



TO: **Pennsylvania Budget & Policy Center**
FROM: Global Strategy Group
DATE: April 2020
RE: **NEW POLL RESULTS: Attitudes of “unheard middle” voters nationally and in Pennsylvania**

Global Strategy Group conducted a 10-state survey, including Pennsylvania, among the “unheard middle” in American politics (those who do not self-identify as strong Democrats or strong Republicans). These voters are a silent majority who provide insights on issues that impact them that are less motivated by partisanship. The coronavirus’ impact on the economy is creating financial challenges for many unheard middle voters, including job security fears. This economic uncertainty is driving a desire for state government to become more involved in the response to the pandemic.

The unheard middle in Pennsylvania believes their state government has a role to play in the coronavirus recovery effort and have a real appetite for it to help people economically over the long-term. By far, the unheard middle prioritizes helping hard-working families and small businesses far above large businesses and corporations. The most appealing proposals to help address the impacts of the coronavirus are those that mitigate health care expenses, assist small businesses to stay afloat, and help workers weather the economic fallout of the pandemic. Paid sick days and paid family & medical leave are among the two proposals that hold a great deal of appeal and remain popular during this crisis under heavy criticism.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS IN PENNSYLVANIA:

- **Unheard middle voters give state leaders positive ratings on their work combatting coronavirus.** A majority approve of the way Governor Tom Wolf (68% approve/22% disapprove) and the Pennsylvania state legislature (53% approve/25% disapprove) are handling the coronavirus epidemic.
- **However, the unheard middle wants Pennsylvania to do more to help hard-working people and to continue beyond the immediate emergency response.** By a huge margin, more believe “the state government still needs to do more to protect the economy and hard-working families” (91%) than “the state government doesn’t need to spend more taxpayer dollars in response to the economic impacts of the pandemic” (9%). By over a three-to-one margin, more want state government to “get more involved in helping people and businesses economically over the long term” (76%) than having state government fix the immediate economic problems “but not get more involved in the economy over the long-term” (24%).
- **Hard-working people and small businesses are unequivocally the top priority for the unheard middle in Pennsylvania, not large businesses and corporations.** Most say Pennsylvania’s priority should be “providing support to hard-working families who have lost income to help them make it through the crisis” (88%) over “helping get businesses back on their feet so that they can hire more people.” And, when asked to choose, far more believe “it is more important that the state government’s coronavirus response provide immediate help to small businesses” (90%) than it “provide immediate help to corporations and other large employers” (10%).

- **The unheard middle in Pennsylvania strongly supports policies that put hard-working people and small businesses first.** The popularity of policies that center on health care affordability, supporting small businesses, and helping regular people navigate the pandemic far exceeds those policies more focused on large businesses.

Support for coronavirus pandemic response proposals	
97%	Extending a grace period for people to pay health insurance bills before their coverage can be cancelled
92%	Limiting what drug companies can charge for high-cost prescription drugs
90%	Requiring workplaces to provide paid sick days to their employees
89%	Extending the length of time that laid-off workers can receive unemployment compensation and increasing the amount that they receive
88%	Providing low-interest loans to small businesses to help them make it through the crisis
88%	Expanding a tax credit to provide extra income to working people with low incomes
86%	Offering people in Pennsylvania the option to buy into the same public health insurance plans that are available to state employees, if they want to
86%	Protecting patients from having to pay the costs not covered by their insurance when treated at an out-of-network hospital or by an out-of-network doctor
84%	Creating an insurance plan to provide paid family and medical leave for employees to care for a sick family member, bond with a new baby or recover from a major illness or injury
79%	Expanding the number of people who can get healthcare through Medicaid to cover more uninsured people who otherwise can't afford healthcare coverage
78%	Eliminating tax breaks for corporations and large businesses that don't offer paid sick and family leave and health care to their employees
69%	Eliminating tax breaks for large corporations
47%	Providing tax breaks and other support to help corporations and large businesses
20%	No longer requiring businesses to pay the minimum wage or pay more for overtime work

- **Unheard middle voters in Pennsylvania are un-swayed by arguments against paid sick days and family & medical leave.** Support for paid sick days (90% support/5% oppose) and family & medical leave (84% support/6% oppose) is extremely high. After a balanced debate with arguments for and against both policies, a huge majority remain supporters of both (Paid sick: 88% support/12% oppose; Family & medical: 85% support/15% oppose).

KEY MULTI-STATE SURVEY FINDINGS:

- **Many unheard middles are struggling in the country's new economic paradigm caused by the coronavirus.** Half of unheard middles report themselves or someone in their family losing a job (17%) or having their hours reduced at work (36%). Those who report job losses are more likely to be women (25%) than men (18%), under 55 (28%) than 55 and older (13%), and Hispanic (40%) than African American (23%) and white (20%).

- **The desire among unheard middles for more state government involvement is strong and widespread.** The vast majority of unheard middles support more state government involvement in protecting the economy (+78 more state involvement). Men are only relatively less supportive (+72) than women (+84). White unheard middles (+78) and African Americans (+92) are more supportive than Hispanics (+60). Younger unheard middles are slightly less supportive than older (+76 under 55; +82 55 & older). Democrats (+88) and Independents (+80) are more likely to support more involvement than Republicans (+67).

Which statement comes closest to your opinion?

89%	The federal government's response was a start, but the state government still needs to do more to protect the economy and hard-working families
11%	The federal government has done enough, and the state government doesn't need to spend more taxpayer dollars in response to the economic impacts of the pandemic

- **Unheard middles want to see long-term involvement from the state government in making the economy work better for people.** Far more want their state to work in the long-term and not stop when the short-term coronavirus is over (+38 long-term). There are sharp divisions in attitudes based on partisanship – but even Republicans tend to favor working long-term (+48 long-term Democrats; +53 Independents; +12 Republicans). There is less appetite for long-term involvement among men (+26 long-term) and voters 55 & older (+29) than among women (+48) and voters under 55 (+44). White (+34 long-term) and Hispanics (+32) are less interested in long-term involvement than African Americans (+72).

Which statement comes closest to your opinion?

69%	The state government should respond to the immediate economic problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic and get more involved in helping people and businesses economically over the long-term
31%	The state government should respond in the short-term to help fix the immediate economic problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic but not get more involved in the economy over the long-term

- **Unheard middles across the ideological spectrum put hard-working people and small businesses first, not corporations.** Democrats (+76 workers), Independents (+61), and Republicans (+32) all think state government's priority in responding to the coronavirus should be hard-working people over businesses. Men tend to be slightly friendlier to businesses (+52 workers) than women (+60), but there is no difference between whites, African Americans, and Hispanics (all +56). Those age 55 and older are more business-friendly (+51 workers), than those younger than 55 (+60).

When asked to choose between small businesses and corporations, most prioritize small businesses with little difference between Democrats (+76 small biz), Independents (+80), and Republicans (+72).

Which statement comes closest to your opinion?

78%	The state government's main priority in responding to the coronavirus should be providing support to hard-working families who have lost income to help them make it through the crisis.
22%	The state government's main priority in responding to the coronavirus should be helping get businesses back on their feet so that they can hire more people.
88%	It is more important that the state government's coronavirus response provide immediate help to small businesses because without the help many of them will have to close their doors for good.
12%	It is more important that the state government's coronavirus response provide immediate help to corporations and other large employers because they employ thousands of people in [STATE].

- In fact, during the crisis, unheard middles think big corporations should be asked to pay more taxes to help protect valuable state programs.** Even after hearing arguments that now - during a pandemic - is not the time to raise taxes on large businesses, a large majority of unheard middles think corporations should pay more in order to pay for schools, health care and public safety (+30 tax corporations). Democrats (+56 tax corporations), Independents (+26) and Republicans (+6) all think they should pay more. Women are more likely to support taxing corporations (+39) than men (+22), and whites (+33) and African Americans (+32) more than Hispanics (only +2). There is a less marked difference between unheard middles under age 55 (+29 tax corporations) and those 55 and older (+32).

Which statement comes closest to your opinion?

65%	Corporations have gotten government handouts and tax loopholes for years. As state budgets get more and more strapped due to the pandemic, the government should be eliminating these loopholes and making big corporations pay their fair share so we aren't forced to cut funding for essential services like schools, health care and public safety
35%	Large and medium-sized businesses employ hundreds of thousands of people in [STATE] and many of them are at risk of shutting their doors forever because of the coronavirus pandemic. Now is not the time to burden large companies with even higher taxes, which will force them to cut jobs, pay, and benefits for thousands of workers who are still employed

- Arguments against paid sick days and paid family & medical leave fall flat with the unheard middle.** Both proposals start off with huge support (+78 support Paid sick; +80 support Family & medical). Both maintain huge levels of support following a balanced debate that includes opponents calling each a new burden that businesses cannot afford at this time (+71 support paid sick; +64 support family & medical). Both policies hold majority support across the board regardless of party, gender, age, or ethnicity. Support is strongest post-debate among women, younger voters, people of color, Democrats, and Independents.

Paid Sick Days Debate

Supporters say that as the coronavirus pandemic spreads, we must take care of those who are working hard. It is critical for workers to not have to worry about losing their job or a paycheck if they need to take time off because they are sick. Paid sick days will encourage workers to stay home to prevent them from infecting others and prevent an even worse impact on businesses. We can clearly see now that permanently requiring paid sick days will make our workplaces stronger by keeping businesses and employees healthier and more productive, which will in turn help grow our economy again.

Opponents say this proposal is an expensive mandate on businesses that will cost us jobs at a time when the coronavirus pandemic has already put millions of businesses and people out of work. Businesses couldn't afford it before, and they can't afford it during this crisis. The proposal will force too many employers to reduce benefits, including health care, and curb pay raises for the dwindling number of workers who are still employed.

Paid Family & Medical Leave Debate

Supporters say that as the coronavirus pandemic spreads, it will be critical for workers to have the time to care for loved ones without losing their jobs or a paycheck. In the long-term, this proposal keeps our families and workplaces strong because it enables people to balance their work with caring for sick children and other family members. It's now clearer than ever that productive businesses with healthy employees are the key to a strong American economy.

Opponents say that this proposal is a giant new burden on businesses at the wrong time. Small businesses couldn't afford to pay for their employees to take weeks off at a time before and they surely can't afford it now. We shouldn't force this expensive and unrealistic mandate on businesses that are struggling to keep their doors open as the coronavirus pandemic ravages the economy. In the long-term, this will hinder business' ability to grow jobs and succeed.

ABOUT THE POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 2,015 middle-partisan registered voters between April 2 and April 8, 2020 in AZ, CO, FL, ME, MD, MI, NV, NC, PA, VA, including 202 in PA. Middle partisan voters are defined as those who do not self-identify as "strong Democrats" or "Strong Republicans." The survey had a margin of error of +/- 2.2%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater, including +/- 6.9% in PA.