

TO: Interested parties
FROM: Franco Caliz-Aguilar National Political Director
DATE: 10/15/26

High prices dominate the thoughts of an angry electorate

The media doesn't always see the whole picture, but this year it's getting the big one right: voters are angry, and it's about the economy. The pinch is real at every income level— even wealthy households feel the pinch from inflation. The old adage rings true: *It's the economy, stupid*. What folks forget from James Carville's legendary 1992 sign in the Clinton campaign HQ is that "It's the economy, stupid" was only one of three messages:

- Change versus more of the same
- It's the economy, stupid
- Don't forget healthcare

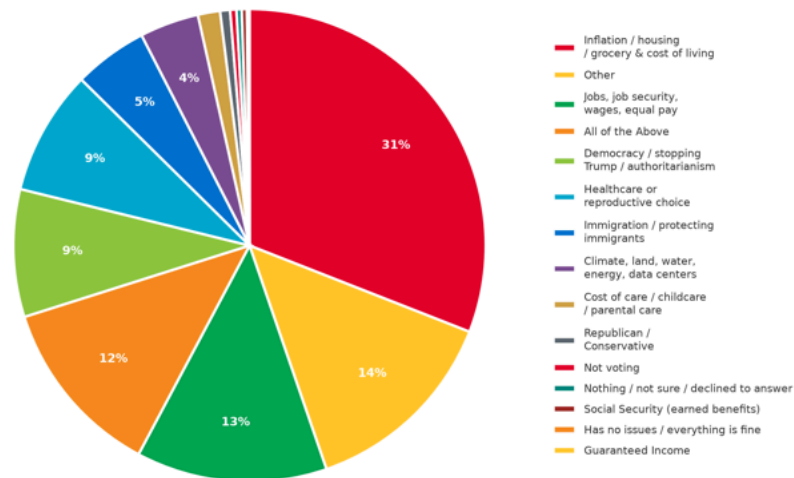
2026 brings us an electorate angrier than anything 1992 showed us— because the desperation runs deeper. Cost of living is the story of this election. In every one of the 20 districts Community Change Voters is working across 10 states, it's the top-named issue—a quarter to a third of voters name it as the single biggest problem facing their family. It is also the biggest mover of voters from neutral to supportive — but only when callers connect the candidate's plan to the voter's actual life. The rent that ate the raise. The price at the gas pump. The power bill and fear of heating prices for winter. A recited general message does not land with this electorate.

Persuading moveable voters still matters, and this is where the media's other story comes out: voters are not enthused about Democrats. They see a Party without fight or backbone. In a normal year, that's fatal. But President Trump's near-constant presence on the airwaves, and in competitive districts, is doing our persuasion for Democrats. Swing voters feel betrayed. They believed he was change. Instead they got more of the same Republican trickle-down economics that has failed our country since Reagan — with their grocery receipt as proof. . As one Georgia voter said: *"I just paid \$400 for groceries. I get food, I get gas. I'm going straight Democrat, bro. It can't be worse or as bad as this."*

That betrayal cuts across race, gender, and age—though younger voters are feeling the pinch the most since they earn more and see jobs being affected by AI..

This memo looks long, but I promise that it's a fast read — and half that length is the graphs!

Most Important Issue — 18 to 35



What voters are telling us

Over the past months, Community Change Voters has called more than 1.6 million infrequent voters in key districts – moderate-to-left leaning, making less than \$75,000, and reached by phone, mail, and soon, on their doorstep. This is the group who has been most harmed by Trump’s policies – and they’ve moved the furthest away from him because of it.

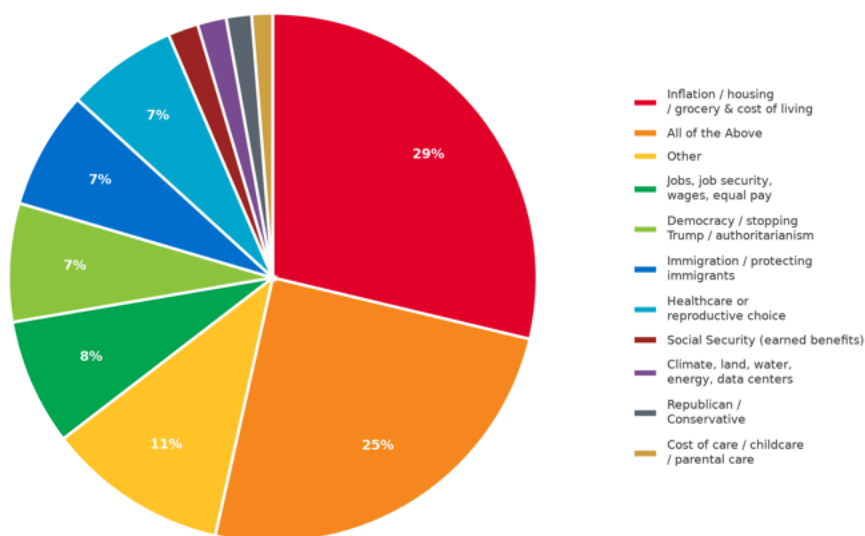
Name recognition is the story of the cycle: We often target districts with multiple competitive races layered together to get the most bang for our buck. In many districts, the second-name candidate is not as well known to voters — and callers win those voters simply by introducing them. The better-known candidates (Aaron Ford in Nevada, El-Sayed in Michigan, Cooper in North Carolina, Crowley in Wisconsin) carry the baggage and absorb all of the opposition. But, after persuasion messaging, voters generally turn into supporters of the second-named candidate. Opposition is thin, mostly identity-based or partisan: attacks on El-Sayed (for his faith, the “socialist” line) are the only recurring candidate-specific negatives; almost nothing sticks to the down-ballot candidates.

There are a few surprises. Keisha Lance Bottoms, running for Georgia Governor, has the highest support levels in our program – even though we’re largely calling outside of the Atlanta metropolitan area. Voters in rural areas are complaining about healthcare reduction (remember that sign from 1992 I mentioned?). Ossoff is doing so well, with support and comments to match, that we expect him to cruise to victory.

Maine continues to be an outlier. Democracy is the top issue for 22% of respondents there – nearly double the usual rate – and it splits two ways: getting Trump and his supporters away from voting, and a distinct fear that the election itself will be tampered with. Meanwhile, concerns about heating oil costs are already surfacing, winter hasn't arrived yet. One note: the Republican in ME-02 has significantly higher negatives than Republicans elsewhere – we've heard "anyone but LePage" more than once. Voters know him well from his time as Governor and views on him are firm.

Targetsmart and others have written about Hispanic voters turning out at a higher rate than even in 2024 at comparable points in the cycle. Our conversations and data show a Hispanic electorate that is not homogenous, and not as motivated by immigration enforcement as they are with economic issues. In fact, Hispanic voters don't pass double digits on immigration when asked what their top issue is.

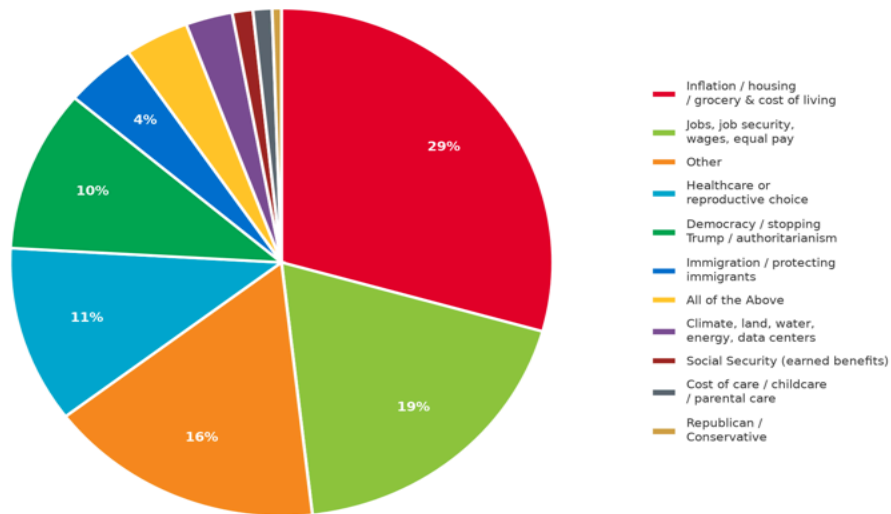
Most Important Issue — hispanic



It's important to note that Spanish matters. In at least ten districts (NV-01, NV-02, NV-04, PA-07, PA-10, TX-15, WI-03, MI-03, and others), Spanish-language calls moved voters to support Democrats at equal or higher rates than English calls; several voters asked for written Spanish materials.

State Deep Dives

Most Important Issue — MI



In Michigan, we heard more about the Iranian war than anywhere else we're calling.

Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist remains a stranger to most voters. His name ID is extremely low – for a candidate running statewide, that's the entire problem and the entire opportunity, when voters are introduced to him we see positive movement..

In MI-03, we see gaps in Scholten's name ID. A large number of folks who knew El-Sayed didn't know her. Worse, conflation was rampant: voters thought El-Sayed was running for governor, or that he was running *against* Scholten. Callers who cleared it up moved them. Some folks hold Scholten's AIPAC support against her.

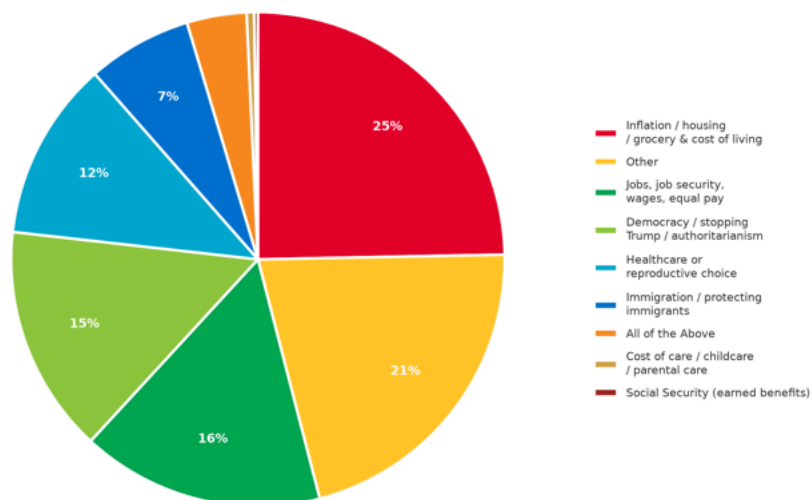
In MI-04, Sean McCann is a stranger to nearly everyone, with nearly double the folks we talk to having never heard of him — but 48% of unfamiliar open voters moved once they learned he is on El-Sayed's ticket. Foreign policy questions came up often – where he stands on the war often part of a conversation on gas prices. One voter said: *"Healthcare is my top issue [...] you just happened to catch me on the day that I'm compiling my medical bills and frowning over it."*

In MI-07, nearly 20% of voters supported El-Sayed before we made any pitch. Healthcare here was the top issue of any district we're working in. William Lawrence's biggest problem is his name ID – once educated about him, 69% moved toward him. We assume his campaign is talking to those most likely to vote instead, but there is opportunity in this segment of voters too.

Of all the districts we called, MI-10's Christina Hines seems to have the softest support. Her name recognition is very low, and her positions are a mystery to most. The anti-corruption parts of her platform — no corporate PAC contributions, stock-trading bans, and overturning Citizens United — stuck out to voters. MI-10 is the jobs and wages district: 20.4% named it their top issue, the highest of anywhere we called. Here are two stories from our calls:

- *"Gas is too high, groceries are too. It's worse than when I was on welfare. I feel like I'm in a hole. And I can't find a way to dig myself out of it." — from a single mother, whom the caller let talk through her debt and job worries.*
- *"For me, it's wages [...] because the cost of living is very high at this point, and then people are just relying on the paycheck. Like if you lose one paycheck, that's it. You are homeless." — from a voter who said she plans to vote for El-Sayed.*

Most Important Issue — NE

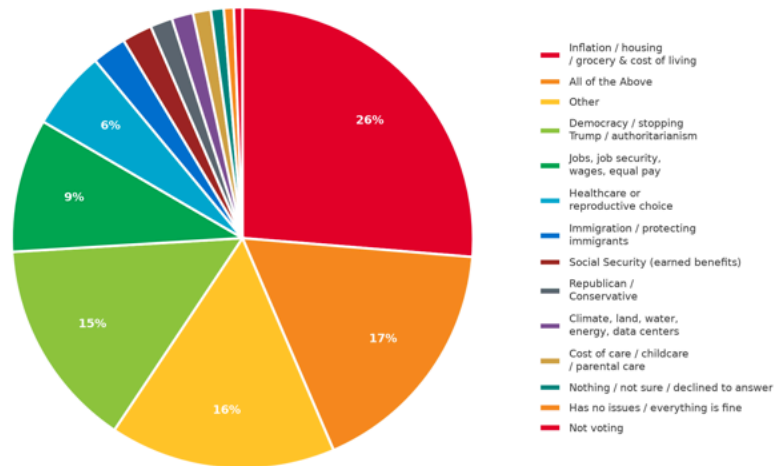


Nebraska

In NE-02, Denise Powell needs to expand her outreach efforts beyond those most likely to vote in this election. First-time voters we contacted are the most winnable group. 67% of voters who had never heard of Powell moved toward her, and several committed the moment callers answered one question: "What is her party?" Cost of living here is the lowest of the 20 districts in our program (only 24.6%), but jobs (15.7%), democracy (15.0%), and healthcare (11.8%) are all above average, and healthcare voters moved at 76%. Immigration is a high area of concern in this district, and cuts both ways. Some voters talked about fear of raids and federal agents, and callers who described Powell as a child of immigrants won their support. But other voters meant enforcement, and were not open to Powell's position on immigration. Her opponent (Brinker Harding) is nearly invisible — no voter volunteered anything positive about him. As one voter said: *"I want Trump and all these con artists held accountable, but we need to be able to do some things to keep health insurance —*

the Affordable Care Act credits, all that."

Most Important Issue — NC

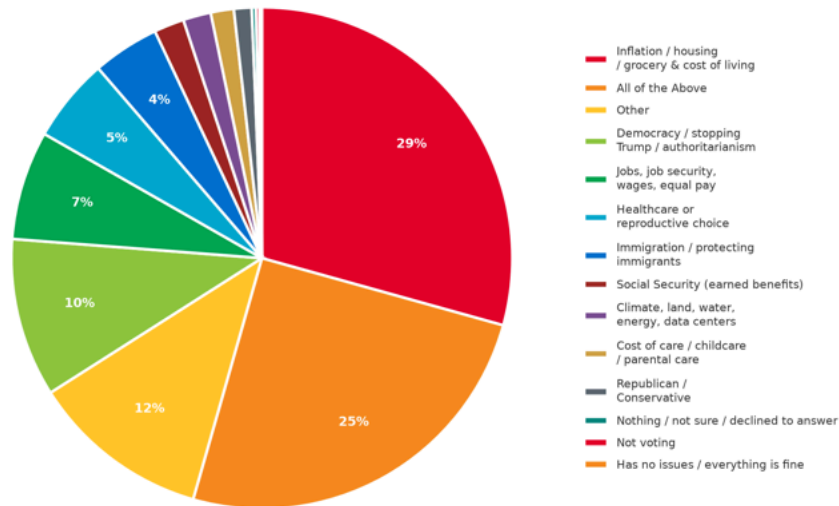


North Carolina

In NC-01, rural hospital closures are the winning point for Rep. Don Davis. Voters who experienced a hospital closing responded immediately to his bill to reopen Martin General. As one voter said: *"Considering I live in the area where the hospital was closed, I'd say, yeah, it's needed."* Seniors here really responded to Roy Cooper's pledge not to cut Social Security – and Social Security was a higher concern here than in any other district in the country.

In NC-11, Ager's introduction is crucial: the fifth-generation farmer who dealt with Hurricane Helene, takes no-corporate-PAC pledges, and turned out 55% of unfamiliar open voters. Hurricane Helene recovery is the district's wound: 17 call transcripts carry the thread of *"money that never came."* Cooper is less liked in Western North Carolina than in Eastern – a hangover from the COVID shutdown and a perceived slow, weak response to Hurricane Helene. Even though FEMA delivery is largely federal, callers heard things like: *"The biggest thing is we didn't get the money we needed when the... after the hurricane [Helene] hit... to recover."*

Most Important Issue — NV



Nevada

Nevada has been a place of emphasis for us due to concerns around Aaron Ford (Governor) and Susie Lee NV-03). The unsurprising part: cost of living tops the issue list at the highest rate of all the districts in our program. The surprising part: who is moving.

In NV-01, we are including Dina Titus (Representative). 32.5% of voters name cost of living as their top issue and they break it down in order: gas first, then groceries, then rent. The surprise: Spanish-speaking voters moved more often than English speakers (68% versus 60%). Again, the persuasion opportunity among Hispanic voters is real, and it runs through economics.

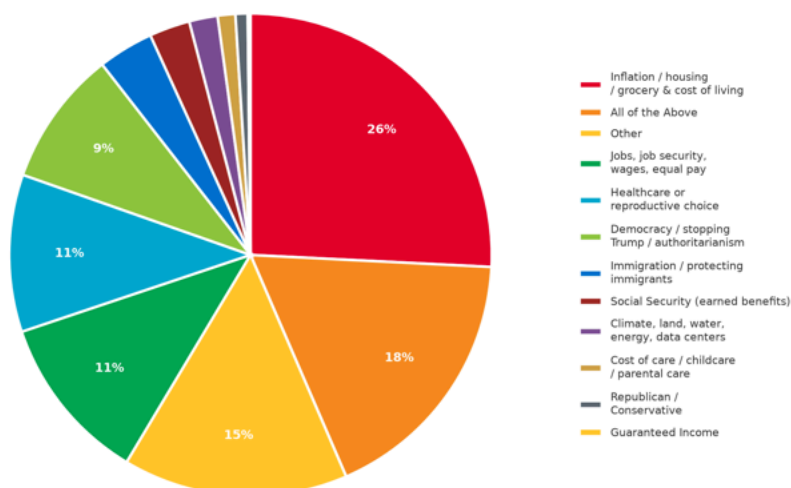
Ford is significantly less known than Dina Titus here and has name ID work to do. The opposition isn't waiting: attack ads are defining him around taxes and California Gov. Newsom's endorsement. Governor Lombardo's campaign and the pro-Lombardo Better Nevada PAC have blanketed the Vegas Valley – ads, billboards, mailers – with the California frame: Ford would bring California-style policies, high taxes, and an \$18 billion legislative agenda to Nevada.

In NV-02, our persuasion moved the most voters: 71% of voters moved from neutral to supportive and even 68% of voters who had never heard of Benitez-Thompson came around. Ford is the known name here, baggage and all, captured by one voter: *"Aaron pisses me off, but I'm gonna vote for him,"* The anti-Lombardo vote is the single most common route to supporting Ford.

Spanish-speaking voters raised a different set of needs – language access at polling places, mail-ballot anxiety, and requests for consolidated candidate information. One voter said: *"I live in Reno, Nevada, the second highest in the nation for grocery prices, and number four on the list for the highest gas prices [...] We [need to] bring down the cost of living, just enough to where people can afford to buy food and drive back and forth to work."*

In NV-03, the hospitality and convention slowdown is the face of the economy. As one voter put it: *"I think the issue of the unemployment rate across the country is scary, but especially in Las Vegas, and hospitality is at an all-time low."* Cost of living was named by 30.4% of voters, but the Las Vegas specifics matter: gas, NV Energy bills, car insurance, rent that one full-time job no longer covers. As one voter said: *"I work more than full-time, and I can't afford three times... any of the rent... so I can't put a roof over my head."*

Most Important Issue — PA



Pennsylvania

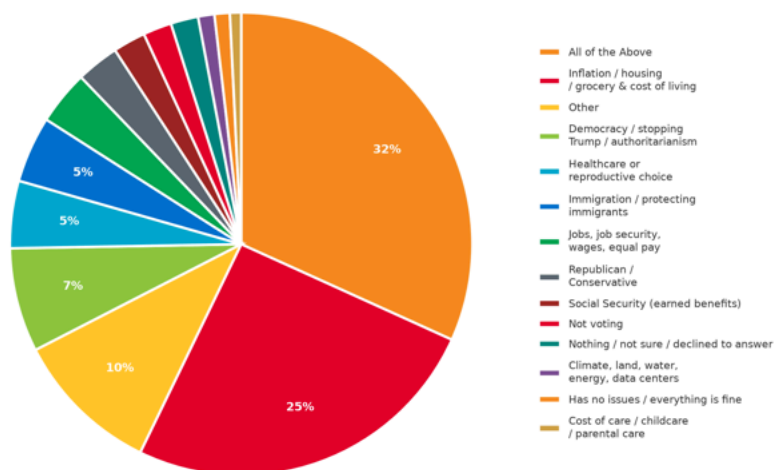
In PA-07, democracy is dead last (5.5%) and healthcare is the whole conversation, including reproductive care (15.3%). One Medicare voter said: *"I pay almost \$400... a month for my healthcare."* The candidates on both sides have high negatives from the constant advertising that is going out.

In PA-10, Janelle Stelson is very well known as central Pennsylvania's news anchor – and the strong dislike for the opponent is doing work. Spanish speakers and bilingual voters in particular moved over to our side. Immigration is a significant

factor running against Trump and Republicans. Two verbatims say it better than I can:

- "Yes, immigration or something, because that old man is very bad" – a bilingual voter who agreed with every point on ICE
- "Get ICE off of the streets."

Most Important Issue — TX



Texas

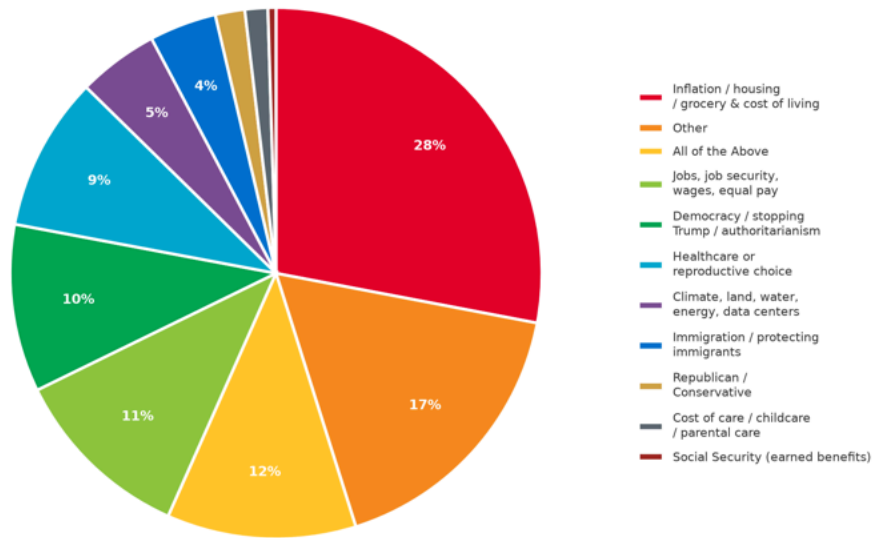
In TX-15, we see a very economically minded district. Cost of living concerns here mean gas and food, not housing – the inverse of Nevada. Jobs (4.0%) and democracy (6.6%) are far below average for this — a low-salience, cost-driven electorate.

Immigration has high salience and cuts both ways — not because of a fear of raids (NE-02) or outrage at enforcement (PA-10), but rather it's a "security" argument. Three districts, three different immigration conversations.

For the Senate race, voters are tired and unwilling to vote for either candidate because of the attack ads. But, the persuasion is there when a caller does the work. One voter who had never heard of Talarico – and named the economy as her issue – heard the caller's case on tariffs and Wall Street landlords, asked which party he belonged to, and announced she was switching sides: *"I'm switching from Republican to Democrats."* Retirees feel it on a fixed income: *"pues aumenta todo y pues no, con el mismo cheque no puedo. [everything goes up, and with the same check, I can't.]"*

One note on data, we started in this district later than the others, so response counts are lower – which may explain the elevated "all of the above" responses so far.

Most Important Issue — WI



Wisconsin

WI-01 brings a lot of apathy and a very low name ID for Mitchell Berman. The largest substantive undecided cluster here shares one trait: they distrust that politicians can deliver — several stopped voting over broken promises. That's a credibility problem, and it needs answers (specific commitments, accountability mechanisms), not enthusiasm.

There are some attack lines to pre-butt: "Crowley raises taxes" — the Milwaukee County sales tax — which we heard outside the September 28 Mitchell Berman town hall we attended, and a "socialist" attack line, the same attack El-Sayed absorbs in Michigan. Notably, the attack on Mitchell as "pro-data-center" is coming from the left, not the right. One voter put the housing math plainly: *"How are you going to tell me that rent is fifteen, sixteen hundred a month and you have to make three times that to even get approved?"*

WI-03 is the data center district. Voters here talked about data centers more than anywhere in the country — and it was the most Republican/conservative-leaning sample of any of the calls we've made. About a third of voters who named data centers as their top issue want a stop or ban outright, not just fees or taxes. The issue is surging in part because voters believe data center construction is imminent. As one voter put it: *"there's a data center that is likely about to go up soon. So that's definitely top of mind."* And another: *"So yeah, food is really important, but I'm also concerned about the data centers."*

The hard news: Crowley has the second lowest support of any candidate in the program.

District	Candidate	Support
GA-GOV	Keisha Lance Bottoms	81.8%
GA-SEN	Jon Ossoff	80.2%
ME-02	Matt Dunlap	74.3%
MI-03	Hillary Scholten	75.5%
MI-04	Sean McCann	74.4%
MI-07	William Lawrence	85.2%
MI-10	Christina Hines	76.0%
MI-SOS	Garlin Gilchrist	68.1%
MI-SEN	Abdul El-Sayed	77.1%
NC-01	Don Davis	76.5%
NC-11	Jamie Ager	80.3%
NC-SEN	Roy Cooper	75.2%
NE-02	Denise Powell	72.5%
NV-01	Dina Titus	77.5%
NV-02	Teresa Benitez-Thompson	79.1%
NV-03	Susie Lee	80.4%
NV-04	Steven Horsford	75.8%
NV-GOV	Aaron Ford	74.0%
OH-09	Marcy Kaptur	73.1%
OH-SEN	Sherrod Brown	76.0%
PA-07	Bob Brooks	72.1%
PA-08	Paige Cignetti	76.4%
PA-10	Janelle Stelson	77.5%
TX-15	Bobby Pulido	83.8%
TX-SEN	James Talarico	79.1%
WI-01	Mitchell Berman	74.2%
WI-03	Rebecca Cooke	74.9%
WI-GOV	David Crowley	71.6%