



BLUEGREEN ALLIANCE®

2020 Polling Memo

Swing State Voters on Responsible COVID-19 Relief

As Congress debates the scope and scale of urgently needed COVID-19 relief and recovery packages, a recent public opinion poll highlights several critical considerations. Voters were clear. Financial assistance provided to larger corporations must be accompanied by specific and robust accountability measures to ensure that taxpayer money is spent efficiently and effectively in support of protecting jobs and positioning American industries for future success. The poll explored voters' perspectives regarding conditional financial relief to the auto industry and found strong support for requiring company guarantees to retain domestic jobs and manufacturing, and to invest in building the cleaner, more fuel efficient vehicles of the future.

Where We Stand

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have touched every corner of our economy. More than 40 million Americans have [filed for unemployment](#), and 30% of Americans [weren't able to make their housing payments](#) in June. The Congressional Budget Office predicts that the unemployment rate will still be around [9% at the end](#) of this year even if the economy starts to recover. The real world implications are devastating for the country. Seventeen percent of poll respondents had themselves filed for unemployment as of early May.

The public opinion poll shows that voters clearly support economic relief during an unprecedented pandemic—especially for individuals and small businesses—but where relief is considered for large corporations, they want it structured the right way—with accountability measures in place.

From May 11-19, Matt George Associates conducted an online survey for the BlueGreen Alliance of 1,000 likely voters in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and North Carolina—key swing states for the upcoming presidential election. The sample demographics closely mirrored each state's 2016 voting records. All of the respondents were registered voters and identified as “absolutely certain” that they will vote in the November 2020 election. This, along with an additional six rigorous screening criteria predicted the likelihood of a respondent to vote with a relatively high degree of certainty.

Conducted after the first round of COVID-19 relief was enacted, the poll explored likely voters' reactions to emergency financial assistance provided as a response to the COVID-19 crisis and sought to identify:

- Which groups and industries voters think should receive financial assistance;
- what corporate accountability measures voters want to be attached to financial assistance; and
- whether and how voters believe assistance should be provided to the automotive industry.

The poll made one thing clear: relief is needed now, and voters want it structured accountably. They support action by their elected leaders to ensure conditions are attached to corporate financial assistance that protect jobs, manufacturing, and the environment.

Who Should Receive Assistance?

The poll found widespread support for the emergency financial assistance that had been provided in the CARES Act, a major Covid-19 relief package passed into law—with 78% respondents viewing relief legislation favorably. An overwhelming 92% supported assistance for individuals and families, and 95% responded that the government should probably or definitely provide assistance for small businesses negatively affected by the pandemic.

By contrast, a majority (57%) of voters polled did not view financial assistance provided to large corporations favorably. But the poll indicates that this support varied dependent upon the specific industry in question. For example, around 6 in 10 supported financial assistance for the automotive industry (61%), airline industry (63%), and the hotel industry (64%). By contrast, less than half (46%) supported financial assistance provided to the oil and gas industry and only 38% supported financial assistance provided to the cruise industry.

The poll found 80% of respondents believed that financial assistance to large corporations should take the form of a *loan* to be paid back, while only 20% suggested the financial assistance take the form of a grant. In addition, 80% agreed with the statement “while these companies may need money now to stay strong, we expect that hardworking American taxpayer dollars will be used responsibly and eventually paid back.” When asked to prioritize nearly a dozen impacted industries by how deserving they are of emergency financial assistance, 44% of respondents ranked the postal service in their top three choices, second only to the food service industry (at a very high 71%), and ahead of retail (40%). The call for corporate responsibility and for public aid being used in the public interest remained consistent throughout the responses to the polling questionnaire.

Demand for Corporate Accountability

The poll explored voter support for providing assistance to the automotive industry, which, like many other industries, is facing a range of short- and long-term business, manufacturing, and environmental challenges. One finding proved irrefutable: voters demand accountability across the board when it comes to how larger corporations use public funds provided as emergency financial assistance.

76% of voters favored relief plans that emphasized providing aid to large corporations ‘carefully’ to ensure the funds are “used effectively and with accountability.”

And, 86% of voters agreed that “conditions” should be tied to emergency aid for automotive corporations. Support for these conditions was strong across the political spectrum. In addition, 8 out of 10 Republicans and 9 out of 10 Democrats agreed that “We have a right to ask that corporations use [American tax dollars] accountably to improve their products, stabilize their operations, and protect worker’s jobs.”

When asked which specific accountability measures should be linked to emergency financial assistance provided to automotive companies, respondents supported the following:

Strong Voter Support For Prioritizing Aid to the Postal Service, As Well As For Food Service and Retail Industries

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The poll reinforces the very strong public support for the essential role of the U.S. Postal Service.

- Keep their manufacturing jobs in the U.S. (89% support);
 - *A clear majority of both Democrats (53%) and Republicans (57%) “strongly” supported adding such a condition to any aid;*
- keep workers on payroll, maintain their benefits, and not engage in any layoffs (85% support); and
- pay the money back (91% support).

Majorities of respondents also responded they would be more likely to vote for a candidate that supported these conditions. 94% of voters responded that it was somewhat, very, or extremely important that auto manufacturers develop and build their vehicles in the United States. And, 72%— including a majority of both Democrats and Republicans—said it was important that auto manufacturers build electric vehicles in the U.S.

The poll found strong support for environmental-focused accountability measures as well. Voters do not want to move backwards when it comes to clean car standards and progress on fuel efficiency. They want the solutions that address the immediate crisis to better position the industry for the future as well.

When asked about specific climate-related policies to be linked to emergency financial assistance:

- 83% believe automakers should be required to make a guarantee to build vehicles that get better gas mileage—similar to conditions associated with the 2009 auto recovery loans.
- 77% believe automakers should be required to make a guarantee to build vehicles that emit less pollution.
- 67% believe automakers should be required to make a guarantee to invest in the sale and production of electric vehicles in the U.S.
- More than a third of respondents from both political parties ranked “producing cars that meet stronger fuel efficiency and emissions standards,” or “building technologies that make vehicles less expensive to own because they get better gas mileage” in their top three priorities for accountability measures to be attached to emergency financial aid provided to automotive companies.

More than 70% of voters—and clear majorities of both Democrats and Republicans—agreed that the economic insecurity AND pollution that “we’ve gotten used to should not be considered normal or acceptable. We have the opportunity now to take steps to create a more prosperous future for everyone. Congress can help us get there by requiring public aid to be used in the public interest.”

Investing in the Future of the Auto Industry

The poll found 70% of voters favored a forward-looking, long-term strategy for investing in the auto industry, agreeing with the statement, “We should keep automotive companies from going bankrupt and workers from losing their jobs due to this crisis, but we can and must go further. We should incentivize added investment in advanced technology and bringing manufacturing back to America to ensure manufacturers and workers don’t just survive the economic downturn from COVID-19, but rather come out of it stronger than ever before.”

Voters’ responses indicate that they do not want emergency financial relief to be merely a “bailout” or a “giveaway.” They want emergency assistance funds to be used as an investment in manufacturing, job creation, sustainability, clean car innovation, and building a stronger, more competitive domestic auto sector, now and for the longer term.

Conclusion

The response to COVID-19 is a defining moment for our country. Our polling shows that we have a clear opportunity to invest in responsible measures that will move our country forward and pave the way for a

strong and equitable recovery. Voters are watching. They are united in support of relief for families and small businesses, and skeptical of providing emergency financial assistance to large corporations. When corporate support is provided, however, they want deliberate, focused, accountable assistance with robust conditions that sustain American jobs and manufacturing today, and drive investment in a cleaner, more prosperous future.