

# Memorandum

To: Interested Parties  
From: Michael Meyers, TargetPoint Consulting  
Date: October 19, 2015  
Re: Presidential Battleground Poll Results

## **American Voters United in Support of National Service**

The concept of individuals investing in their communities through different means of philanthropy and service is an idea common to our American values system. For decades Americans have formally committed themselves to serving their neighbors through a number of national service programs, most notably through AmeriCorps and other corps programs. Our recent findings show that American voters, Democrats and Republicans alike, are united in support of National Service and making sure we continue this worthwhile investment in such critical programs.

## **Research Methodology**

Commissioned by Voices for National Service, TargetPoint Consulting conducted a poll of 800 registered voters from October 3-5. Those voters interviewed were representative of nine presidential battleground states: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The margin of error for this poll is +/- 3.46%. This memorandum reflects the findings from this survey.

## **Key Findings**

- Presidential battleground voters understand that national service programs address some of the most critical challenges we face and overwhelmingly support the concept of national service. Voters believe investing their tax dollars in national service programs is a worthwhile federal investment and after hearing more about specific programs and their components show continued strong support for investing in those programs.
- After learning the details about national service programs and hearing about benefits voters show increased support in investing their tax dollars in these programs, and want to either maintain or increase spending toward national service programs.
- Republican and Democrat elected officials and candidates alike should consider the real impact of backing continued and further investment in these programs could have on voters' consideration of their candidacy and support.

## Solid Initial Support for National Service and Programs

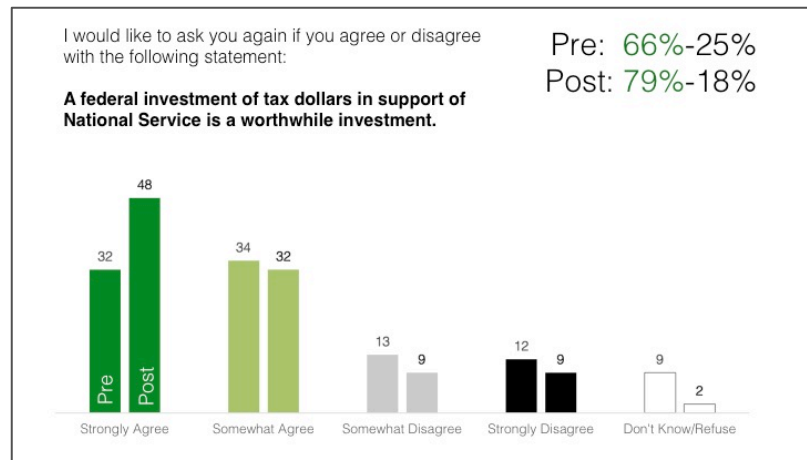
We introduced the concept of National Service to presidential battleground voters and the initial reaction garnered 74% support with 39% strongly supporting this idea. We see support stays strong among Republican voters with 66% of Republicans supporting National Service as well.

Following our initial read on voters we posed our ballot question that asked them if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “A federal investment of tax dollars in support of National Service is a worthwhile investment.” 66% of presidential battleground voters agreed National Service is a worthwhile investment of their tax dollars, and 32% strongly agreed. 56% of Republicans, 68% of Independents, and 75% of Democrats agreed the investment was worthwhile, too. Even 59% of our most conservative of voters – our Tea Party supporters – agreed that a federal investment in National Service is worthwhile.

Voters strongly support investing in (with at least 79% support across the board) the specific program components we asked about including Senior Corps and the Foster Grandparents program, AmeriCorps, and the public-private partnerships formed through groups like Habitat for Humanity and local food banks or shelters. 87% support federal investments in Senior Corps (58% strong support), 80% support AmeriCorps (49% strongly support), and 79% support the public-private partnerships (47% strongly support).

## Strong Agreement on Investing Tax Dollars in National Service Programs

We asked respondents their opinion on funding National Service programs at three different intervals throughout the survey and saw an increase in support for funding National Service at each different interval. Beyond our overall support seen from voters in each of our states surveyed, we also saw very few voters across the spectrum who were interested in cutting all funding for National Service programs. Only 14% of our Tea Party supporters want to cut all funding for National Service programs, with many of our demographic groups reaching near unanimity that we should maintain or increase spending and investment in National service programs.



**Initial Ballot Test:** 66% agree that a federal investment of tax dollars in support of National Service is a worthwhile investment

**Informed Ballot Test:** 79% agree that a federal investment of tax dollars in support of National Service is a worthwhile investment

**Funding Preference:** 83% would like to maintain or increase the levels of spending and investment, (39% think increasing spending would be best, while 44% think maintaining current levels of spending would be best).

It's clear that voters are not dissuaded by the idea that government spending for National Service programs means tax dollars are invested. Support for investment stems income and partisan divides.

## **Tangible Benefits and Belief in Service Values Influences Voters' Support of Candidates Who Back National Service**

Whether or not a candidate supports National Service in general or through a specific plan will affect voters' opinion of elected officials and support of potential candidates. Two possible plans were posed that a presidential candidate could support to each half of our respondents. We asked if voters would be more or less likely to vote for a candidate who came out with that plan. These were the two potential plans:

**PLAN A:** If a presidential candidate came out with a plan to provide an AmeriCorps member to all low-performing schools in America to be tutors and mentors giving struggling students the additional support they need to succeed, would you be more or less likely to vote for that candidate?

**PLAN B:** Right now hundreds of thousands of qualified applicants are turned away because of a lack of funding. If a presidential candidate came out with a plan to guarantee funding so that every qualified applicant who wanted to serve in a National Service position would be given that opportunity, would you be more or less likely to vote for that candidate?

67% of voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who came out with the first plan to help low-performing schools, while 61% of voters were more likely to vote for a candidate who would guarantee funding for all qualified National Service applicants. This includes key voting groups who are also more likely to vote for a candidate with one of these plans. Given the majority and in many cases strong support across demographic groups for a candidate to come out with a plan, this is an issue that can be addressed in both general and primary election political atmospheres without real concern.

| Key Voting Group     | Low-Performing School Plan | Guaranteed Applicants Plan |
|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| GOP Base Voters      | <b>59%</b>                 | <b>47%</b>                 |
| DEM Base Voters      | <b>81%</b>                 | <b>78%</b>                 |
| Independents         | <b>65%</b>                 | <b>52%</b>                 |
| Frequent Churchgoers | <b>64%</b>                 | <b>60%</b>                 |
| Tea Party Supporters | <b>58%</b>                 | <b>51%</b>                 |
| Millennials          | <b>76%</b>                 | <b>63%</b>                 |
| Seniors              | <b>63%</b>                 | <b>53%</b>                 |
| African Americans    | <b>86%</b>                 | <b>75%</b>                 |
| Hispanics            | <b>59%</b>                 | <b>55%</b>                 |

Presidential battleground voters agree with the potential benefits and impact these programs have and the values they instill in both service members and the communities they serve in. At least 68% of all presidential battleground voters are more likely to support National Service programs after hearing each of the benefits. The following were the most popular messages with our voters.

### Top Three Most Popular Messages Overall

- “These programs act as an important two-way bridge for our veterans returning home from service. More than 1.5 million veterans and their families have received help from program members and more than 17 thousand veterans have continued their service to the country as national service members themselves.” *(80% more likely to support National Service programs, 60% much more likely)*
- “Some National Service members have partnered with organizations like the Red Cross to help the nation prepare, respond, and recover from natural and man-made disasters. National Service members have responded to a full range of disasters including floods, hurricanes, forest fires and tornados and provided especially vital and innovative services following Super Storm Sandy.” *(85% more likely to support National Service programs, 50% much more likely)*
- “National service members develop needed professional skills that make them more competitive when applying for jobs. By gaining valuable experiences, they enter the workforce as better trained, better educated and more valuable employees.” *(83% more likely to support National Service programs, 45% much more likely)*

Similar to the overwhelmingly positive reaction to the benefits of National Service programs, we asked voters whether they believed that national Service was connected to a few core values. Our respondents overwhelmingly agreed that National service:

- **Helps prepare young people for the workforce (80%)**
- **Helps build stronger neighborhoods and communities (79%)**
- **Helps restore important values of patriotism and civic duty to our young people (78%)**
- **Helps replace government handouts with local, volunteer-based, community work and empower people to be more self-sufficient and less dependent on the government in the long run (75%)**

It's likely we're seeing the high influence this concept has on support for a candidate stemming from deep agreement on the national and local benefits, and the core values that define these programs.

### **Conclusions**

The findings here show voters in presidential battleground states believe in supporting National Service not just in theory, but also through a federal investment of taxpayer dollars to support overall national service programs and their members. Digging into the greater benefits of these programs is where we see voters enthusiastically support National Service programs – a value seen by the entire country and realized in their local communities. Candidates on both sides should look at how funding a national service plan could improve the likelihood of key voters supporting them in the upcoming election. Voters in our survey overwhelmingly agree with the strong values that national service programs are built on – showing the many national service corps should be maintained through federal funding. Voters in presidential battleground states do not want to see funding cut for these programs that help restore important values in our citizens and build us stronger communities.