TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Montana State Legislature Republican Primary Study

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Identity and Values of Republican Primary Voters

- GOP Primary voters are slightly more male than female, older, and self-identify as coming from the working and middle class.
- Three-quarters are Republican, and of these, the bulk identify as Trump Republicans. Most believe mainstream media is fake, however, there is some disagreement over whether Trump lost in 2020, with Trump Republicans firmly in the "it was stolen" category, and mainstream Republicans more dubious of the claim.
- Important note on targeting: partisan scores aren't that helpful. For the most part, no matter how GOP primary voters self-identify politically, partisan scores are uncorrelated.
- Reducing property taxes and addressing crime are these voters' top priorities. Second tier issues are affordable housing, school funding and infrastructure—for all three second tier issues, any messaging with a heavy dose of "accountability" and "responsible spending" language receives stronger support.
- Voters' values framework focuses heavily on the concepts of honesty, integrity, and their Christian faith.

Perceptions of Candidates' Personal Backgrounds

- Local roots matter. Being a lifetime Montanan is an asset and being a newcomer is a significant liability.
- Being framed as "an outsider who has never held political office" is more a hindrance than a help—though it's worth noting that Trump Republicans like the moniker, while everyone else dislikes it.
- "Career politicians" are loathed, while voters very much value "a long-time community leader." To the extent possible, we should frame incumbents as community leaders, given divided

perceptions of "leaders with deep experience in the legislature."
- Republican primary voters equally prioritize when conservative leaders compromise to solve problems and when they stand fast and hold to their values. Demonstrating conservative bona fides writ large will be the key to successful campaigns.

Perceptions of Public Safety
- Republican voters back a multi-faceted approach to supporting law enforcement and cracking down on crime.
- Don't just say a candidate "supports" law enforcement. Pair that assertion with an acknowledgement of voters' fear of rising crime.
- While addressing prison overcrowding and ending revolving door justice are popular, they're not as popular as blanket support for fire and law enforcement. Reference the latter before the former in creative.
- Specify specific public safety institutions that are slated for "deep cuts" when developing negative contrast. Frame the vote as "support for cuts to _____" rather than "against resources for _____."

Perceptions of Taxes and Government
- Talking about bringing property tax relief to Montana homeowners and small businesses is a must. It's more effective to talk about this issue without invoking populist rhetoric. • Opposing property tax relief is a sin. However, it's not as compelling as failures to support public safety or weakening employment protections.
- While these Republican primary voters want to stop the tax and spend cycle and are concerned about government "handouts" they are willing to support smart investments. Based on other datapoints in this research, both law enforcement and vocational training are good examples of smart investments.
- Our advice when talking about "supporting" services or making "investments" in them is to pair with statements attesting to the need for accountability in government spending, like insisting on balanced budgets.

Perceptions of Education
- Expanding vocational training and apprenticeship programs is extremely popular. • Other educational issue areas – including universal pre-k, childcare, and local control – are also well received though comparatively lower testing.
- Republican primary voters are generally against voucher programs. Trump Republicans in particular are, however, divided over whether public dollars should be used to subsidize private school tuition.

Perceptions of Housing Affordability

• Housing affordability is a second-tier issue that resonates with the Republican primary electorate.
• While all of the framings test well, talking about "common sense reforms to make it easier and more affordable to build housing, bring down costs, and preserve our communities" is the most effective way to talk about it. Diving into the specifics of *how* to make it easier/more affordable to build housing is comparatively less effective.

Perceptions of the Economy and Jobs
• The Republican primary electorate is broadly supportive of candidates who put working people first.
• We can draw effective contrast with candidates who take on anti-worker positions. • Infrastructure investments are also well-received but are most effective when we name types of projects (roads, bridges, and broadband). We may want to consider adding these infrastructure improvements to the list of "smart investments" alongside law enforcement and job training. • Given the intensity of feeling, taxing electric vehicles is a proposal we shouldn't hesitate to tout if given the opportunity.