

**MEMORANDUM**

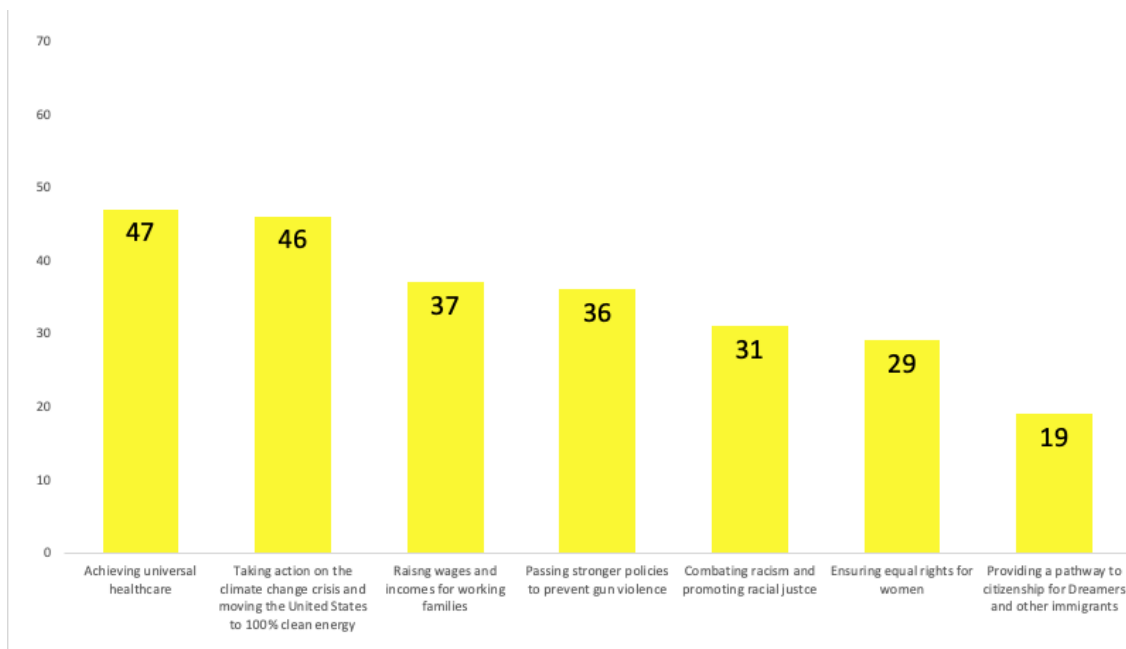
**To: Interested Parties**  
**From: Geoff Garin and Jill Normington**  
**Date: February 14, 2019**  
**Re: Climate Change among Democratic Voters in Early States**

*The following is a summary of findings from a survey of 1,765 likely 2020 Democratic primary voters and caucus goers in CA, IA, NH, NV, and SC. This survey was conducted jointly by Hart Research and Normington Petts for CAP Action Fund, Environmental Defense Action Fund and the League of Conservation Voters. This summary is based on a telephone survey conducted using live interviewers on both landline telephones and mobile phones from January 23-29, 2019. The sampling error for this survey is ± 2.5 percentage points. The error for subgroups will be greater.*

**Summary**

- **Addressing the climate crisis is a top tier issue for Democratic primary voters, shared only with universal healthcare coverage.**
- **The Democratic primary for president is wide open with 77% of voters having not yet narrowed their candidate choice.**
- **Taking action on climate change is a key motivating issue for Democratic primary voters in early states. Having a plan to address the climate crisis is seen as essential and is a driver of vote choice.**
- **Both the Green New Deal and Moving to 100% Clean Energy by 2050 are extremely popular ideas among Democratic primary voters in early states.**
- **Voters believe that candidates who support these solutions to climate change are serious, forward-thinking candidates.**

**Addressing the climate crisis (46%) emerges as a top tier issue for Democratic primary voters, shared only with universal healthcare coverage (47%),** when Democratic primary voters in early primary/caucus states are forced to choose their top three priorities out of seven issues when deciding who to support for president (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1. Most Important Issues When Deciding Support in Democratic Presidential Caucus/Primary*

Moreover, climate change is a top tier issue in four of the five early states, including 55% of voters in Iowa naming as important to deciding which candidate to support, 54% in New Hampshire, 49% in California and

46% in Nevada. Only in South Carolina does climate change fall out of the top tier of issues and even then, 27% still say it is important in their decision-making. On top of the widespread geographic popularity, taking action on climate is the most frequently selected priority among: Iowans under age 50 (65%); Very liberal voters (53%); Somewhat liberal voters (54%); Four-year college grads voters (52%); and Voters with a post graduate degree (56%).

**Democratic primary voters care deeply about climate change.** When asked about seven different issues, 84% say it is “very important that a Democratic candidate for President have a clear plan on “taking action on climate change crisis and moving the United States to 100% clean energy” including 42% saying it is “essential” (see Figure 2). This is on par with “ensuring equal rights for women” (91% very important; 43% essential) and “combating racism and promoting racial justice” (87% very important, 42% essential). A plan for acting on climate change was tied with “achieving universal health care” (84%) and was closely followed by “raising wages and incomes for working families” (83%), “passing stronger policies to prevent gun violence” (81%), and “providing a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and other immigrants” (74%).

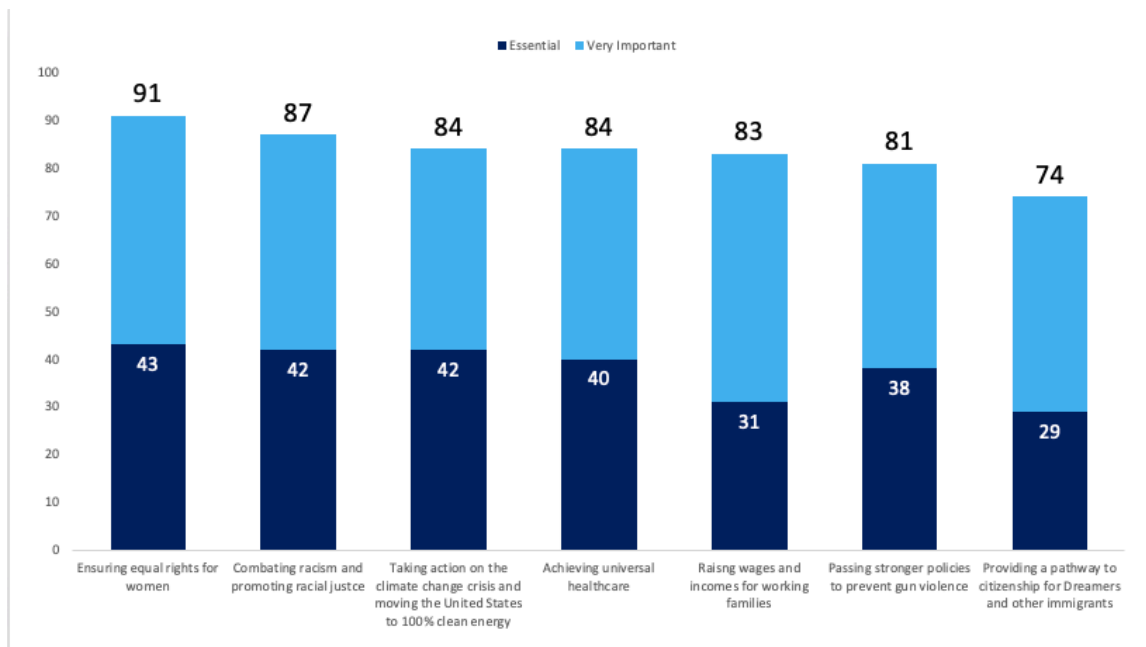


Figure 2. Importance of Having a Clear Plan on that Issue for a Democratic Candidate for President

Moreover, having a presidential candidate who has a clear plan to address the climate crisis is slightly more important to Latinx voters (87%) and voters under age 35 (87%).

The profile of early primary voters who say that having a plan to address climate change is essential for a presidential candidate (42% percent of the voters in early primary states) is reflective of the broad Democratic universe, rather than being some niche group. The likelihood of rating addressing climate change as essential for a Democratic presidential candidate increases the more liberal the voter and the higher their educational attainment. That is, the most liberal and best educated voters are the most likely to say that it is essential that a presidential candidate have a plan for addressing the climate crisis. Importantly, these voters are largely up for grabs as 73% say they have not really narrowed down their choice for president even though 80% are previous primary voters/caucus-goers.

**Policy solutions addressing the climate crisis are very popular with voters.** We tested brief descriptions of two ways to tackle climate change and both were very well received. Voters had identical strongly positive reactions to a presidential candidate who supports the Green New Deal as well as to Moving to 100% clean energy by 2050<sup>1</sup> (see Figure 3).

<sup>1</sup> Brief description of Green New Deal: “Suppose a candidate running in your state’s Democratic presidential [primary/caucus] supports



Figure 3. Likelihood to Support a Democratic Presidential Candidate Who Supports Each Plan – Brief Descriptions

Early primary voters have strong positive reactions to candidates who support these ideas because they view the policies themselves extremely favorably. Sizeable majorities view the Green New Deal favorably (74% favorable; 54% very favorable) as well as Moving to 100% clean energy by 2050 (82% favorable; 62% very favorable). The detailed description of the Green New Deal was taken closely from the Justice Democrats website and the full descriptions of both ideas are included below.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that a majority of voters (50%) say that they “like both plans equally and I would support a candidate who favors either one.”

**Having one of these clear plans for addressing the climate crisis helps voters believe that a presidential candidate is serious and forward thinking.** When asked to choose from a list of traits that describe a candidate for president says 100% clean energy by 2050 is one of their most important priorities, 63% of early primary voters said that “serious and thoughtful about problems facing the country” described that candidate very well while 60% said “forward thinking, with a bold vision for the future” also described that person very well. Reactions toward a candidate who makes the Green New Deal one of their most important priorities

the Green New Deal to make major investments in infrastructure, technology, jobs and training in order to drastically and immediately move the United States away from the use of fossil fuels to one-hundred-percent renewables within ten years to address the threat of climate change.”

Brief description of Moving to 100% clean energy by 2050: “Suppose a candidate running in your state’s Democratic presidential [primary/caucus] had a plan to take immediate action on climate change and promote clean energy jobs by moving the United States to one-hundred-percent clean energy sources, like solar and wind power, by the year 2050.”

<sup>2</sup> Long description of Moving to 100% clean energy by 2050: “The plan to move the United States to one-hundred-percent clean energy by 2050 would require swift action across the government to move the country away from fossil fuel energy and transition to cleaner forms of energy like wind and solar. It would improve public health and reduce environmental pollution, especially for low-income communities and communities of color that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The plan would set a clear interim goal for the year 2035 to make sure the United States is staying on track to create a clean energy economy that provides good jobs and world-leading technology.”

Long description of Green New Deal: “The Green New Deal is a mass mobilization to address income inequality and poverty by dramatically expanding existing renewable power sources and deploying new production capacity with the goal of meeting one hundred percent of national power demand in the United States through renewable sources within ten years. It will also provide all members of society, across all regions and all communities, the opportunity, training, and education to be a full and equal participant in the transition. It will include a job guarantee program to ensure a living wage job to every person that wants one as well as ensure a ‘just transition,’ for all workers, low-income communities, communities of color, indigenous communities, rural and urban communities, and the front-line communities most affected by climate change and environmental harm. And it will ensure that local implementation of the transition is led from the community level.”

produced almost identical reactions: 60% “serious and thoughtful about problems facing the country” and 56% said “forward thinking, with a bold vision for the future.” Having a clear plan for addressing climate change can help establish or reinforce these extremely desirable traits.