



The Daily Dish

Policy Priorities and the Election – Evidence from Polling

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Eakinomics: Policy Priorities and the Election – Evidence from Polling

Sometimes it is a good idea to ask the customer what they want. This lesson holds in the think tank world as well as the broader economy. After all, what good is it to analyze esoteric policies that have no chance of being supported by the voters? With this in mind, AAF commissioned polls in five key states – Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio – during the first week in September and repeated in early October.

The September [polls](#) yielded some key insights.

- The sharp partisan divide in politics spills over to nearly every policy issue as well. For example, recovering from the recession and eliminating the coronavirus are nearly tied as the most important domestic issue, but the former is a runaway leader among Republicans and the latter among Democrats.
- There is no strong support for reforming entitlements, although in three of the five states, voters prefer a mix of spending cuts and tax increases to doing nothing.
- In states where asked, voters cite costs as their primary health care concern, are positive about Right to Work laws, and are hopeful that their financial situation will improve over the next year.
- On a bipartisan basis, there is opposition to the government regulating the content of social media, but at the same time a notable sentiment that big tech companies are under-regulated.

The [results](#) of the second round of polling are now in. The poll questions in October were largely unchanged from the month before. But in the past month there are been four important developments: (1) the candidates squared off in the first presidential campaign debate, (2) the president became infected with the coronavirus, (3) a Supreme Court vacancy was created by the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and (4) national polling suggested the possibility of a sweep by Democrats of the House, Senate, and White House.

The first two questions had the potential to have a fundamental impact on the race. As noted above, a clear finding was that the sharp partisan divide in politics spills over to nearly every policy issue as well. Anything that changes the partisan balance in the race will affect the policy priorities.

AAF added questions regarding the latter two issues, specifically, how important filling the Supreme Court vacancy was as a policy issue and whether voters favored or opposed eliminating the legislative filibuster. (There has been speculation that if Democrats controlled both houses of Congress, they would change Senate rules requiring a super-majority vote, i.e. 60 votes, to end debate on an issue and move to a final vote governed by a simple majority; requiring this super-majority is known as the filibuster.)

The key findings are quite similar to September with two exceptions.

- On the surface, “Eliminate the Coronavirus” seems to have emerged as the top issue by a large margin. In

September it was roughly on par with “Recovery from the Recession.” This shift is a result, however, of the addition of “Filling Supreme Court Vacancy” to the menu of options. Republicans are split between the latter two, with the Supreme Court actually the leading issue among Arizona Republicans. Because of this schism among Republicans, the top line appears to have shifted in favor of addressing the coronavirus.

- Respondents oppose eliminating the legislative filibuster by large margins and nearly on a bipartisan basis. In Ohio, however, Democrats favor eliminating the filibuster 45 percent to 37 percent.

On a state-by-state basis, the polls contain a wealth of insights. Enjoy browsing through the results.