



PRESS RELEASE

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AHEAD OF MID-TERM ELECTIONS, A NEW POLL SHOWS VOTERS BLAME POLITICIANS AND THE NEWS MEDIA FOR LACK OF CIVILITY IN POLITICS

Bi-Partisanship Approach Preferred on Limited Set of Issues

WASHINGTON, DC (November 1, 2018): A poll released today by 1st Tuesday Campaigns, a new bi-partisan firm focused on state and international ballot referendums and initiatives, sees the American public holding politicians and the media mainly responsible for the tone of our current political discourse. More than 65% say the tone and civility of political discourse in the country is bad with only 25% saying that it is good. The survey shows 66% of voters place the blame on politicians for driving the state of political debate. These attitudes help to explain Congress's 16% job approval rating. Coming in second for blame is the news media at 51%. When it comes to working across the political divide in Congress, 89% of respondents agreed that politicians should take a bi-partisan approach to policymaking.

Findings

The American public is clearly very concerned about the effect that constant political conflict has on democracy and the ability to craft solutions for issues facing the country. Over 67% of respondents feel that civility in U.S. politics has gotten worse over the past year; 73% believe that the current tone makes it harder for politicians to pass laws to address today's problems; and 72% feel that the state of civility in the United States is hurting our democracy. A staggering 89% of voters want politicians to work across the aisle even if that means not getting everything they want.

However, as you delve into feelings on specific policy issues, the numbers reveal the public is divided. Although respondents would like to see more bipartisanship among lawmakers, 52% say there are some issues on which politicians should not compromise: healthcare, immigration and terrorism top the list. The numbers are even greater when partisanship is factored in: 73% of very conservative voters and 64% of very liberal voters believe that there are issues on which politicians should not compromise. Only 41% of moderates hold that same view.

Additionally, the poll surveyed reactions to quotes by elected officials and political commentators but withheld their names and party affiliations. The two top ranking blind quotes were by Democratic Senator Heidi Heitkamp, pointing out that civility is the only way to get things done, and Democrat Michelle Obama, lamenting that fear is not a proper motivator and that hope wins out. Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters' exhortation to chase officials you don't agree with and tell them they're not welcome tested by far the lowest with 58% of respondents less inclined to support someone who espoused those views.



Analysis

Civility in the United States is clearly a topic on the minds of the American public. But who is to blame for the current state of affairs? 2016 Trump voters say the media (74%); 2016 Clinton voters say politicians (77%); very few respondents (19%) in the survey said the "public" is to blame. As we've seen during this election cycle, both sides of the political divide are likely to continue with the current rhetoric as it mobilizes their vote. Add to that a news media obsessed with commentary and achieving viral moments as opposed to producing quality journalism, and the result is a political and news media class acting as the driving forces helping to unravel civility in today's public life.

"Voters and politicians find themselves in a quandary," said Matt Rodriguez, co-founder of 1st Tuesday. "On one hand, our poll shows that voters are strong advocates of a more bipartisan style of politics. However, more than half – 52 percent – of those who want politicians to work along bipartisan lines say there are some issues that they should not seek to compromise, pointing to healthcare, immigration and terrorism. This is troublesome as these three issues have arguably been to blame for the current hostile nature of our political debate and have prevented politicians from working along bipartisan lines."

The 2018 and looming 2020 elections seem likely to exacerbate tensions in the country throwing potential public policy remedies on the cutting room floor as the political class caters to its self-interests. This diagnosis opens up the possibility that voters will seek direct policy solutions to problems, leaving elected officials in their wake.

"73 percent of American voters are fed up with the tone of the political discourse in this country," said Gerry Gunster, co-founder of 1st Tuesday. "And with more than 70 percent also disapproving of the job of elected officials, a perfect storm is coming —referendums and initiatives, where decisions are put into the hands of everyday Americans, will increase at a levels we've never seen before."

Methodology

The survey was conducted online between October 23rd – 24th, 2018 using stratified sampling. Respondents were selected to be representative of registered voters living in the U.S. based on age, gender, ethnicity, education and census region.

In order to achieve a representative sample, figures from the U.S. Census Bureau were used to derive weighting targets. The final survey data was weighted by age, gender, ethnicity, census region and 2016 Presidential election vote.

All questions appear in the order in which they were shown to respondents. The final computer tables show weighted crosstab data for the following variables: gender, age, ethnicity, census region, education, household income, 2016 presidential vote and political identity.

This survey has a margin of error of 2.53% at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error within specific demographics (crosstabs) is significantly higher due to the smaller sample size. Due to the effects of rounding some figures may not equal 100%.



About 1st Tuesday Campaigns

1st Tuesday Campaigns is a new bi-partisan firm launched by veteran campaign strategists Gerry Gunster, Matt Rodriguez, and Jonathan Stember. The firm focuses exclusively on ballot initiatives and referendums.

Services include opinion research and message development, campaign strategy and management; earned media relations; creative testing, production and advertising; paid media placement; and voter contact operations.

The team brings decades of campaign experience from the right and left sides of the political spectrum. Throughout the final weeks of the 2018 campaign season, the 1st Tuesday team has provided expert insight into this season's most hotly contested state ballot measures across the country, with exclusive polling and commentary through news media partners and 1st Tuesday's own social channels, including @1stTuesCampaign on Twitter and @1stTuesdayCampaigns on Instagram and Facebook, along with 1stTuesdayCampaigns.com.

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