

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Hart Research Associates and ALG Research
DATE: November 12, 2021
RE: New Polling Shows Attacking Republicans on Abortion Will Be Key to Winning in 2022

This memorandum summarizes the key findings from two recent surveys by Hart Research Associates and ALG Research for Planned Parenthood Action Fund, EMILY's List, and American Bridge 21st Century. Both surveys were conducted among base and ambivalent voters on abortion; the samples excluded registered voters who are strong Republicans or are staunchly anti-abortion.¹ The research was designed to gauge the potential for Democrats to leverage concern about threats to *Roe v. Wade* and Republicans' efforts to ban abortion to win in 2022.

OVERVIEW

Democrats have an opportunity to go on offense against Republicans with messaging on abortion. Defining Democrats and Republicans through the lens of their position on abortion will be key to mobilizing and persuading voters in the midterms that Democrats need to win.

Our research clearly shows that attacking Republicans for their assault on reproductive rights is a winning message for Democrats. To realize the opportunity that support for reproductive rights and abortion access provides with voters in the midterms, it will be critical to:

- a) **Focus on the fundamental question of whether abortion should remain legal, safe, and accessible;**
- b) **Educate voters about the real and imminent threat to *Roe v. Wade* in their states through the Texas law and the Supreme Court case on Mississippi's abortion ban in particular;**
- c) **Attack Republicans for actively working to ban abortion and doing so through punitive measures such as criminalizing doctors and asking people to spy on their neighbors' private health decisions.**

¹One online survey was conducted among 1,503 base and ambivalent registered voters on abortion across 11 states with 2022 elections for U.S. senator and/or governor (AZ, FL, GA, KS, IA, MI, MN, NV, NC, PA, WI) from October 1 to 8, 2021.

The other online and text-to-web survey was conducted among 1,838 base and ambivalent registered voters on abortion, including 1,504 women and 334 men, across five states (AZ, GA, PA, VA, WI) from September 30 to October 6, 2021.

KEY FINDINGS**1. Even compared with other broadly popular issues, abortion drives these voters to support Democrats over Republicans by a 71-point margin. It is the most motivating issue across mobilization and persuasion targets.**

- Voters say, by a very wide 71-point margin, that they would be more likely to vote for a Democrat who favors leaving the decision on abortion up to a woman and her doctor and opposes efforts to ban abortion (80%) than a Republican who favors making abortion illegal, including in early pregnancy (9%). This margin of preference for a Democrat over a Republican is wider than on other key issues of climate change (+56 Democrat), taxes (+43 Democrat), and vaccine mandates (+34 Democrat).
- Not only is this issue particularly effective among mobilization targets (i.e., voters would vote for a Democrat for senator or governor in 2022 but are *not* certain that they will vote), but it moves a plurality of voters in this survey who currently intend to vote for a Republican candidate.

Strategic Imperative: Make abortion a central issue in the 2022 midterms and focus on Republicans' efforts to make abortion illegal while Democrats are working to keep abortion legal and accessible.

2. These voters overwhelmingly oppose efforts to severely restrict abortion access and believe that Republicans are out of step with their personal views on this issue.

- Eight in 10 of these voters believe that abortion should be legal in all circumstances (35%) or most circumstances (46%).
- These voters overwhelmingly oppose their state passing new laws that would severely restrict access to safe and legal abortions (17% favor, 83% oppose).
- Importantly, they believe that Republicans are most out of step with their own views when it comes to the issue of abortion (71% women, 64% men)—even more than they think Republicans are out of step with them on guns (61% women, 47% men), immigration (62% women, 55% men), taxes (60% women, 48% men), or healthcare (60% women, 52% men). At the same time, voters perceive Democrats as most aligned with their values on the issue of abortion (women: 67% in step, men: 57% in step).

Strategic Imperative: Frame the 2022 election as a referendum on Republicans' intention and efforts to actively pass laws that would ban abortion, including before most women even know they are pregnant.

3. Support for *Roe v. Wade* is widespread and intense, and voters do not want to see it overturned, but few realize *Roe* is under threat today.

- Before any reminder of what *Roe v. Wade* is about, voters support it by 58% to 8%, with 34% unsure. Once voters are reminded that *Roe* established a woman's constitutional right to decide for herself whether to have an abortion and limited the circumstances under which government could restrict this right, support increases to 87% support.

- Even after hearing that the Supreme Court allowed the Texas law to take effect and has agreed to hear the Mississippi case and being told that six of the nine justices are conservatives who were appointed by Republican presidents, only one in three (33%) of these voters think SCOTUS is likely to overturn *Roe*.
- But the majority of these voters do perceive a threat to abortion access in their own state if *Roe* were overturned: 55% think it is very or somewhat likely that their state will pass new laws that severely restrict the ability of women to get safe and legal abortions.

Strategic Imperative: In the coming months, it will be important to remind voters what is at stake in the impending Supreme Court decision on Roe vs. Wade, including the potential for restrictive laws in their own states.

4. Awareness of the Texas abortion law raises the stakes for 2022 elections, but it is not a top-of-mind issue for many voters.

- Just one in three (32%) voters has heard a lot about the Texas abortion law, and another third (34%) have heard some. Notably, higher levels of awareness correlate with greater concern about threats to women's rights, including abortion.
- Those who are aware of the Texas law overwhelmingly oppose it, and 88% of all voters oppose it when informed of what it does.
- All of the provisions are viewed unfavorably, but voters are particularly unfavorable toward the fact that it bans abortion even, in cases of rape and incest, and that it provides financial rewards to individuals who sue abortion providers.
- After hearing provisions of the Texas abortion law, two in three (67%) voters think that what is happening in Texas is relevant to their vote for senator or governor, especially if their own state or a candidate running for office in their state is considering a similar law.

Strategic Imperative: Use the Texas law as a case study in how extreme Republicans are on the issue of abortion and make this radical approach to abortion central to the Republican Party brand.

5. Abortion-focused messages against Republicans are effective in increasing support for Democrats.

- After hearing messaging about Republicans' assault on reproductive rights, Democrats make the largest gains in the generic ballot among women, particularly Republican-leaning and independent women.
- In a split-test, an attack against Republicans for rolling back abortion rights is equally effective as a tax fairness message framing Republicans as supporting tax policies that protect the rich and hurt working families. After the abortion-focused message, the margin in a generic congressional ballot grows from a +40 Democratic advantage (55% Democrat, 15% Republican) to a +52 Democratic advantage (62% Democrat, 10% Republican).

- The Republican policies on abortion that concern these voters most are a) the vigilante elements of the Texas law (e.g., the provisions that encourage Americans to spy on their neighbors' healthcare choices and provide financial incentives to those who provide information about someone's personal healthcare choices), b) steps Republicans have taken to criminalize abortion and arrest doctors who perform abortions, and c) Republicans' efforts to allow employers to deny coverage for birth control to women employees.
- Messages that frame Republicans as trying to control women and interfere in a woman's freedom to make her own healthcare choices, combined with describing the harmful consequences of what an abortion ban means for women in terms of poverty, health problems, and intimate partner violence are most effective. But the Texas law and what it seeks to do leave a strong impression with voters who move toward Democrats.

Strategic Imperatives: There are three imperatives for framing the Republicans' assault on safe and legal abortion:

- ***Use the Texas law as the Republican objective—opposition to the law is near universal, and it contains several alarming elements (financial incentives, criminalizing abortion, full-stop abortion ban).***
- ***Note Republican efforts to control women by getting in between a woman and her doctor and taking away a woman's freedom to make her own healthcare decisions.***
- ***Describe the consequences: If Republicans gain power and ban abortion, more women will end up living in poverty or being forced to have unhealthy and dangerous pregnancies.***