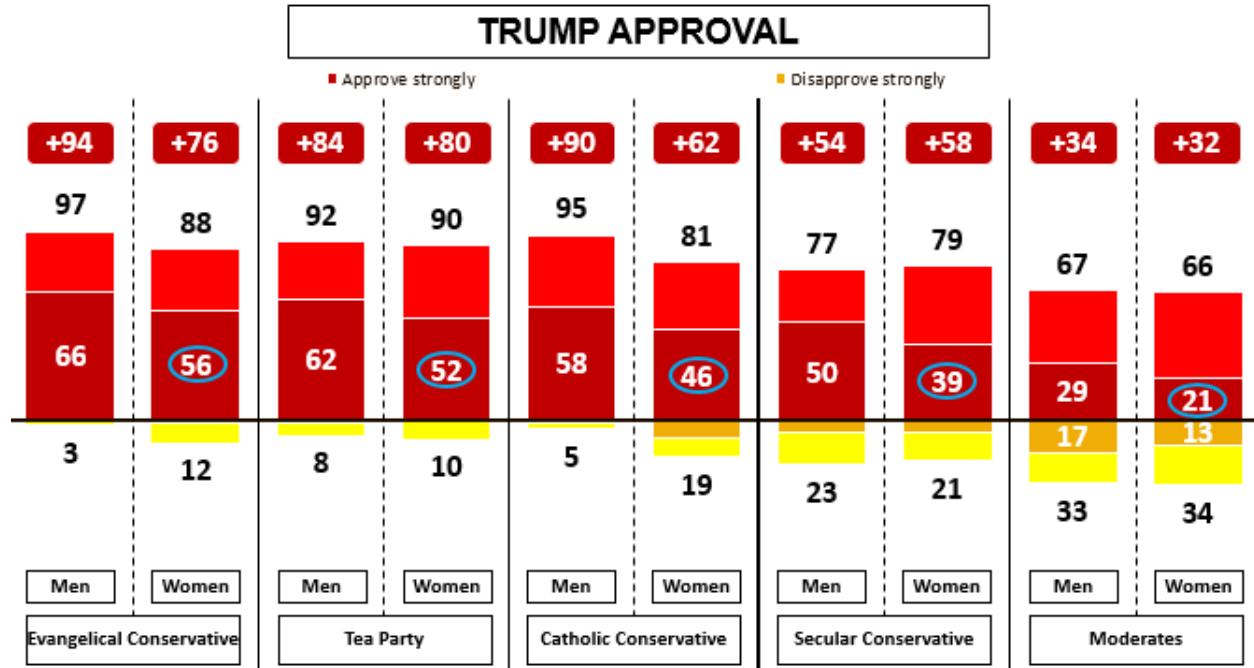■ Check strongly   ■ Defend strongly

58	36	20	42	+16

It is also possible to further refine by demographics like gender, age and education. Women across all factions of the GOP base are also significantly less likely than their male and counterparts to express strong support for Donald Trump or high enthusiasm for voting in November.

Women across the board less taken with Trump

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?

TRUMP APPROVAL

■ Approve strongly   ■ Disapprove strongly

	Evangelical Conservative		Tea Party		Catholic Conservative		Secular Conservative		Moderates	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Net	+94	+76	+84	+80	+90	+62	+54	+58	+34	+32
Approve total	97	88	92	90	95	81	77	79	67	66
Approve strongly	66	56	62	52	58	46	50	39	29	21
Disapprove strongly									17	13
Disapprove total	3	12	8	10	5	19	23	21	33	34

Republican women who are under 45, born before 1980, or are under 30, college educated Republican women and unmarried Republican women present the greatest opportunity based on their low approval of President Trump and low interest in the midterms.

Talking to GOP targets

This survey provides clarity about the best message platform and attacks for the target audience of GOP base voters. These targets are critical of politicians who have created too much division and urge them to end the gridlock that is hurting the middle class. They want politicians who will work with both parties to fix our problems.

Democratic message platform: politicians stop dividing & start working together

Below is something that a Democratic candidate is saying about the country and why it is important to vote for Democrats for Congress and other offices in November. How much more positive do you feel about the Democratic candidates for Congress and other offices after hearing that?
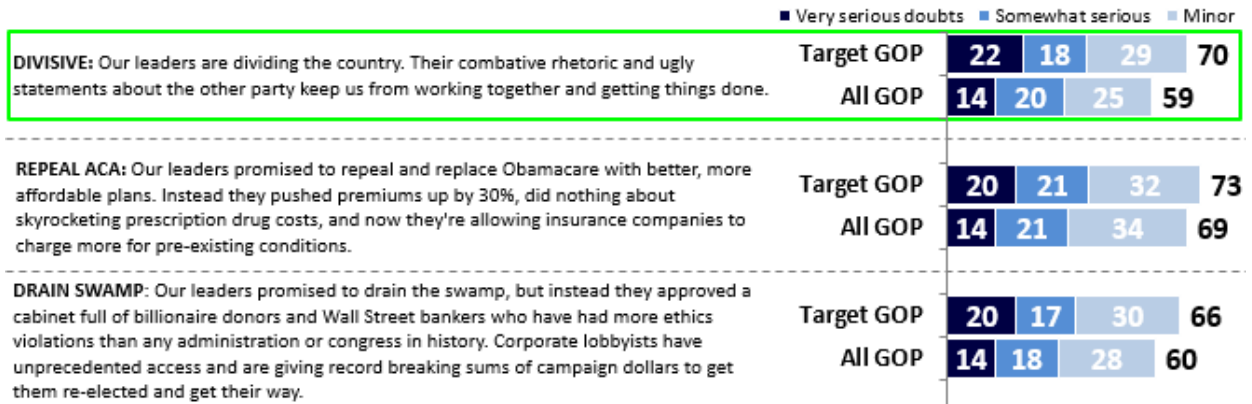
■ Much more positive
■ Somewhat more

WORK TOGETHER: The political leaders in this country have created too much division and polarization. It is gridlocking our country so nothing gets done for the middle class. Listening to each other and working together is how we will help people earn enough to support themselves and their families, get the health care they need, and protect Social Security and Medicare. I will work with anyone, Democrat or Republican, to fix our problems.

12	17	26	54
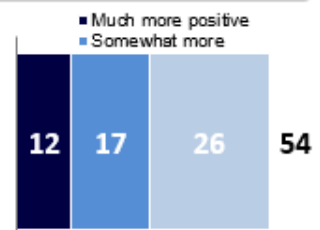
The strong attack among GOP targets is consistent with this platform: politicians are dividing the country with their statements about the other party and won't work together to get things done.

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Divisiveness, health care & swamp produce biggest doubts

Now you are going to read some reasons why some people say they cannot vote for the Republican candidate for Congress in November. For each one, indicate whether it raises very serious doubts about the Republican candidate, somewhat serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts.

■ Very serious doubts ■ Somewhat serious ■ Minor

		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Minor	Total
DIVISIVE: Our leaders are dividing the country. Their combative rhetoric and ugly statements about the other party keep us from working together and getting things done.	Target GOP	22	18	29	70
	All GOP	14	20	25	59
REPEAL ACA: Our leaders promised to repeal and replace Obamacare with better, more affordable plans. Instead they pushed premiums up by 30%, did nothing about skyrocketing prescription drug costs, and now they're allowing insurance companies to charge more for pre-existing conditions.	Target GOP	20	21	32	73
	All GOP	14	21	34	69
DRAIN SWAMP: Our leaders promised to drain the swamp, but instead they approved a cabinet full of billionaire donors and Wall Street bankers who have had more ethics violations than any administration or congress in history. Corporate lobbyists have unprecedented access and are giving record breaking sums of campaign dollars to get them re-elected and get their way.	Target GOP	20	17	30	66
	All GOP	14	18	28	60

Attacks on Republicans' handling of health care and failing to drain the swamp also do damage, but the data best supports a clear, integrated message focused on the politicians dividing the country and refusing to work with the other party at the expense of the middle class.