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To: Interested Parties
From: Andrew Baumann and Maura Farrell, Global Strategy Group
Date: June 8, 2020
Re: Winning on Climate in the 2020 Election

Global Strategy Group partnered with Climate Power 2020, the Center for American Progress Action Fund and the League of Conservation Voters to conduct two online surveys in March and May 2020. The first survey was conducted among 603 persuadable registered voters, with additional samples of 302 non-Republican Hispanic voters and 300 non-Republican younger voters in key states between March 20th and March 29th, 2020. The second survey was conducted among 502 persuadable registered voters, with additional samples of 401 non-Republican younger voters, 301 non-Republican Latinx voters, and 302 non-Republican African American voters in key states between May 1st and 10th, 2020.

Key Findings:

- **The voters that are up for grabs in the presidential race are Republican-leaning, but they are also fundamentally pro-climate.** Though persuadable voters were split on President Trump's overall job performance in March, this group leans Republican, largely because Democrats are more solid in their decision to vote against Trump and thus fewer fit our definition of persuadable voters. Persuadable voters overwhelmingly disapprove of the job Trump is doing on climate change, and a majority think climate change is a crisis or a very serious problem and support taking strong action to combat climate change and moving to a 100% clean energy economy by 2050. Plus, persuadable voters feel strong action to combat climate change will be good for the economy. Our May survey indicated significant erosion in both Trump's favorability (-31 favorable, down from -22 in March) and job approval (-15 approve, down from -1 in March), further indicating that persuadable voters' attitudes on the President are malleable headed into November.

	Persuadable Voters (March)
Partisanship (self-identified)	**30 / 29 / 41** Democrat Independent Republican
Trump Job Approval	**47 / 48** Approve Disapprove
Trump Climate Job Approval	**18 / 62** Approve Disapprove
Support for 100% Clean Energy Economy by 2050	**66 / 11** Support Oppose
Support for Strong US Action to Combat Climate Change	**67 / 13** Support Oppose
Strong US Action to Combat Climate Change Will Be…	**72 / 28** Good for the economy Bad for the economy

- **There is huge opportunity to move persuadable voters on the Congressional ballot using climate.** While Republicans lead the generic ballot with these GOP-leaning persuadable voters by 9 points, when that is reframed as a choice between a Democrat who "supports taking strong government action to combat climate change" and a Republican who opposes such action, **the generic ballot shifts to a 20-point Democratic lead – a net 29-point shift**. Among center-right white women, the shift is even more dramatic, as these voters move from -36 to +12, an incredible 48-point shift. This finding demonstrates a real opportunity for Democrats in Congressional and Senate races and is consistent with other research we have done in battleground states around the country in the last 6 to 8 months**.**

	Persuadable Voters (March)
Generic Ballot: If the general election for Congress were today, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?	**32 / 41** Democrat Republican
Climate Generic Ballot: If the general election for Congress were held today between a Democratic candidate who supports taking strong government action to combat climate change and a Republican candidate who opposes taking strong government action to combat climate change, for whom would you vote?	**46 / 26** Democrat Republican

- **Talking about climate is credible to voters in the midst of the public health crisis surrounding the coronavirus – and a majority of persuadable voters agree with Democrats who say clean energy should be part of how our economy recovers from the effects of the virus.** Coronavirus is certainly a top-of-mind issue for voters, with a majority of persuadable voters in our March survey classifying coronavirus as a crisis (39%) or at the very least a very serious problem (40%). However, this does not diminish the seriousness of climate change in their minds: a 65% to 24% majority of persuadable voters agree with the statement: "the coronavirus is disrupting our lives for a few months, but if we fail to act, climate change will disrupt our lives for decades." And a 57% to 29% majority agree with the statement "the public health effects of climate change will be just as bad or worse than the coronavirus." In our May survey, a Democratic message arguing in favor of investing in clean energy as part of an economic recovery plan beat a Republican message arguing against it by 14 points with persuadable voters – even though this group leans Republican by 11 points.

	Persuadable Voters (May)	
Democrats who say that, instead of giving more bailouts to big oil companies and their CEOs as the Republicans want to do, we should be focusing on policies that will provide the best bang for our buck in putting people back to work now AND invest in the jobs and industries that will help us in the future. Investing in clean energy will create millions of good-paying jobs for all kinds of workers while protecting our kids' health.	**57%** Agree with Democrats	**30%** Identify/lean Democrat
Republicans who say we should be focusing on policies that will help American workers and business - including the American oil and gas industry - recover from the economic impacts of the coronavirus crisis, not using the crisis as an excuse to push through a wish-list of liberal and socialist policies like the Green New Deal that will drive up the cost of energy for American families and businesses while costing taxpayers trillions of dollars.	**43%** Agree with Republicans	**41%** Identify/lean Republican

- **Our March survey showed that critiques of Trump's record of ignoring experts and denying reality on the dual crises of climate and coronavirus reinforce negative frames on Trump and move persuadable voters away from him.** Out of seven anti-Trump messages that focused on Trump's record on climate, a message that critiques Trump for dismissing military leaders, scientists and the CDC about both climate change and coronavirus (language below) is top-testing among persuadable voters as well as non-Republican younger and Hispanic voters. Not only is this argument the most effective framing of Trump's record on climate change among these key audiences, this framing reinforces voters' existing negative feelings about Trump, driving up the percent of persuadable voters who agree that Trump ignores the advice of experts by 10 points, the percent of persuadable voters who agree that Trump denies reality and ignores the truth by 9 points, and the percent who agree that Trump is putting future generations of Americans at risk by 14 points.

Persuadable Voters			
Initial	Final	Δ	
66% Describes Trump well	**76%**	**+10**	**Ignores the advice of trusted figures like military leaders and public health experts**
62%	**71%**	**+9**	**Denies reality and ignores the truth**
51%	**65%**	**+14**	**Is putting future generations of Americans at risk**

- **Critiquing Trump's record on climate results in real movement away from Trump among persuadable voters AND increases motivation to vote for Hispanic and younger voters.** Messaging that highlights Trump's poor record on climate moves these GOP-leaning persuadable voters away from Trump on both the 2020 ballot and disapproval on his job performance. This strategy also boosts the percent of younger voters who initially support Vice President Biden and say they are extremely motivated to vote by 12 points. Motivation among Hispanic voters who stated they initially supported Biden increased by 9 points, in addition to upping Biden's lead over Trump with these audiences.

	Persuadable				Hispanic			Younger		
	Initial	Final	Δ		Initial	Final	Δ	Initial	Final	Δ
Biden vs. Trump	**-9**	**+6**	**+15**	**Biden vs. Trump**	**+63**	**+69**	**+6**	**+61**	**+64**	**+3**
Trump Job Approval	**-1**	**-20**	**-19**	**Motivation to Vote** % extremely motivated among Biden supporters	75%	84%	**+9**	67%	79%	**+12**

- **Our May survey identified a real need to improve Biden's standing among persuadable and younger voters in particular.** Biden over-performed 2016 Clinton recall with all four groups in our positive survey, especially younger voters, but his favorability remains poor, particularly with the persuadable and younger groups. This is holding Biden back from converting Trump disapprovers among persuadable voters and limiting motivation with younger and Latinx voters.

	Biden Favorability	2020 Vote	2016 Recall
Persuadable voters	-37	-5	-13
Younger	+24	+61	+42
Latinx	+49	+66	+59
African American	+75	+78	+69

- **Biden positives result in big gains on his favorability and solid gains on the vote and motivation with Latinx and younger voters.** We tested seven positive messages highlighting ways Biden does or could support strong action to address climate change, and a message that focused on making investments in clean energy part of the country's economic recovery plan to create jobs and grow the economy following the coronavirus crisis (language below) was a standout top message among persuadable voters and across the additional turnout samples. Overall, positive climate-focused messaging on Biden resulted in big gains on favorability with persuadable voters and younger voters and solid gains with Latinx voters, as well as solid gains on the vote with the persuadable and Latinx samples. Biden positives also significantly boost motivation with Latinx and younger samples.

	Persuadable			Younger			Hispanic			African-American		
	Initial	Final	Δ	Initial	Final	Δ	Initial	Final	Δ	Initial	Final	Δ
Biden vs. Trump	-5	+4	+9	+61	+65	+4	+66	+74	+8	+78	+82	+4
Biden Favorability	-27	+3	+40	+24	+60	+36	+49	+70	+21	+75	+84	+9
Motivation to Vote % extremely motivated	70%	77%	+7	67%	75%	+8	68%	71%	+3			

- **Biden positives also successfully convince targets that Biden will help future generations and listen to experts – and convince younger targets that he has a strong climate plan.** Positive messaging about Biden and climate action also convinced younger targets that Biden will bring needed change to Washington, which are all drivers of the vote and/or motivation in regression analysis. Among younger voters, positive messaging on Biden also increases agreement that Biden has a strong plan to address climate change (+29: from 52% agree to 29%) and that he will make climate change one of his top priorities if he becomes president (+28, from 54% to 82%).

Persuadable			Younger			Hispanic			African-American			
Initial	Final	Δ	Initial	Final	Δ	Initial	Final	Δ	Initial	Final	Δ	
45 Describes Biden well	60	+15	75	85	+10	77	85	+8	87	95	+8	**Will leave a better world for future generations**
42	63	+11	70	78	+8	81	84	+3	89	93	+4	**Will tackle our biggest challenges**
35	41	+6	61	74	+13	77	79	+2	86	90	+4	**Will bring needed change to Washington**

Messaging Recommendations:

The Three Prongs of a Climate Critique of Trump:

- **Highlight how Trump ignores and dishonors experts.** Scientists, the CDC, NASA, public health experts and, to a lesser extent, military leaders are all viewed positively by persuadable voters. Further, a message that slams trump for dismissing military leaders and the CDC about both climate change and coronavirus is top testing among persuadable voters and both turnout groups. This concept comes through clearly in text highlighting and the open ends, is the trait that voters rate the most concerning about Trump and results in excellent movement throughout the survey, with 76% of persuadable voters saying it describes Trump well at the end of the survey.

- **And how, instead, he has sold the farm to big oil and coal companies and their CEOs.** A "Big Energy" message did well across all three audiences and can be improved by incorporating Chevron not paying taxes last year and Trump-appointed oil and coal lobbyists' rollbacks of 95 environmental safeguards.

- **As a result, Trump's denial of reality has put future generations at risk.** Regression analysis shows that a belief that Trump is putting future generations at risk is closely correlated with the vote, and this also results in excellent movement. Moreover, a message that ties Trump's repeated labeling of climate change as a "hoax" in the face of expert consensus (which pops throughout the survey, particularly in the open ends) with its impact on our kids' future is a top message among all groups.

Helpfully, these three lanes are the strongest with all three target audiences, meaning Democrats can use the same core messaging with all three. However, there should be modest differences in emphasis. The "Big Energy" piece is more important for persuadable voters. It is helpful with the two turnout audiences, but a step below Trump ignoring/dishonoring experts and denying reality.

Main Message on Trump:
Our politicians have a duty to listen to our nation's most respected leaders and experts – and a basic responsibility to leave a better world for our children. Yet Trump puts our kid's future at risk and dishonors the experts by insisting that he knows better.

First, Trump denied reality and dismissed scientists, NASA, and our military leaders when they said climate change was a threat to the country – repeatedly calling climate change a "hoax" and even changing the rules to allow polluters to release unlimited amounts of the carbon pollution that is disrupting our climate and putting future generations at risk.

Then, for eight weeks, he ignored the Centers for Disease Control's and other public health experts' warnings about the threat of coronavirus and even overturned their proposed plans to fight it.

Secondary Message on Trump, Especially with Persuadable Voters – Add in Giveaways to Big Energy:
Instead of listening to scientists and public health experts, Trump put oil and coal lobbyists in charge of protecting our air, water, climate, and public lands – and they immediately went to work rolling back 98 different environmental safeguards. And Trump not only helped big oil and coal CEOs boost their profits by pumping more mercury, arsenic, and carbon pollution into our air and water, he gave them hundreds of billions of dollars in new tax breaks and subsidies. Thanks to his plan, Chevron did not pay any federal taxes.

The Three (and a half) Prongs of a Positive Case for Biden:

The overall argument for Biden is largely the inverse of the overall argument against Trump:

- **The centerpiece of positive messaging should focus on investing in clean energy to turbocharge our economic recovery right now while combating climate change and providing other benefits in the long-term – with a populist twist.** A "Recovery" message was clearly the most compelling among persuadable, younger, Latinx, and African American voters, and there is a huge need to boost Biden on the economy. This message can be improved by incorporating two strong populist proof points – pursuing criminal charges against bad CEOs and supporting workers by creating clean energy jobs, which will also create a strong contrast with a negative on Trump's giveaways to energy CEOs and lobbyists.

The most important secondary positive messaging should:

- **Demonstrate Biden's leadership on both climate and COVID to set up the contrast argument against Trump.** The "Climate/COVID" message was solid to strong across all groups and listening to experts and leadership traits are both strong drivers of both vote and motivation. This is going to be central to the campaign and is the strongest negative against Trump, so a positive message that ties climate and COVID together makes sense as part of the overall contrast between Biden and Trump.

- **Make the case that Biden's leadership will leave a better world for future generations.** The "Generational" message was, again, solid to strong across target groups, and in both surveys looking out for future generations is a driver of vote and motivation. This also generates a contrast with Trump. This positive is particularly compelling to Latinx targets.

- **Complement the above with a pollution-focused environmental justice message – particularly with younger and AA targets.** An environmental justice message that is focused on cleaning up pollution in communities of color and low income communities can be an effective complement with persuadable voters, particularly when added to a populist economic message. Democrats SHOULD lean into environmental justice heavily with younger and African American targets, where this ranks behind only the "Recovery" message.

Main Message Supporting Biden:
Joe Biden believes that as we recover from the coronavirus crisis, we should focus on rebuilding an economy that works for regular Americans, not CEOs, by making investments that will create high-quality union jobs right now and provide benefits to the country for decades to come.

That's why Biden is proposing the largest ever investment in clean energy to create 10 million good-paying middle- and working-class jobs while also protecting our kids' health, spurring innovation and economic growth, and combatting climate change.

(And Biden will not only end the special tax breaks for big oil CEOs, he'll pursue criminal charges against CEOs who knowingly lied to the American people about their companies' impact on climate change.)

Supporting Messages for Biden:
Joe Biden knows that our politicians have a duty to listen to our nation's most respected leaders and experts, especially in a time of crisis. As president, Biden will bring steady leadership, make decisions based on the facts, and work with our top scientists and public health experts to develop plans to deal with our country's biggest challenges, including responding to the coronavirus crisis, rebuilding our economy, and combatting the long-term threat of climate change.

Biden understands that we have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for future generations. His climate plan will move the US to 100% clean energy and eliminate carbon pollution by 2050. And after listening to scientists, experts (and the concerns of younger Americans), Biden made his plan even more ambitious, including a major investment over the next ten years to build the infrastructure we need to scale up clean energy and combat climate change.

Joe Biden understands that communities of color and low-income communities have paid the highest price for our dependence on dirty energy sources in the form of polluted air and water and greater levels of asthma, cancer, and birth defects. That's why he will clean up air and water pollution – like lead, mercury and toxic chemicals – in these communities.