PROTECT OUR CARE

NOT ONE PENNY

clarity campaign (labs)

TO: Interested Parties
FR: John Hagner, Clarity Campaign Labs
Jesse Ferguson, Project Consultant
RE: The Impact of Health Care Repeal and TrumpTax Votes on the GOP
DT: January 24, 2018

There has been mounting national evidence that voters are rejecting the pillars of this Republican Congress – their health care repeal and the TrumpTax. Every poll shows both bills to be some of the least popular in Congressional history.

In order to assess the impact of both issues on a Member of Congress who supported them, *Protect Our Care* and *Not One Penny* partnered on an experimental simulation of the impact on Congressional approval of an incumbent Member who voted for the bills. Unlike the multitude of traditional polling that has been done on this issue, this experiment actually simulated communication on the issues and assessed the impact on voters. As far as we're aware, this is the first publicly-available experiment on the impact of these issues.

FINDINGS
Both policies are broadly unpopular with voters across the country and are both impacting their opinions of individual Republican members of Congress. We polled 18 battleground Congressional districts in which the incumbent voted for the recent GOP tax overhaul as well as to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

Aggregating the data from all 18 districts, we found voters learning about their Republican Member of Congress's actions on health care or taxes lowered approval of the Member relative to the control group by statistically significant levels. Merely telling voters that the Member of Congress voted for the bill resulted in a statistically significant increase in very unfavorable ratings. Telling voters about their Member's vote and including information about the bill aimed at persuading voters almost doubled the increase in unfavorable ratings..

Voters were significantly less favorable to their Member of Congress if they were merely told their Member voted for the "health care repeal" or the "tax bill that just passed Congress." This movement was approximately equal between health care and taxes and required no additional persuasive messaging because the underlying bills are already so historically unpopular.

- Very unfavorable ratings were 8 points (20% vs. 28%) higher among voters who were told their Member of Congress "voted for the health care repeal bill in Congress" as compared to a control track that was not told. Very favorable and somewhat favorable ratings were 2 points lower. In addition, strong disapproval of the Member of Congress's actions on health care was 6 points higher (37% vs. 31%).

- Very unfavorable ratings were 7 points (from 20% to 27%) higher among voters who were told their Member of Congress "voted for the tax bill that just passed Congress" as compared to a control track that was not told. Very favorable and somewhat favorable ratings were 3 points lower. In addition, strong disapproval of the Member of Congress's actions on taxes was 6 points higher (30% vs. 36%).

Voters were even less favorable to their Member of Congress if they were also told information about the impact of their Members' support for health care repeal or the TrumpTax. This movement was approximately equal between health care and taxes.

- Very unfavorable ratings were 11 points (31% vs. 20%) higher among voters who were told their member voted for health care repeal and what that vote would mean. In addition, strong disapproval of the Member of Congress's actions on health care was 9 points higher (40% vs. 31%). These voters were told that their Member of Congress "voted for the health care repeal bill in Congress which would raise premiums by 20%, allow insurance companies to charge seniors up to 5 times more than everyone else and gut protections for people with pre-existing conditions."

- Very unfavorable ratings were 11 points (31% vs. 20%) higher among voters who were told their member voted for the tax plan and what that tax plan would mean. In addition, strong disapproval of the Member of Congress's actions on taxes was 9 points higher (42% vs. 33%). These voters were told that their Member of Congress "voted for the tax bill that just passed Congress which will raise taxes on a majority of Americans so they can cut tax rates by 40% for big corporations and hand the richest 0.1% a $150,000 tax break."

CONCLUSION

The bottom line is that a **real-world experiment proved the damage supporting health care repeal or the TrumpTax does to incumbent Member of Congress in the midterm battleground**. Voters have significantly lower approval of their Member if the only information they are given is simply that their member supported these bills. Beyond that, when voters are actually made aware of what those bills would do – in a way similar to the way they may be in political campaign advertising – those approval levels are lowered even further. These changes in disapproval occur across demographic groups, among voters of different ages, genders, and racial and ethnic groups. The evidence is clear that Republicans who continue pursuing an agenda of health care repeal or who oppose repealing the TrumpTax will be more vulnerable to defeat in the midterms.

METHODOLOGY

This test involved polling 18 Republican-held Congressional districts in which the incumbent voted in favor of the recent GOP tax overhaul as well as to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. Of the 18 districts, 3 voted for both Obama '12 and Clinton '16, 4 voted Clinton '16 and Romney '12, 5 voted Trump '16 and Obama '12 and 6 voted for Trump '16 and Romney '12.

Interviews were conducted via IVR to landlines and live calls to cell phones January 4-9, 2018. The final dataset was 7,337 completed interviews, split fairly evenly across the 18 districts and randomized into 5 treatment tracks. Respondents were first asked their 2018 vote likelihood. They then received one of the four treatment questions regarding health care or taxes, before being asked whether they have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of their Member of Congress. The control group skipped right to the Congressperson favorability. Respondents then were asked whether they approve of their Member's handling of the issues of health care and taxes, and were finally asked to agree or disagree with a series of attribute statements about their Member.

This experiment was well-powered. The findings are highly significant; that educating voters that their member voted for the tax bill raised their negative ratings is significant at a p=.002 level. Essentially, there's a 1 in 500 chance that the differences are attributable to random error, and not real movement. The impact of persuasion messages on health care on favorability were significant at p=.00000000007. The odds of that being due to random chance are more than a trillion to one.