

**To: Interested Parties**  
**From: Geoff Garin**  
**Re: Swing Voters' Reactions to Trump Administration's Title X Gag Rule Restrictions**  
**Date: September 12, 2019**

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*On behalf of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, Hart Research conducted a survey of 1,036 likely 2020 voters in 57 swing congressional districts to gauge voters' reactions to the Trump administration's recently imposed changes to the Title X family planning program. A more detailed explanation of the methodology appears at the end of this memo.*

**Background:**

The U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives are currently considering spending bills for the federal government for fiscal year 2020 (FY20). One of the legislative issues is the need to stop the Trump administration rule that would impose additional restrictions on the nation's family planning program, Title X, that has forced Planned Parenthood health centers and other providers out of the program. Legislative language to block this rule is contained in the House FY20 Labor-HHS-Education bill in June, and the Senate is currently negotiating the Senate version of the same bill.

**Overview:**

Voters in swing House districts share an overwhelmingly positive view of the Title X family planning program and are **strongly opposed to the restrictions recently imposed by the Trump administration, also known as the gag rule**. Swing district voters express serious concerns about the real-world impact of these restrictions in terms of both reducing access to care and jeopardizing public health, and a majority of voters oppose the impact these restrictions have had on Planned Parenthood specifically. Notably, this issue is especially relevant and has a measurable impact on the views of critical constituencies in these swing districts, including independents and suburban women.

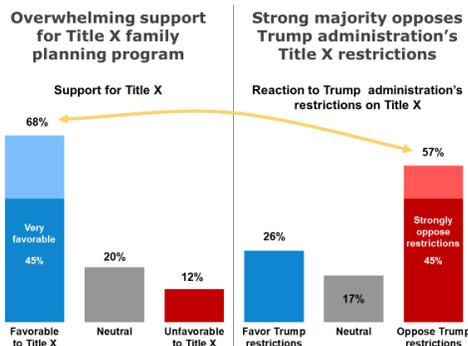
**In fact, these findings make it clear that members of Congress align with the views of their constituents by standing up to the Trump administration's restrictive Title X policies, and members who support this policy are measurably out of step with their constituents on multiple fronts in the eyes of swing district voters.** First, the perceptions of these lawmakers are negatively impacted when their position on the Title X gag rule is made explicit. Further, swing district voters ascribe a negative array of judgments, including being seen as "out of step" and putting politics ahead of people's needs, about the values and priorities of congressional leaders who support the Trump administration's restrictions on Title X; this compounds existing concerns that voters have about Republicans and the Trump administration on issues that predominantly affect women.

The bottom line is that:

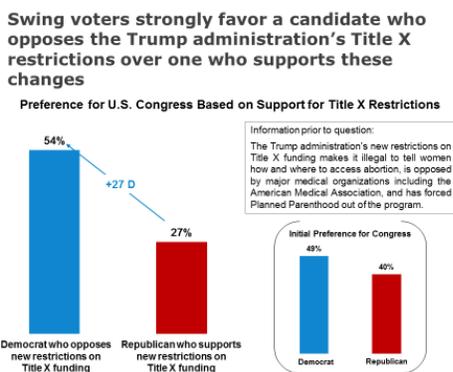
- The Trump administration's newly imposed restrictions on Title X are deeply unpopular, including among key voting audiences such as independent and suburban women.
- Voters express a clear desire and preference for their members of Congress to stand up to these restrictions and oppose them. By 54% to 27%, swing voters choose a "Democrat who opposes the Trump administration's new restrictions on Title X funding" over a "Republican who supports the Trump administration's new restrictions on Title X funding."
- Voters make sweeping negative judgments about members of Congress who support the Trump administration's Title X restrictions, going so far as to say they are placing their political agenda ahead of what is best for patients.

## Key Points:

1. **Swing district voters—and disproportionately suburban women voters—overwhelmingly favor the Title X program and a clear majority oppose the Trump administration’s newly imposed restrictions on the program.**
  - More than two in three (68%) swing district voters report having a positive view of Title X as a program that “provides funding for reproductive healthcare for people who have low incomes and can’t otherwise afford it,” including 61% of independents and 73% of suburban women.
  - Durable support for the existing structure of the Title X program is evident in swing district voters’ reactions to the Trump administration’s newly imposed restrictions: a strong majority (57%) of swing district voters oppose these changes, including 55% of independents and 61% of suburban women.



2. **By a 40-point margin—61% to 21%—swing district voters express support for the House bill that would block the Trump administration’s changes to Title X.**
  - More than six in 10 swing district voters approve of the House bill that would “allow the Title X program to continue to operate as it does now, providing birth control, cancer screenings, and testing for STDs without restrictions on the information healthcare providers can give to their patients.”
  - Support for the House bill holds up among a wide array of key groups; in fact, a 57% majority of voters in Republican-held swing districts support the House bill (29% oppose), as do a plurality of voters who supported Trump in 2016.
3. **This issue carries important consequences for members of Congress in swing congressional districts who oppose the Trump administration’s policy in that it brings them more in line with the views of voters in their districts and reveals a tension for members of Congress who support the Trump administration’s restrictions. As evidence of this, voters in these swing congressional districts are moved dramatically by the issue of restrictions on Title X funding when this issue contrast is made explicit.**



- The findings from this survey show that Democrats currently hold a nine-point advantage in swing congressional districts overall (49% Democrats, 40% Republicans, 11% undecided). **However, when the choice is framed with an explicit focus on contrasting positions on Title X, the marginal advantage for Democrats grows considerably, from nine points to 27 points.** By 54% to 27%, swing voters choose a “Democrat who opposes the Trump administration’s new restrictions on Title X funding” over a “Republican who supports the Trump

administration's new restrictions on Title X funding." Party affiliation, here, is used to account for voter perception of each party's position on issues that predominantly affect women.

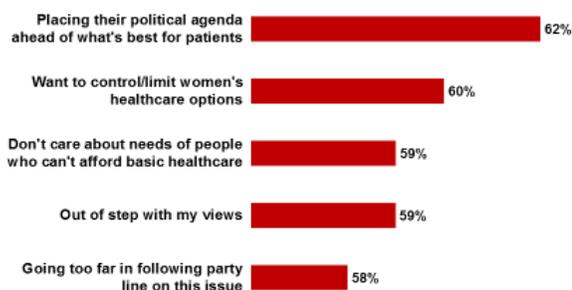
- Looking just at Democratic swing districts, the difference around standing up against the Trump administration's Title X gag rule is even greater. While Democrats start with a 14-point advantage in these districts (51% Democrats, 37% Republicans), that margin grows fully 17 points to a 31-point advantage (55% Democrats, 24% Republicans) when the contrasting positions on Title X are made explicit.
- By contrast, looking just at districts currently held by Republicans, Republicans start with a three-point advantage (44% Democrats, 47% Republicans). Yet when the choice is framed around a lawmaker's support for the Trump administration's restrictive changes to Title X, that lead turns into a double-digit deficit, with Republicans in support of the Trump administration's new restrictions on Title X losing a net 16 points, from +3 Republican to +13 Democrat (48% Democrats, 35% Republicans).

#### 4. Lawmakers who support the Trump administration's Title X restrictions are seen as being out-of-step with voters, amplifying an existing perception that the Republican Party does not share voters' way of thinking on issues important to women.

- By a 22-point margin—61% to 39%—voters in swing districts say that the Republican Party is “out of step,” rather than “in step” with their positions and policies on women's reproductive healthcare. On this measure, Republicans are “under water” (net negative) among a broad array of critical blocs, including independents (-37 points) and women (-26 points). This is especially true among undecided voters, who say that the Republican Party is “out of step” (rather than “in step”) by a full 45-point margin.
- While Republicans do not reflect swing district voters on this measure by supporting the Trump administration's new Title X policies, Democrats are more aligned with voter values by opposing them; by a 16-point margin, swing district voters judge the Democratic Party as being “in step” (58%) rather than “out of step” (42%).
- Voters also make a series of negative judgments about members of Congress who support the Trump administration's new restrictions on Title X, revealing much larger themes. As if being seen as “out of step” wasn't significant enough, concerns held by constituents and swing district voters also characterize lawmakers who support these restrictions in the following ways:

#### Swing district voters make negative judgments about lawmakers who support the Trump administration's Title X restrictions

*I AGREE with this description of members of Congress who support the Trump administration's new restrictions on Title X funding:*



#### 5. Voters have numerous concerns about the real-world consequence of the Trump administration's new restrictions on Title X, including how they will impact doctor-patient relationships and the ability of low-income women to access healthcare services. The impact on Planned Parenthood specifically is a leading objection—one that unites Democratic and independent-leaning voters and divides key blocs.

- When told about how the Trump administration's restrictions would affect healthcare services, strong majorities of swing district voters say they have very or fairly major concerns on each of the following measures:
  - “Prevent doctors and other healthcare providers from giving women all the information they need to make healthcare decisions that are right for them and their situation” (63% very/fairly major concerns).
  - “Make it harder and more expensive for women with low incomes who rely on Title X to get preventive and reproductive healthcare services such as treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), cancer

- screenings, and birth control” (62% very/fairly major concerns).
- “Shift federal funding to organizations that do not provide a full or complete range of healthcare services and are not even required to disclose that they are only providing limited information, meaning women would go to clinics that don’t provide information about common forms of birth control and they wouldn’t even know they weren’t being told about all their options” (61% very/fairly major concerns).
- On multiple measures, swing district voters say they are concerned about how these new Title X restrictions will affect Planned Parenthood specifically. By a 33-point margin (58% oppose, 25% support), voters say they are opposed to the change that would “stop women from getting medical screenings and birth control from Planned Parenthood, which is the program’s largest provider of these services to low-income women,” including 63% of women and 58% of independents. Notably the objection to operationally defunding Planned Parenthood divides key blocs, with one in three (33%) Trump voters and one in three (32%) voters who currently say they are likely to vote Republican in the 2020 congressional race saying they oppose this measure.

### Swing district voters oppose all aspects of the Trump administration’s Title X restrictions

Designed to stop women from getting medical screenings and birth control from Planned Parenthood, which is the program’s largest provider of these services to low-income women.



Allows Title X funds to go to organizations that do not offer access or counseling on all methods of birth control, such as the pill and IUD, and focus on offering natural family planning methods, commonly known as the “rhythm method” or promoting abstinence. Some of these programs do not teach young people about birth control and STD prevention.



Making it illegal for healthcare providers who receive Title X funds to give information to patients about how or where to access abortion services even if they request that information. This provision is sometimes referred to as “the gag rule.”



#### Methodology:

From August 27 to September 4, online interviews were conducted with 1,036 likely 2020 voters in 57 swing Congressional districts. The districts included in the sample were:

AZ-01	ME-02	NY-19	GA-07
AZ-02	MI-08	NY-22	IL-13
CA-10	MI-11	OK-05	NC-02
CA-25	MN-02	PA-07	NE-02
CA-39	MN-07	PA-08	NY-24
CA-45	NH-01	PA-17	NY-27
CA-48	NJ-02	SC-01	OH-01
CA-49	NJ-03	TX-07	PA-01
GA-06	NJ-05	TX-32	TX-22
IA-01	NJ-07	UT-04	TX-23
IA-02	NJ-11	VA-02	TX-24
IA-03	NM-02	VA-07	TX-31
IL-06	NV-03	WA-08	
IL-14	NY-11	WI-03	
KS-03	NY-18	PA-10	