

TO: The Alliance for American Manufacturing
FROM: The Mellman Group, Inc. & Public Opinion Strategies
RE: National Survey Results
DATE: September 28, 2018

This analysis represents the findings of a national survey of 1,200 likely 2018 general election voters from Aug. 28 through Sept. 9, 2018. Survey interviews were conducted on both landlines and cellphones, using a registration-based sample. The margin of error for is +/-2.8 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence and is higher for subgroups.

With a new version of NAFTA expected to be released soon, our poll conducted earlier this month provides needed context on voters' attitudes regarding free trade agreements. Voters are not opposed to free trade agreements but see them as a lower priority in a list of ways to strengthen the economy and create jobs, with "signing more free trade agreements" ranking next to the bottom – barely one in ten (11 percent) said it is one of the most important ways to do so. However, voters do have a clear idea of what they want such agreements to accomplish, with large majorities saying it is at least very important to raise wages for U.S. workers (72 percent); establish penalties to prevent trade partners from cheating (67 percent); and promote strong alliances (71 percent). While there are some differences by demographics, all of these items are seen as at least "very important" for majorities across party, race, region and other key demographics.

This memo follows on the heels of results from this poll released last week which showed that there is more concern among voters about unfair trade practices (54 percent) than a trade war (37 percent). Moreover, a 63 percent majority of the 2018 electorate supports keeping the tariffs on China imposed this year or giving them more time to work, compared to only 29 percent who want to have them removed. This is the only current publicly released survey to explore views on trade in-depth, going beyond a simple binary approach.

Voters' Top Priorities For New Trade Agreements Are Raising Wages, Stopping Unfair Trade, And Promoting Strong Alliances

We asked voters about priorities in negotiating new U.S. trade agreements. The top priority was raising wages for U.S. workers, with 72 percent saying it was a very important priority, followed by promoting strong foreign policy alliances (71 percent) and establishing penalties to prevent trade partners from cheating or side-stepping agreements (71 percent). The other priorities were not far behind, with nearly two-thirds saying it was very important to reduce the trade deficit (66 percent), maximize the use of American parts (65 percent) and reduce barriers to American goods in other markets (64 percent).

Majorities across demographics saw all of these items as very important, with slight differences in by party. For instance, Democrats put more of a premium on raising wages (84 percent very important or one of the most important) than Republicans. But still, 60 percent of Republicans put wages as at least "very important" as a

Raising Wages And Penalties For Cheating Top Voters' Priorities For A New Trade Deal

QUESTION:

How important of a priority is each in negotiating new U.S. trade agreements? Is it one of the most important priorities, very important, somewhat important, not too, or not at all important?

(Ranked by % one of the most + very important)



priority in negotiating new U.S. trade agreements. In fact, raising wages garnered more intensity, with 32 percent overall saying it was one of the most important, compared to all other items being less than 25 percent. Wages ranked at the top as “one of the most important” priorities among Republicans, independents and Democrats. Penalties for unfair trade, on the other hand, was a bigger priority for Republicans (75 percent very important or one of the most important) but was still seen as very important by a large majority of Democrats (59 percent).

The prioritization of penalties for cheating extends even to those who are not inclined to take a tough stance on trade. Among the 29 percent minority of voters who want to end the current China tariffs (per our memo from last week) – a 56 percent majority says establishing penalties to prevent trade partners from cheating or side-stepping commitments is one of the most or a very important priority when negotiating a new trade deal. Similarly, among the 37 percent minority who are more worried about a trade war than unfair trade, a 55 percent majority see establishing penalties for cheating as very important.

Voters Are Not Opposed To Free Trade Agreements, But Put Them As A Lower Priority, Below Taking Tough Action On Trade

There is support for free trade agreements in principle, but the support is relatively soft. Nearly a third (32 percent) *strongly* agree with the statement that “Free trade agreements have always benefited the U.S. and we should sign more of them.” Another 26 percent agree *not so strongly*. That 58 percent majority is well below the 75 percent who agree with the statement “Free trade is a goal, but in the real world we cannot get there

unless we are also willing to use tough measures at the same time.” In fact, the 50 percent strong support for that statement is nearly double the strong support for signing more free trade agreements. Moreover, that lower support reflects that free trade agreements do generate some opposition. Nearly a third (32 percent) disagree with the statement that “free trade agreements always benefits the U.S.,” half of whom (16 percent) strongly disagree.

Large majorities across party support the use of tough measures. Two third of Democrats (68 percent), nearly three quarter of independents (72 percent) and almost all Republicans (85 percent) agree with the idea that “free trade is a goal, but” we must be “willing to use tough measures at the same time.”

Given a list of eight different proposals to create jobs and strengthen the economy, “enacting more free trade agreements” ranked near the bottom, below cracking down on unfair trade, a national infrastructure repair effort, and investing in vocational and technical training. Barely one in 10 (11 percent) felt enacting trade agreements was one of the most important things to do, and only 38 percent felt it was even “very important.” This sentiment held consistent across demographics, with trade agreements ranking near the bottom in importance across party, race, region, among manufacturing households and with the white working-class.

Voters are open to the idea of free trade agreements, but they will judge the success of any agreement by how much it will do to help American workers and stop unfair trade.

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