

November 19, 2018

## First Agenda Item for Congressional Majority: Ending the Culture of Corruption in Washington

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

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This election was about many things: a referendum on Donald Trump and his policies, a fight over affordable healthcare and prescription drug costs, a surge of women candidates and voters, and more. Through largely uncelebrated post-election, the context of money in politics, reform, and ending the culture of corruption, was woven into the fabric of many successful Democratic candidacies and formed one of the central contrasts in these races.

Whatever one calls it—money in politics, reform, culture of corruption—this is more than an “issue,” rather it is part of a core narrative that defined many newly elected Democrats who campaigned on service and country more than on party identity. In many cases, Democratic challengers defined their races as a clear choice between service to people and country versus fealty to big money and corporate special interests. Refusing corporate money fit this contrast and credibly boosted the challengers’ claims to be guided by a different mission.

The post-2018 agenda begins with this issue.

A poll commissioned by End Citizens United<sup>1</sup> highlights the centrality of reform messages both as a campaign strategy for Democrats in the 2018 midterm elections and for the new congressional majority moving forward.

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<sup>1</sup> Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted a phone survey of 1,000 2018 general election voters in a national battleground of Congressional Districts (CA-25, CA-39, CA-45, CA-48, CA-49, CO-06, FL-26, GA-06, IA-01, IA-03, IL-06, IL-12, IL-14, KS-03, ME-02, MI-08, MI-11, MN-02, MN-03, NH-01, NJ-03, NJ-07, NJ-11, NM-02, NY-02, NY-11, NY-19, NY-22, NC-09, NC-13, OK-05, PA-05, PA-07, PA-17, SC-01, TX-07, TX-23, TX-32, VA-02, VA-07, VA-10, and WA-08) on November 8-12, 2018. The data are subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; margin of error is higher among subgroups.

Three-quarters of voters said ending the culture of corruption in Washington was “very important” when deciding how to vote this fall, making it the most important issue for voters. Among independents, the gap in importance of these issues is even larger as ending the culture of corruption tops the next highest issues by 6-8 points.



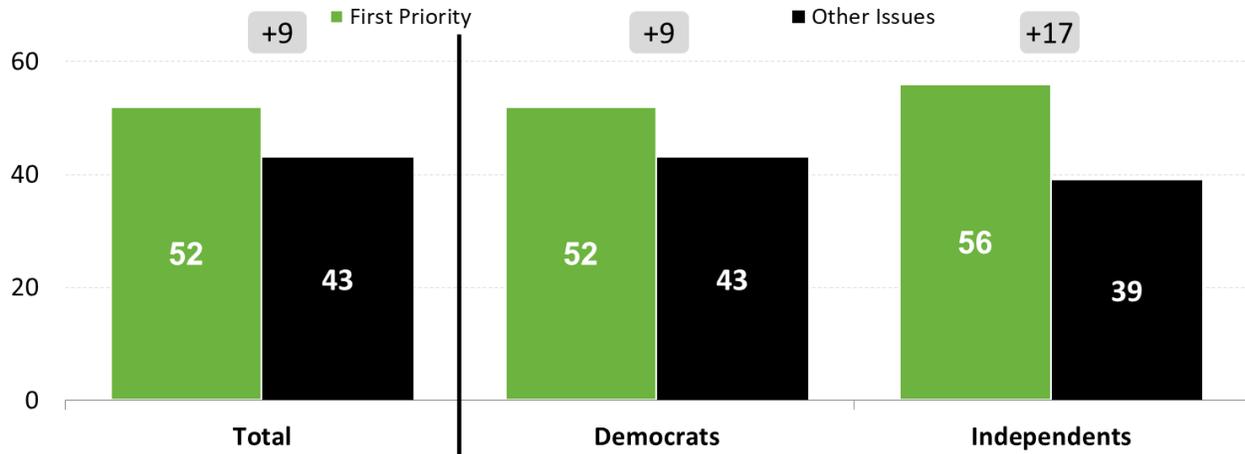
Moving forward, voters believe the first action of the next Congress should be legislation to stop corruption with **tougher ethics rules, ensuring the protection of voting rights, and cracking down on special interest money in politics** to help make Washington work for the people again.

An overwhelming majority (82 percent) supports this idea and 58 percent support it strongly. The intensity is stronger among independents: 62 percent strongly support, 84 percent support overall.

Moreover, voters recognize that addressing money in politics is the critical antecedent to all other progress, and should be done first or nothing will really change. When presented with a choice of first addressing money in politics as a way to bring real change or passing other legislation, voters believe money in politics should be the first priority by 52 – 43 percent. Among independents the desire is even deeper. They say the reform agenda needs to be addressed first by a 56 – 39 percent margin. Voters are telling us there will not be real progress on other issues—health care, education, economic opportunity—until something is done about money in politics.

**(FIRST PRIORITY)** Some people say that cracking down on corruption and getting big money out of politics should be the first priority because it affects everything—the cost of health care, prescription drugs, and many other things. Nothing will change until politicians stop being bought and sold by big money.

**(OTHER ISSUES)** Other people say that cracking down on corruption and getting big money out of politics is important, but there are more important issues that need to be tackled first. Instead we should start by addressing issues like healthcare, prescription drugs, and the economy, and then tackle corruption and getting big money out of politics.



Voters sent many messages on November 6<sup>th</sup>, but made one thing clear. They want the culture of corruption ended in Washington. They believe this culture of big money in politics is the root of a lot of our problems – like the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs – that cannot be fixed without first changing the system.