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## Competitive Race for Iowa Senate

Key Findings from a Survey of Likely Voters in Iowa

**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** GQR

The race for Iowa's Senate seat could hardly be more competitive, with Theresa Greenfield edging out incumbent Joni Ernst 49 to 47 percent.<sup>1</sup>

This is a race where the issue of money in politics can play a defining role, not only because of Greenfield's stance on the issue, but because of Ernst's failure to keep her word to stand up for Iowans and take on the special interests. As voters learn more about the ways in which Ernst has bowed to the special interests in Washington, concerns about Ernst grow significantly and Iowans distrust her and view her as someone who works against their interests.

### Key findings

**Ernst begins with nearly universal name recognition, but a deficit in terms of appeal.** The vast majority of voters (93 percent) recognize Ernst, but those who know her do not seem to like her much. Just 35 percent view her in favorable terms, while 44 percent offer negative ratings.

**Ernst's image is damaged.** In 2014, Ernst said she would "make 'em squeal" in Washington, but voters are well aware that she has done little in the last five years to keep her promise. By a 20-point margin, voters say the phrase "too close to corporate special interests" describes Ernst well, and less than one-third believe she is "trying to change Washington."

**Ernst's record on corporate special interests further erodes her image.** Messages about Ernst's record on corporate special interests and ethics change perceptions of her among key swing voters who often determine election outcomes in Iowa. When voters hear about her record as part of the Washington crowd, her image erodes dramatically with swing voters, particularly independents and moderates who move away from her in large numbers.

### Conclusion

There are few races nationally where the forces of light and dark on the issue of campaign finance reform are so vividly defined as in Iowa. And there are few races where the potential of this issue is so apparent.

<sup>1</sup> On behalf of End Citizens United, GQR conducted a live telephone survey of 800 likely general election voters in Iowa from June 23-28, 2020. Forty percent of the interviews were conducted on cell phones. The margin of error is +/- 3.46% at a 95 percent confidence interval.