

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Hart Research

DATE: May 3, 2023

RE: Climate Change Is a Critical Issue for California Voters across the State and in Battleground and Critical Communities

This memorandum presents key findings from recent surveys and online discussion boards Hart Research conducted on behalf of EDF Action that examined California voters' attitudes on climate change. The research shows that climate change is a critical issue for voters across the state and in key battlegrounds and communities. The two surveys were conducted March 28 to April 6 among likely 2024 voters—one among a representative cross section of 600 voters statewide (margin of error ± 4.0 percentage points) and one among a representative cross section of 475 voters (margin of error ± 4.5 percentage points) in competitive, or swing, congressional districts (CDs) in California.* Using the polling data to guide us, we conducted three online discussion boards from April 18 to 20, in which we spoke with AAPI, Latino, and registered Republicans and Decline-to-State (DTS) voters living in swing congressional districts to gauge how we should talk to these different audiences about climate change and climate action.

Key Findings:

- 1. California will be a critical state for national politics in 2024, and it may well be the battleground in the fight for control of the U.S. House. Both our quantitative and qualitative research suggests that California voters, including in the eight swing CDs and among key voting blocs such as AAPI and Latinos, are concerned about climate change and that messaging on climate action CAN help win their support.**
- 2. One important finding in the statewide and targeted congressional district surveys is that the two samples have much more in common than they have differences regarding core environmental issues.** This is an encouraging finding because, despite the partisan differences between the two samples (for example, Democrats have a +24 advantage in party registration in our statewide sample and a minimal +3 advantage in the targeted CDs), there is opportunity to connect with voters on climate change even in the more politically challenging swing congressional districts.
 - Statewide**—61% believe that climate change is a crisis or serious problem; 54% think the federal government is doing too little to address climate change; 60% say climate change plays a major role in extreme weather events.

*The California swing congressional districts included in the sample are: 13, 22, 27, 40, 41, 45, 47, and 49.

- **Swing CDs**—53% believe that climate change is a crisis or serious problem; 48% think the federal government is doing too little to address climate change; 53% say climate change plays a major role in extreme weather events.
- Another area where there is notable convergence is the share of respondents who report owning or leasing an Electric Vehicle (EV)(15% statewide and 17% in the swing CDs).
- Attitudes among DTS, Latino, and AAPI voters in the swing congressional districts were even more similar to those in the statewide sample:

- **DTS in Swing CDs**—60% believe that climate change is a crisis or serious problem; 47% think the federal government is doing too little to address climate change; 53% say climate change plays a major role in extreme weather events.

"Making this a priority for Congress, but more importantly making it a global priority is very, very important." – DTS voter

- **Latinos in Swing CDs**—54% believe that climate change is a crisis or serious problem; 55% think the federal government is doing too little to address climate change; 56% say climate change plays a major role in extreme weather events.

"This is a grave issue that carries tremendous costs, whether its economic or with lives, in the future. We need to be serious and start making much larger investments in the future. We need to reduce energy consumption, focus on cleaner technology, and focus away from fossil fuels." – Latino voter

- **AAPIs in Swing CDs**—72% believe climate change is a crisis or serious problem; 54% think the federal government is doing too little to address climate change; 59% say climate change plays a major role in extreme weather events.

"Climate change is a global emergency. The president and Congress need to urgently plan and act for our future. If we delay, more lives, infrastructure, plants, and animals will be gone." – AAPI voter

3. **Voters across California are concerned about climate change, especially with the daily, tangible effects—on how it affects both California's environment and its economy.** The climate-caused events of the past few years clearly have made an impact on voters' attitudes, with wildfires and drought vying with economic concerns (particularly in the swing CDs) such as gasoline prices and energy bills.

- When asked whether extreme weather events have an impact on California's economy, a majority say they have a large or moderate effect (72% statewide; 68% in swing CDs). In connecting with California voters on climate action, it will be important to touch on how climate action will bolster and generate revenue for the state's economy and lower the cost of living in a state with one of the highest in the country.

- Our findings from the online discussions with voters in swing congressional districts echoed the survey findings: wildfires, drought and water shortages, and the costs of climate change are the top-of-mind environmental issue concerns.

"When I think of climate change, the first thing that comes to mind is wildfires. California has gone through severe droughts that have created areas in California that are dry and make it easier for fires to start and spread very quickly." – Latino voter

"I'd like to see water storage being addressed. With the exception of the current year, we are often in a drought. The lack of water has a very real impact on farmers as well as the way farmers are expected to pay for the water that they may or may not receive." – DTS voter

"The hotter temperatures have been slightly tolerable, except for the need to use air conditioning more often, which in turn raises energy consumption and higher bills to pay in a given month." – AAPI voter

4. **In promoting climate change as an effective 2024 issue, messaging should emphasize the economic and job benefits of addressing climate change.** This finding underscores again that campaigns promoting climate action should connect clearly to reducing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events AND, in turn, bolstering California's economy. Some important frames to incorporate into these messages are:

- **Jobs:** Climate action will create tens of thousands of new jobs in big cities and small towns across California that cannot be outsourced—jobs for everyone in every industry and skill-level. Sixty-three percent (63%) say this is a strong reason to elect a candidate for Congress statewide, 60% say so in the swing CDs, and it performed well among all the key voting blocs in the swing congressional districts.

"I think that there are lots of innovations to be made when it comes to climate change and along [with] that comes new jobs." – AAPI voter

"Climate change is important but so is a sustainable economy, which to me would mean more jobs, opportunities, and better pay." – Latino voter

"I feel that new jobs in our state is always a good thing. I would like to see more Americans overall working. I would also like to see job training made available to individuals looking to work in these industries, skills which carry over into other jobs as well." – Republican voter

- **Energy Independence:** Investment in American-made clean energy will lower our dependence on imported oil, protect us from future price hikes, and the unpredictability of the global market. Sixty-nine percent (69%) say this is a strong reason to elect a candidate for Congress statewide, 60% say so in the swing CDs, and this resonated strongly with Latino, Republican, and DTS voters.

"Our dependence on fossil fuels as a primary energy source has proven to be a pervasive issue...Removing our alliance of foreign fossil fuels would allow us economic and military autonomy." – Latino voter

"I believe it is very important to stop outsourcing so much of our lives to other countries. I would also expect that the jobs created by these plans would pay fair wages to their employees." – DTS voter

- **Food:** To protect our food supply and protect ourselves against future disruptions to our food system, we need climate action now. Sixty-three percent (63%) say this is a strong reason to elect a candidate for Congress statewide, 56% agree in the swing CDs, and AAPI voters found this message very persuasive.

"California farmers and ranchers are on the front lines of climate change. Adaptation to climate change will require quicker redesign of facilities and institutions, balancing the net social benefits from economic activities and environmental conservation." – AAPI voter

"With the extreme winter weather we have received this year I can only imagine what disruption it has on trucking, farming, and the overall supply chain of food. One break in the chain link and it disrupts our food supply, creating shortages, hoarding, and general worry, if not panic. When the roads are frozen over or the snow is blocking pathways, food can't move. On the other extreme, the heat puts strain on the power grid as well, to keep refrigeration constantly going so we as consumers can have fresh food. A candidate that recognizes these extremes and who wants to mitigate them sensibly could receive a yes from me." – AAPI voter

- **Costs:** Climate action will be good for Californians' wallets by protecting us from the unforeseen costs of climate change, buffering against future price hikes through stronger national supply chains, and increasing the number of American jobs that cannot be outsourced to other countries. It will be important to continue to ground all messaging in lowering the cost of living—the top-of-mind issue in national surveys and also among statewide and swing CD respondents. Thirty-three percent (33%) statewide list cost of living in their top two most important issues facing the country, 35% do so in the swing CDs, and 40% of AAPI and Latino voters agree statewide.

"People who switch to cleaner energy sources save money on their monthly energy bills. For example, solar panels can significantly reduce or even eliminate electricity bills, while electric cars can save on fuel costs compared to traditional gas-powered vehicles. Additionally, improving the energy efficiency of homes and businesses can lower heating and cooling bills, resulting in significant savings over time." – AAPI voter

"In my opinion, we must attempt to keep as many jobs as possible within the United States, and not outsource them to other countries. It's imperative that we keep producing jobs within our country. I can only imagine how many more jobs would be available to citizens if we took the steps forward to fight climate change. This would only strengthen our country." – Latino voter