

TO: SMP
FROM: Geoff Garin
DATE: October 21, 2025
RE: Tracking Poll on the Shutdown

This memorandum summarizes the key findings from our new survey with a representative national cross section of 1,221 voters who say they will or might cast ballots in next year's mid-term elections. The interviews were completed online October 17-19 with a panel that is matched to the voter file.

There is a lot of very important good news for Democrats in this survey.

1. Voters continue to blame President Trump and Republicans more than Democrats for the shutdown, with no significant change from our previous survey.

- 52% of voters say Trump and Republicans in Congress are more to blame for the federal government shutdown, while 41% say Democrats in Congress are more to blame. This is essentially the same result as in our previous poll conducted October 2-3, when 52% blamed Trump and Republicans and 40% blamed Democrats. Among voters with strong feelings on the matter, 39% say Trump and Republicans are a lot more to blame, compared to 28% who say Democrats are a lot more to blame.
- Voters in the center of the electorate, who are neither strong partisans nor strong ideologues and represent nearly half of all voters, blame Trump and Republicans more by a 17-point margin—a significant result given that they voted for Trump over Harris in 2024 by 4 points.



2. Donald Trump, whose overall job rating is 45% approve and 55% disapprove, has a 19-point net negative rating for the way he is dealing with the shutdown. Trump's refusal to negotiate with Democrats is deeply at odds with what the large majority of voters think he should do.

- Only 36% of voters say they approve of Trump's handling of the shutdown, while 55% disapprove. Sixty percent of voters in the center of the electorate disapprove.
- Fully 82% of voters say President Trump should be willing to negotiate with Democrats in Congress to help achieve a bipartisan compromise to end the government shutdown, including 61% who feel strongly that he should be willing to do so. Two thirds of rank-and-file Republican voters say Trump should be willing to negotiate with Democrats.
- While the vast majority want Trump to negotiate with Democrats to end the shutdown, only 28% of voters say he actually has been willing to negotiate, while 51% say he has not been willing and 21% are not sure.
- By 49% to 28% voters say the things they have seen and heard lately about Trump have made them less favorable to Trump, while another 16% say they have heard both good and bad about him. The most frequently volunteered negative comments about Trump focus on his (mis)handling of the shutdown. Very few voters offer any positive comments about Trump on the shutdown (the most frequently mentioned positives related to the Israeli-Hamas peace agreement).
- 40% of voters say that Democrats are willing to negotiate a bipartisan compromise with Trump and Republicans to end the shutdown (12 points higher than the share who credit Trump for being willing to negotiate), while 39% say Democrats are not willing to negotiate (12 points lower than the share who say Trump won't negotiate).
- Trump's decision to layoff and fire thousands of federal government employees is unpopular with a large majority voters and could easily create a backlash against Republicans. Only 36% of voters approve of the Trump Administration's mass layoffs and

firings, while 64% disapprove—including 48% who strongly disapprove. So far, 70% say they have heard a lot (36%) or some (34%) about Trump’s decision to engage in mass layoffs and firings.

3. Democrats are building a large advantage over Republicans on lowering costs for working families—especially among voters who are paying close attention to news about the shutdown.

- By 46% to 41%, voters say that Democrats have better policies than Republicans to deal with the high cost of living and lower costs for average working families. Democrats have an 11-point advantage on this question among voters who say they are following news about the shutdown very or somewhat closely (80% of all voters). Voters in the center of the electorate say by 43% to 34% that Democrats are better at dealing with the high cost of living.
- Democrats have an even larger advantage when voters are specifically asked which party has better policies for holding down healthcare costs and making sure people can afford healthcare, with 52% preferring Democrats and 36% preferring Republicans. Democrats have a 21-point advantage among voters who are following news about the shutdown (56% Democrats better, 35% Republicans better) and a 26-point advantage among voters in the center (53% Democrats better, 27% Republicans better).

4. The Democratic focus on healthcare continues to be closely in sync with voters’ priorities. The more that voters know what Democrats are for and what Republicans are against in this debate, the better it is for Democrats and the worse it is for Republicans.

- Fully 72% of voters say it is very important for the President and Congress to take action to lower the cost of healthcare. Nearly all voters on the left feel say taking action on healthcare costs is very important, but so do two thirds of voters in the center and on the right.

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- Eighty percent of voters say that preventing big increases in the cost of health insurance for those who get coverage through the ACA should be an important priority in resolving the shutdown, including 55% who consider it to be essential. Even though the question explicitly describes this as a priority of Democrats, 64% of Republican voters consider it to be an important priority.
 - When asked which is more important to them at this point, 60% of voters say it is more important to prevent huge increases in health insurance premiums for over 20 million Americans, while 34% say it is more important to end the federal government shutdown.
 - Seventy-one percent of voters say that rolling back the most damaging Medicaid cuts from the Trump budget law is an important priority for them in resolving the shutdown, including 46% who consider it to be essential. Notwithstanding the fact that this was explicitly described as a Democratic priority, 51% of Republican voters consider it to be important.
 - By 55% to 36%, voters say it is more important to stop damaging Medicaid cuts that will eliminate health coverage for millions and force rural hospitals to close than it is to end the federal shutdown.
 - When voters hear that the two main priorities of Democrats in the shutdown fight are preventing premium increases and rolling back damaging Medicaid cuts, they say by 61% to 39% that it makes them MORE favorable Democrats in Congress.
 - And when voters hear that Republicans oppose these two healthcare priorities, they say by 59% to 41% that it makes them LESS favorable to Republicans in Congress.
 - This is a debate that can come back to haunt Republicans in the mid-term elections. Among voters who are up in the air about how they will be voting, 64% say these healthcare issues make them more favorable to Democrats, while 67% say they are less favorable to Republicans because they oppose these policies.