

To: Interested Parties
Cc: Forward Majority, Everytown for Gun Safety, and AAPI Victory Fund
From: Joshua Ulibarri and Meryl O'Bryan, LRP
Re: Results from an Online Message Board Among Texas AAPI Votersⁱ
Date: May 2020

AAPI voters are a demographic bloc that Texas Democrats must target – especially going into the 2020 election cycle where stakes are higher than ever. AAPI voters are growing at a faster rate than other groups in the state that would be key to a progressive victory in November, with the number of eligible Texas AAPI voters growing 46% from 2012 to 2018¹. While AAPI voters tend to lean more Democratic, this is not a monolithic voting group. Texas Democrats cannot simply count on their vote. Instead, Texas Democrats need to engage AAPI voters and persuade them to vote for Democrats on Election Day. To do this, Democrats need to commit to learning more about what is important to these voters, as little research has been done with Texas AAPI voters as the central focus.

Recently, LRP completed an online message board among 20 swing AAPI voters in the Houston and Dallas/Fort Worth regions – the regions with the highest AAPI populations in Texas. Participants and their families came from a wide range of countries of origin, including India, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, and Pakistan – reflecting the rich diversity of the AAPI population in Texas. Participants in the message board logged in twice a day for four days of discussion, providing deep insight into a range of topics, including their top issues and their views on Democrats and Republicans and where they align with each party.

Here are some of the major findingsⁱⁱ:

- 1) **Almost across the board, participants greatly dislike Donald Trump.** When asked without prompting if there was a candidate or politician they dislike, over half of participants name Trump. Among their reasons, several participants say that Trump is racist and divisive, and they do not like him as a person. **For many participants, a legislator's support for or opposition to Trump matters to them in their decision to support that legislator.**

“He [Trump] isn't fit to run this country. He has bred hatred in this country. Dividing instead of uniting the American people.”

“Narcistic, sexist, racist...”

¹ <https://www.apivote.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Texas-2020.pdf>

“Since Republicans are rubber stamping everything Trump is saying even his lies and have abandoned their principles - so VOTING is the only option left to throw them out of power.”

- 2) **The top issues for these participants are the economy and jobs, affordable healthcare, and gun violence.** The top issues for voters in this group are strengthening our economy with good paying jobs and making healthcare more affordable (tied as the number one issue).

“I believe if everyone has access to good paying jobs, the income disparity gap would minimize and afford a decent comfort of living to all those who strive for it.”

“Healthcare is most important to me, and if I don’t have health insurance, I could go bankrupt due to a medical emergency.”

When asked what issue is second most important to them, protecting our families and communities from gun violence rounds out the top.

“It is scary to think about how in an instant, someone could be gone. I do not want my family or friends to ever lose their lives unexpectedly.”

- 3) **Participants tend to agree more with Democrats than Republicans on healthcare and gun laws.** Many participants list these two issues proactively, and when asked directly which party aligns more on their position on guns and gun availability, over half say the Democratic Party. Among what Democrats say that makes sense about guns are strengthening gun violence protection laws and background checks.

“I own firearms and believe in the ability to protect myself. I also realize that people who shouldn't have access to guns do. There's never going to be a one size fits all for this. I do favor enhanced background checks.”

“NRA is the next 'evil' sitting right at home fooling people into thinking that any change to gun ownership is assault on their constitutional right. Just for PROFITS, they are willing to sacrifice kids.”

- 4) **Issues around gun violence and gun reform are important to participants.** Across the board, these participants support commonsense gun reform laws that have passed in other states. Among these reforms are background checks and creating red flag laws.

“These are all reasonable laws. They ensure the right to bear arms while taking measures to prevent fatalities, criminal or accidental.”

Most participants also think that their Texas state legislator is supposed to represent them and be their voice, but their legislators do not represent their values when it comes to gun issues. From this qualitative work, AAPI voters favor more gun violence prevention laws, and they expect their state legislator to represent their values. From this conversation, however, it is clear that they do not think this is a priority for Republican state legislators, and this could be a wedge issue for Fall elections.

They also think that the state legislature has the power to prevent mass shootings but is failing to act, and they think that these legislators need to be voted out for Texas to make progress on this issue.

“They have a great deal of power to help prevent it. However, they choose not to exercise it.”

“They should implement a stricter gun law, deeper background check and general public should not be allowed to own high assault guns.”

“I do think we need to vote and replace legislators in order to see change.”

As we have seen within the broader public, attitudes towards gun violence have moved into the public health framework. There are elements from this research that show that this is true among Texas AAPI swing voters as well, but more work needs to be done by advocates to find clear definitions and links.

- 5) **Almost across the board, voters in this group strongly dislike insurance companies, pharmaceutical corporations, and the gun lobby.** The high cost of healthcare and prescription drugs are real concerns for these voters, and they are angry at the Texas politicians who have taken significant contributions from drug and insurance companies. Across the board, participants are very against politicians moving forward with efforts to let insurers discriminate against people with pre-existing conditions, which is especially egregious in the midst of a pandemic.

“I think drug companies have too much power. I think government should have more responsibility in regards to pricing and affordability.”

“TERRIBLE - greedy insurance companies with their large lobbies putting profit over people.”

Most participants also feel that the NRA has too much control over Texas politics and government in Texas, and many outright link the NRA with Republicans.

“They have way too much influence on the GOP.”

“I think they are corrupt like any other big organization tends to become. From what I have read, they have also had a lot of internal corruption. Any entity with a lot of money has too much influence over government.”

- 6) **Many participants proactively state that Democrats are welcoming of diversity and AAPI people.** When asked what the Democratic message in Texas is for people who are AAPI, participants say that they are the party of diversity, they will support AAPI people on racial issues in Texas, they welcome AAPI people, and AAPI people deserve to be treated fairly, without prejudice or discrimination.

“The Democratic message is that AAPI are welcome, and they are an integral part of society to function.”

“We are the party of diversity & we have a very diverse tent that can include everyone.”

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ⁱ Texas AAPI Message Board: LRP conducted this message board among Texas AAPI swing voters April 27th through May 1st. Participants were required to log-in for morning and evening discussions each day for four days of discussion. Participants were given a fifth day as a make-up day. Participants were recruited from Harris, Fort Bend, Dallas, Collin, and Denton counties. Participants included both men and women.

ⁱⁱ Please note that this is qualitative data, and we should look to confirm these findings in survey work.