



To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group

Date: April 2026

Re: NEW POLL RESULTS: Messaging Guidance on Transgender Rights

Research from Global Strategy Group, conducted on behalf of the ACLU, shows that **candidates do not gain votes by throwing trans people under the bus, and indeed ultimately pay a price because doing so makes them seem inauthentic and transactional.**

The following analysis is based on a survey of 1,006 likely 2026 general election voters in battleground House districts conducted between March 17-23, 2026. Additional information about the poll can be found at the end of this memo.

The reality is that policies around trans people are neither a dealbreaker nor a top priority for most voters. In fact, they want to see candidates focusing on it less, not more. And, because voters don't prioritize this issue, they don't care if a candidate shares their views or values on it. In other words, taking a pro-trans position, in and of itself, does not cost candidates votes.

- Where this issue becomes most problematic for a candidate is when opponents use the issue to show they're not focused on the right things (which today means affordability and cost of living) or not fighting for the interests of the common voter.
- Only a small minority of voters (1 in 4) say they want candidates to be more focused on this issue. And as many say it *would be* a dealbreaker if a candidate doesn't align with them on it – meaning relatively few would change their vote just because of a candidate's stance.

Battleground voters broadly agree that transgender people shouldn't be discriminated against – but pushing further than that is a harder sell given the current climate around this issue. Two-thirds (68%) of battleground voters agree that *transgender people are just like everyone else and deserve the same rights* or at least that *transgender people shouldn't be discriminated against but there must be some reasonable restrictions on things like sports and bathrooms*. Candidates can show support and respect for trans people, while re-focusing on affordability issues that are more top of mind to voters today.

And in fact, there is a political cost to caving on this issue and throwing the trans community under the bus, even if voters aren't all the way supportive of these policies. In the survey, respondents read descriptions of candidates with either a "pro-civil liberties" or "compromised" stance on this issue (see appendix for full text of candidate statements). **Candidates who embraced a 'compromised' approach scored lower on key character attributes, while a pro-civil liberties message boosted a candidate's brand.**

- Voters were more likely to rate a **Democratic** candidate who offered a pro-civil liberties message on trans rights as **authentic (+10 points), trustworthy (+4), principled (+4)** and less **willing to say whatever it takes to win (-14)** compared to a Democrat who proposed a "compromised" approach.
- Similarly, a pro-civil liberties **Republican** candidate was more likely to be seen as **thoughtful (+18)** and **principled (+8)**, and less likely to be seen as **weak (-12)** or **willing to say whatever it takes to win (-6)** compared to a "compromised" one.

Democratic Candidate Attributes			
NET Describes Well	Read <i>Pro-Civil Liberties</i> Description	Read <i>Compromised</i> Description	Diff.
Authentic	+14	+4	+10
Trustworthy	+8	+4	+4
Principled	+20	+16	+4
Will say whatever it takes to win	+18	+32	-14

Republican Candidate Attributes			
NET Describes Well	Read <i>Pro-Civil Liberties</i> Description	Read <i>Compromised</i> Description	Diff.
Thoughtful	+8	-10	+18
Principled	+16	+8	+8
Weak	-28	-16	-12
Will say whatever it takes to win	+20	+26	-6

When it comes to **trans rights**, successful messaging should:

- **Keep focused on high-level values everyone agrees with – no one should be discriminated against, and no government interference:** *“Decisions about a child’s medical care, whether transgender or not, should be made by families and doctors, not politicians.”*
- **Connect the dots for voters:**
 - **Broaden the benefit by integrating trans rights into a general message about strengthening our communities:** *“Our country is stronger when everyone feels respected, whether transgender or not. Embracing our differences—without singling anyone out for unfair treatment—helps build stronger families, schools, and communities for all of us.”*
 - **Name the issues people care about and include trans people as a way to reassert that trans people are people:** *“Some politicians are working to divide us to make it harder to fight for the things we all need: good jobs, affordable housing, great schools, and healthcare we can afford. I believe that every person in our community, including transgender people, deserves to be able to live a good life.”*
- **Don’t dismiss concerns, but don’t linger on this issue as it’s not widely nor deeply felt by voters.** Spending too much time having this conversation with voters can do more harm than good.
- **Call out the politicians who are using this issue to score political points, but don’t label everyone who takes a less than a supportive stance as “extreme”:** Since many voters agree with anti-trans positions, they don’t necessarily experience anti-trans candidates as extreme.
- **Inoculate authentically—explain your rationale and values, without trying to change their minds:** Governors Spanberger and Sherrill leveraged their background as moms and their professional experience cracking down on child abusers to show they value keeping kids safe.
- **We absolutely do not need to throw trans people and vulnerable kids under the bus to win.** Governor Spanberger effectively withstood \$10 million in anti-trans attacks. Candidates don’t need to pre-emptively concede the narrative here.

Full Text of Candidate Statements Tested:

Pro-Civil Liberties Candidates:

- *A Democrat who says the government has no place interfering in decisions about a child's medical care, transgender or not.*
- *A Republican who says the government has no place stepping on a parent's right to make decisions about their children's medical care.*

Compromised Candidates:

- *A Democrat who says it's not fair to allow biological boys to play in girls' sports or use girls' bathrooms. But this is just a distraction from the issues voters really care about. We should be talking about prices, not pronouns.*
- *A Republican who says everyone knows there are only two genders, male and female, and to pretend otherwise is ridiculous. My opponent wants boys to play sports and share locker rooms with little girls and will let children change genders without telling their parents.*

ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 1006 likely voters in House battleground districts between March 17-23, 2026. The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.4%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented.

The House battleground districts we sampled included:

AK-AL	CA-22	FL-07	IN-01	MN-02	NH-02	NV-04	OH-09	PA-10	TX-35	WI-03
AZ-01	CA-45	FL-13	ME-02	MT-01	NJ-07	NY-03	OH-13	TN-05	VA-01	
AZ-02	CA-48	FL-23	MI-04	NC-01	NJ-09	NY-04	OR-05	TX-15	VA-02	
AZ-06	CO-03	IA-01	MI-07	NC-11	NM-02	NY-17	PA-01	TX-23	VA-07	
CA-13	CO-05	IA-02	MI-08	NE-02	NV-01	NY-19	PA-07	TX-28	WA-03	
CA-21	CO-08	IA-03	MI-10	NH-01	NV-03	OH-01	PA-08	TX-34	WI-01	

In addition to the survey, Global Strategy Group conducted six focus groups with swing voters in House battleground states between February 26 and March 3, 2026.