

**TO:** Josh Silver, Represent.Us/United Republic

**FR:** Jeff Harrelson, MFour Research  
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**RE: National Voter Survey Findings (Insider Analysis)**

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Between 11/12 and 11/17, our firms fielded a poll of 1,003 likely U.S. voters statistically balanced to represent the U.S. voting public. For transparency purposes, we have included the sampling methodology at the end of this memo.

Numerous public and private polls have already documented a growing feeling of alienation and disenfranchisement among American voters, and the erosion of confidence in Congress. This poll attempts to understand the cause of – and potential solutions to – this growing dissatisfaction by measuring current voter attitudes toward money and corruption in politics, and testing alternative campaign funding and anti-corruption solutions.

The results are compelling.

Many national polls seeking to understand America’s deep dissatisfaction with our government show a moderate to deep divide along party and ideological lines. This poll suggests an overwhelming consensus amongst Democrats, Republicans, Independents and non-affiliated voters around the issue of corruption in the American election system and the need to institute tough, meaningful reforms.

The poll suggests now may be the most opportune time in modern history to toughen the nation’s campaign finance laws and restore an electoral system that voters agree has been soured by big money and political corruption.

However, the poll suggests that in order to succeed, some long-standing assumptions about campaign finance reform must be reconsidered.

**Four key data points stand out in the poll.**

1. **Broad consensus in support of measures to reduce corruption.** 95% of respondents believe it is important that our elected leaders reduce the influence of money and corruption in political elections, and more than 97% would support a federal law that imposes “tough, new anti-corruption laws for politicians, lobbyists and Super PACs.” This includes 82% of Democrats and an even higher 83% of Republicans who believe it is important to do so.

2. **Reframing “campaign finance reform” as “corruption” garners broader bipartisan support.** “Reduce the influence of corruption in elections” achieved a 21-point increase over “reduce the influence of money in elections,” and a 30-point increase from Republicans among respondents who ranked it as very important (the highest possible rank).
3. **Conflict of interest reforms outrank public funding reforms.** Respondents were asked to list their top three (of 11 listed) potential anti-corruption and campaign finance reform measures:  
 Notable measures chosen:
  - i. 46.8%: Prohibit politicians from taking campaign money from the industries they regulate.
  - ii. 37.2%: Dramatically reduce how much money lobbyists can give to candidates, political parties and political committees.
  - iii. 30.8%: Put tough limits on unregulated superPAC’s.
 This indicates that the public will more strongly support proposals that include provisions such as these, along with important-but-less popular reforms.
4. **While public funding ranks lower among possible reforms, the “Tax Refund” model outperforms others.** When compared to the “Matching Funds” model and traditional public funding models, the Tax Refund public funding model shows an 8-point increase among likely voters and a 13-point increase among Republican respondents.

These four data points demonstrate the viability of sweeping money in politics reforms in the current political climate, and show that success for these reforms may be dependent upon a new framing and packaging of the problem and the solution.

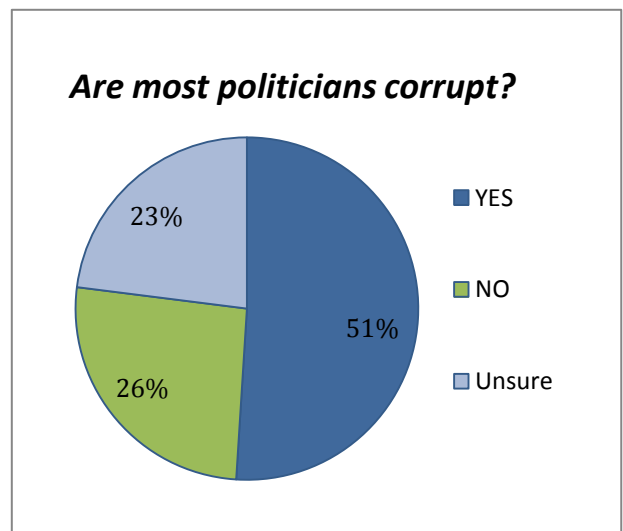
To give some further depth to these poll results, we have broken down the analysis of the findings.

### VOTERS SHOW DISILLUSIONMENT WITH U.S. CAMPAIGN FUNDING SYSTEM

While numerous public polls have documented the precipitous decline in Congressional favorability and job performance ratings, this poll demonstrates an increasing disillusionment with how our public officials are elected.

- 71% of voters say the U.S. election system is “biased in favor of the candidate with the most money” – including nearly 80% of Independent voters.
- In addition, more than half of all voters – 51% - believe most politicians are corrupt.

It is not surprising that with these joint



perspectives of bias and corruption weighing on voters, that voters are expressing so little faith in and support for Congressional representatives. In addition, poll results showed voters perceiving “Big Money,” “Lobbyists,” and “Wall Street and Corporations” as exerting too much influence in Washington. When talking about the “bad guys” behind the corruption efforts, citing “big money” and “lobbyists” will likely be most effective.

Top groups with too much influence in Washington...				
	ALL VOTERS	REP	DEM	OTHR
1	Big money	Big money	Big Money	Big Money
2	Lobbyists	Lobbyists	Wealthiest 1%	Lobbyists
3	Wall Street and Corporations	Labor Unions	Wall Street	Wall Street

This baseline disillusionment with the nation’s campaign funding system translates into an overwhelming consensus that it is important for elected leaders to reduce the influence of money and corruption in political elections.

- 92% say it is important that “our elected leaders reduce the influence of money in political elections
- 97% say it is important that “our elected leaders reduce the influence of corruption in political elections.” This includes 82% who say it is *very important* to do so.
- While the overwhelming percentages here show the broad consensus of attitudes among voters, split sampling shows voters reacting more strongly to language advocating a reduction of “corruption” in politics, rather than “money.” The influence of corruption was particularly powerful amongst Republican and conservative voters.

Not surprisingly, almost an equal number of voters say they would support a federal law that “imposes tough, new campaign finance/anti-corruption laws for politicians, lobbyists and Super PACs.”

- 90% of voters say they would support a federal law that imposes tough, new campaign finance laws.
- 97% of voters say they would support a federal law that imposes “tough, new anti-corruption laws,” including 72% who say they would *strongly support*. Again, “anti-corruption” language proves more effective than “campaign finance” or “money.”

Would you support or oppose a federal law that imposes tough, new <b>[SPLIT A: campaign finance laws/SPLIT B: anti-corruption laws]</b> for politicians, lobbyists and Super PACs?				
N= 1003	TOTAL	DEM	REP	OTHR
SUPPORT	94%	95%	91%	94%
OPPOSE	5%	3%	8%	4%
REFUSE	1%	2%	1%	2%

Would you support or oppose a federal law that imposes tough, new <b>[SPLIT A: campaign finance laws/SPLIT B: anti-corruption laws]</b> for politicians, lobbyists and Super PACs?				
N= 1003	TOTAL	CONS	LIB	MOD
SUPPORT	94%	93%	97%	96%
OPPOSE	5%	6%	2%	4%
REFUSE	1%	1%	1%	*%

## VOTERS SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE CAMPAIGN FUNDING SYSTEMS

While the concept of public funding for political campaigns has historically received mixed support, this poll tested support for several alternative campaign funding strategies aimed at reducing the influence of big money in elections.

In a head-to-head match-up of three alternative funding systems, voters were asked to choose which plan they like best. Proposal R, where voters receive a tax refund of up to \$100 that they can donate to the eligible candidate of their choice (eligible candidates agree not to accept donations of \$1000 or more), was the top choice. A plurality of voters selected this as the preferred approach. Notably, Proposal R was the first-choice selection among Democrats, Republicans and Independent voters.

Of the three proposals you just read, which one would you be most willing to support?				
N= 1003	TOTAL	DEM	REP	OTHR
PROP. R: Voters receive a [SPLIT A: tax refund/SPLIT B: grant] of up to \$100 that they can donate to the eligible candidate of their choice – eligible candidates agree not to accept donations of \$1000 or more.	33%	33%	36%	30%
PROP. S: Candidates who agree to campaign contribution limits and get small campaign donations from over 500 local voters receive a set amount of public campaign funds to help them run.	28%	30%	27%	27%
PROP. T: Candidates who agree to campaign contribution limits of \$1000 per donor receive six dollars from public campaign funds for every dollar they raise in small contributions from local voters.	22%	25%	18%	23%
NONE	16%	12%	18%	17%
REFUSE	1%	2%	1%	2%

\*\* For complete question text and context, refer to the topline or cross tab data tables.

Argumentation for and against these funding proposals shows consistent agreement with the arguments that “this proposal will make everyday voters more important” and “this proposal will allow voters to elect good candidates who will stand up to special interests.”

From a strategic perspective, when discussing the funding component of Proposal R, proponents should refer to the following message battery (these messages were effective across partisan lines).

- (Voter empowerment) “This proposal will make everyday voters more important.”
- (Prioritizing voters vs. special interests) “This proposal will allow voters to elect good candidates who will stand up to special interests.”
- (Affordability for value) “This proposal will cost citizens just \$2 a year to fund, an affordable price to reduce the influence of special interests.”
- (Voter priorities vs. corporate priorities) “This proposal will help elect candidates who will ensure our tax dollars are spent on things like education and public safety, not tax loophole subsidies and giveaways for big money donors.”

It is important to note that messages citing the proposal as capable of reducing the influence of money in politics and reducing corruption in politics were not as effective as the messages listed above with any of the three proposals. This suggests that while voters may strongly appreciate anti-corruption efforts, they do not instinctively associate public funding with this value.

Not surprisingly, all of these proposals will continue to be vulnerable to messages citing public funding to extremists candidates and the inability to “stop big money.”

A second “he-said-she-said” question test put to all voters regarding Proposal R reinforced the strength of support messaging when compared with opposition messaging. Split sampling also shows independent voters reacting more positively to messaging prioritizing voters over special interest donors -- while Democratic and Republican voters react more positively toward messages prioritizing voter tax dollar distribution interests over special interests.

### VOTERS STRONGLY SUPPORT THE AMERICAN ANTI-CORRUPTION ACT

Voters overwhelmingly supported the proposed American Anti-Corruption Act, including its key tenants. Most importantly, the proposal was widely supported across the ideological and partisan spectrums.

A group of concerned voters is proposing [**SPLIT A: tough, new campaign finance laws/SPLIT B: tough, new anti-corruption laws**] for politicians, special interest lobbyists and Super PACs by:

- Prohibiting politicians from taking campaign money from industries they regulate;
- Putting limits on unregulated Super PACs;
- Increasing transparency for campaign funding;
- Empowering all voters through a tax refund to contribute to the candidates they support;
- Reducing the influence of big money in elections; and
- Getting tougher with politicians and special interests that break campaign finance laws.

N= 1003	TOTAL	DEM	REP	OTHR
SUPPORT	87%	91%	83%	87%
OPPOSE	7%	2%	12%	7%
REFUSE	6%	7%	5%	6%

- Split Sampling results show voters reacting more positively to descriptive language summarizing the law as including “tough, new anti-corruption laws for politicians, special interest lobbyists and Super PACs” with 89% registering support and 41% registering *strong support*.
- Interestingly, regardless of partisan or ideological position, voters generally prioritized the same key components of the proposal.

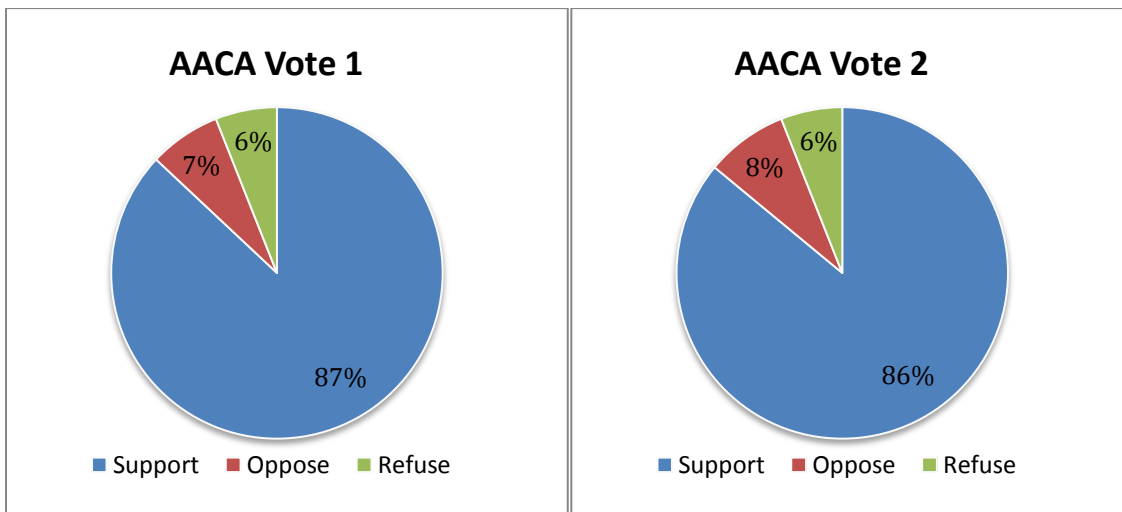
1. Prohibit politicians from taking campaign money from industries they regulate
2. Reducing the influence of big money on candidates and elections
3. Dramatically reducing how much money lobbyists can give to candidates, political parties and political committees
4. Put tough limits on unregulated Super PACs

Arguments for and against the proposal had little effect in shifting strong voter support, but helped identify a clear message battery for supporting the AACA:

- (Voter empowerment) “This proposal will make everyday voters more important.”
- (Prioritizing voters vs. special interests) “This proposal will allow voters to elect good candidates who will stand up to special interests.”
- T-3 (Affordability for value) “This proposal will cost citizens just \$2 a year to fund, an affordable price to reduce the influence of special interests.”
- T-3 (Reducing the influence of money) “This proposal will reduce the influence of money in politics.”

It is interesting to note that with the complete components of the AACA, voters are more willing to prioritize “reducing the influence of money” argumentation than they were in the funding mechanism battery. These top two priorities remain consistent along the partisan spectrum, although for a third message, Republicans prioritized the reduction of money influence, while Democratic and Independent voters prioritized affordability for value messaging.

- We see almost no movement based on the impact of arguments as support remains very high. Initial support for the AACA starts at 87% support and 7% oppose (+80) and shifts to 86% support and 8% oppose (+78).



Overall, given the current political climate, this proposal has a strong opportunity to connect with the American public and attract support across party lines, particularly as voters have demonstrated a punitive mindset when it comes to increasing regulation on Congress.

## POLLING METHODOLOGY

This poll was conducted from November 12 to 17, 2013 and includes 1,003 U.S. voters. The poll was administered using an online format and adapted for voters using Apple and Android-based smartphone phones. The sample was controlled and weighted to reflect U.S. voter demographics.

Participating voters were recruited from a reputable panel provider and invited to complete surveys typically by email notification in exchange for minimal monetary compensation (i.e., \$0.50-\$0.75) or redeemable points. The panel provider ensures panelist identity and that IP addresses are legitimate from people wishing to become panelists.

Also, panelists are screened for completing a large number of surveys and showing undesirable behavior such as inconsistent responding or “speeding” through surveys.

The margin of error for the entire survey is +/- 3.5 percent at a 95<sup>th</sup> percent confidence interval. Some questions in the poll were administered to roughly equal halves of the samples, i.e., split samples, which produces larger margins of error.

The poll was conducted by MFour Market Research and Tulchin Research. These firms were retained to represent a Republican and Democratic polling firm perspective in the drafting and analysis of the poll. The firms have worked together in other public polling efforts, including on behalf of the University of Southern California.

[www.MFour.com](http://www.MFour.com)

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