



TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Priorities USA, House Majority PAC, HIT Strategies and Hart Research.

DATE: August 8th, 2022

RE: [NEW POLL] Examining the Preferences of Black Voters Ahead of the Midterms

Black voters delivered the presidency and the Senate for the Democratic Party, and will play a decisive role in Senate, gubernatorial and House races this November. In order to retain the trust of this community, Democrats need to emphasize that Black political power is the reason we've made progress. Black voters were crucial to the election of the first Black woman vice president and nomination of the first Black woman Supreme Court justice. All of these achievements are only possible from Black voters' strong turnout at the polls, even in the face of rampant voter suppression.

Priorities USA and House Majority PAC partnered to complete a comprehensive summary of the political attitudes and preferences of Black voters across key US House districts. In order to win these critical races, Democrats must speak to the specific needs of the Black community and consciously avoid classifying Black communities as simply "mobilization audiences" which puts organizations under the false impression that Black voters don't need the same long-term engagement strategies and campaigns that other demographic groups do. The following summary of findings from polling and focus groups identifies key areas for effective persuasion.

Democrats Must Invest in Messaging that Centers the Needs of Black Communities.

When asked which party they trust most to handle top concerns, Black voters overwhelmingly chose Democrats — giving scores of **77%** on voting rights and **70%** on tackling racism and discrimination compared to **9%** and **10%** for Republicans on those same issues.

In order to retain and build on this trust with Black voters, Democratic messaging must address **how our platform specifically affects the lives of Black voters**. Broadcast messages about widely popular Democratic accomplishments on COVID relief, health care, and jobs resonate best with Black voters when we invest in messaging lanes that frame the impacts of the very policies that Black communities voted to put in place.

For example, Democratic messaging must name how sweeping policies like vaccine distribution and the child tax credit uplifted Black communities. Because Black voters turned out in record numbers, millions of Black lives were saved by vaccines and the child tax credit reduced Black child poverty by **40%**. It's not enough to focus solely on the broad impacts of the 300 million

vaccines that were distributed in the first 150 days of the Biden administration or the 35 million families that received the child tax credit.

Among Black voters, **57%** and **58%** say that the proposal to cap the price of insulin and the \$46 billion for housing assistance during the pandemic affects their lives. While these are strong numbers on salient issues, they will be more effective electoral messages when framed as specifically affecting the Black community. These are tangible examples of progress that highlight how Democratic policies account for the unique ways these policies impact Black voters and must be distinct from broader Democratic messaging.

In addition to highlighting the specific impacts of broader policies, Democrats must invest in messaging that focuses on the policies that address issues that Black communities widely recognize as disproportionately affecting them. In the survey of Black voters, the Democratic accomplishments that resonated with respondents the most were the executive order on police reform that established a national database on police misconduct and restricted the use of no-knock warrants and choke holds by federal officers in response to the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (**71% of respondents said this directly impacted their lives**), and Biden's \$15 billion allocation to replace water pipes and reduce lead exposure in Black communities (**67%**).

In order to build trust and demonstrate that the Democratic Party is committed to the voters that put them in office, we must be responsive to the issues that impact the day to day lives of Black Americans. By highlighting real solutions that matter most to Black communities, we can better communicate that the Democratic Party is fighting to improve their lives.

Black Voters Recognize the Threat of the Republican Party in Both Style and Substance.

Black voters are well aware of the existential threat the GOP poses to their political power and fundamental rights. In general, respondents were persuaded by the impact of Republican threats on their lives — the largest perceived threats being voter suppression (**78%**) and the perpetuation of white supremacy and racist violence (**77%**).

“The root of the Republican Party is founded upon white supremacist values. Everything that I view as the Republican Party is anti-Black.” (Female Focus Group Participant).

And when asked about possible Republican threats to democracy, most Black voters agreed that these threats would have a major impact on their lives. Approximately two-thirds (**66%**) of respondents cited the spread of white supremacy and voter suppression as threats that had major impacts on their lives, which presents an opportunity for Democrats to underscore the GOP's extremist base, hateful policies and position themselves as the party championing anti-racism, voting rights and opportunities for everyone to get ahead.

The data is clear that Black voters are well aware of the white supremacist threat posed by the GOP. An effective message will contrast the obvious threat of Republican white supremacist violence with Democratic efforts to champion issues that Black people care about and fight back

against the forces of extremism. The Democratic Party is known for its diversity in both its electorate and elected officials. Black voters recognize this obvious difference from the GOP and Democrats should lean into their diversity as a contrast point on both style and substance. A key component of Democratic messaging must make this election a choice between the far-right Republican Party and the multi-racial coalition of the Democratic Party that represents and delivers for the majority of Americans.

Democrats Must Play Offense to Show Black Voters That Their Vote Matters.

The survey demonstrated that appealing to the political power of the Black community is an effective method to increase voter enthusiasm. Respondents said that the biggest sources of increasing Black political power are electing people who will faithfully represent the Black community (**53%**) and electing more Black people to political office (**45%**).

After years of racist discrimination and disenfranchisement, many Black voters do not trust those in power to reflect the meaningful political power of their community.

“You’re constantly finding ways: gerrymandering, voter restrictions, additional I.D. laws. Why? Just say you don’t want people of color to vote. Just say you want this to maintain the GOP ways. Or even if you don’t want to assign a political party to it, you say that you don’t want these people to progress.” (Female Focus Group Participant)

The expansion of voter suppression bills across the country continue to threaten the right to vote and limit Black political power. Democrats need to aggressively use their voter outreach channels to fight back against laws that seek to disenfranchise Black voters, which are seen as the **biggest threat to Black political power (53%)** and have the **greatest** partisan margin out of all issues surveyed. White supremacists also registered with many as a top threat at **47%**.

“They’re making it almost painful for a person to go cast a ballot when in this day and age, with the technology that we have, you should be able to vote on your phone. And it’s way more than like, you know, I mean, it should be easier now to go cast a ballot. It shouldn’t be harder.” (Male Focus Group Participant)

While Republicans are clearly on the attack, rolling back voting rights state by state, Black voters perceive Democrats as having less bite on enacting voter protections. With all this in mind, Democrats must be more clear in taking urgent action against GOP efforts to restrict the right to vote and aid and abet insurrectionists. By using the full range of outreach capabilities Democrats have at their disposal to keep voters updated on how they can legally cast a ballot in their state, Democratic candidates and organizations can build trust with the communities most affected by these laws and mitigate their suppressive intent.

Conclusion and Recommendations.

Black voters support Democratic candidates at a higher rate than any other voting bloc this year, but this support cannot be taken for granted. Failure to cast Republicans as unelectable extremists and double-down on Democrats’ commitment to the Black communities that have

delivered the progressive wins of the past could result in a sustained erosion of Black support for Democratic candidates. Black voters' trust of the Republican Party is increasingly low, but this distrust is not a given. Voters are tuning out of the news and have busy lives to focus on. If Democrats don't make the connection between violent white supremacy and Republican extremism on policies like voting rights and the social safety net, there is no guarantee that this context will reach voters ahead of the election.

In order to engage the Black community and persuade Black voters to support Democrats in November, Democrats must invest in outreach campaigns that speak to the specific needs of this community. Many traditional political messages about economic and social issues are constructed with majority white audiences in mind. Black voters are very concerned about the economy but also are acutely aware that their community is often an afterthought in policymaking. Democrats must not only speak to these broad concerns but specifically tailor messaging that emphasizes the commitment of Democrats in power to the needs of Black communities. Black voters do not need Democratic politicians to be saviors — they are looking for a party that acknowledges their communities, their needs and elevates Black voices.

Black voters know their votes have power. It's up to Democrats to find ways to center and authentically engage Black communities long term to continue to grow Black political power and develop leaders that will represent and better their communities.

HIT Strategies conducted a survey from June 22nd to June 27th, 2022 by phone and text to web survey in battleground House districts with over 10% BVAP of 600 Black voters who voted in 2016, 2018 and/or 2020, or have registered since 2020.

Hart Research conducted three online focus groups with Black voters held July 6 to 7, 2022. The focus groups included 24 Black voters recruited from congressional battleground districts in 12 states.

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