



# Congressional Institute Study: What Working and Middle Income Voters Want From Their Government



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## Overview

The most recent research for the Congressional Institute indicates that the electorate continues to show serious concern about the direction of the country, and defines the kinds of changes they want to see. In the context of the most recent presidential election, voter perceptions were that the election was a choice between change and the status quo, and the result of voters' voices not being heard.

Across the groups that voted for Trump in larger numbers than voted for the Republican candidate in previous elections — union households, middle and lower income voters, and those with less than a college degree — they began seeking change well before the 2016 election cycle; they voted for change in 2008, but did not see the kinds of change for which they voted. Their definitions of change are largely economic in nature, with jobs returning to the US as the most common definition of change. Safety from terrorism/dealing with the ISIS threat is another major priority across many groups, particularly the Republican base. As part of the definition of change, voters are looking for measurable progress. They do not expect significant change to happen quickly, but they do expect to see clear signs of progress. While there is no single institution or person that is solely responsible for delivering change, voters believe that Congress has the largest role in determining the scale of change, either positively or negatively, working with the President and other actors.

As part of how voters are defining change, the research explored in depth the personal outcomes that people are seeking in their lives. Throughout the qualitative discussions, particularly in the middle income group in Pittsburgh, there is a changing view of retirement. Retirement is the culmination of an individual's economic activity throughout his or her lifetime. As many voters described, they have worked multiple jobs throughout their lives, and some work multiple jobs simultaneously, but because of stagnant wages and rising costs, retirement is not a possibility for many people. This unsustainable pace and sense of treading water economically drove working and middle class individuals to vote for change, and for the candidate whom they saw as the most likely agent of change.

From voters' perspectives, the middle class sees value in their contributions and the work that they do, but do not feel valued by the nation's elites and institutions. There is also a sense that work is not rewarded anymore. As part of delivering change that voters are expecting, lawmakers, institutions and especially Congress need to think through how they can value individuals' contributions at a greater level, but also how the value of work can be more clearly rewarded.

While one out of two voters describes themselves as more engaged and interested in the political process after the last election cycle, they are not fully clear on how to effectively make their voices heard other than by voting. However, the actions taken by lawmakers as a reflection of the issue priorities for which they voted seems to be the most clear signal to voters as to whether or not their voices were heard. Furthermore, in terms of who or what has the largest role in whether voices are effectively heard, elected representatives in Congress are viewed as playing the largest role, even more than the individual voter, the President or the media.

This research examines voters at a national level but also within two broad categories of voters:

- “Opportunity groups,” defined as groups that voted for Republicans at the presidential level in larger margins than have historically done so. These voter groups include union households, lower to middle income, and those with less than a college degree.
- “Majority coalition groups,” defined as groups that historically have been key parts of majority coalitions at the Congressional level. This category includes independents, women, middle income, Hispanics and young voters.

## Post Election Voter Outlook

From the qualitative discussions, there are two central themes in voters’ interpretation of the choices in the election.

### A Choice Between Change and the Status Quo

The first major theme was that this election was about the economy and finding a more positive economic direction, especially with a President who has a business background rather than a political one. At a broader level, voters felt their choice in this election was between change and the status quo.

*Orlando Independent Voter: It seemed like it was - this election was either a change or the same old thing. The same status quo that has been going on the last eight years.*

Particularly among the middle income group, they felt that the message voters sent was that work is not rewarded, and “working people are tired of seeing others not working.”

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: What I have seen is that we have a class of people that rely on the government to give them everything. They get their housing. They get their free phones. They get their food. They get rewarded for working less. Now they’ve just said why should we ever work? And they just gave up. Then I see middle aged people just trying to get by and they can’t get ahead because every time something good happens, two bad things happen to them...We have built a system where nobody can get ahead and people are all going to stay just where they are.*

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: I have neighbors that have all these kids and they get so much money in food stamps and then they brag about how they can get all this stuff. And my husband is working as hard as he can and I’m cutting coupons and shopping at Aldi’s and Save-A-Lot. It’s frustrating.*

### Is Your Voice Heard?

A second major theme of the election was that the belief that voters’ voices had not been heard.

*Pittsburgh Female Voter: I think it [the election] was more about people standing up for exactly what they believe in. And wanting their own voices to be heard.*



In terms of the question of voices not being heard, by 2:1 the electorate still does not see their voices being heard (29-58 yes-no), but this is an improvement from where this number stood a year ago (19-79). This positive improvement is because a larger percentage of Republicans now feel they are heard to a greater extent (42-49 yes-no) as compared to where it stood a year ago (15-84 yes-no). This improvement among Republicans in voices being heard was observed in the qualitative discussions with conservative Republicans. In

those discussions, the outcome of the election gave some conservative Republicans hope that their voices were heard more than before, and that going against elites and the media in this election was evidence that people could be heard if they acted and engaged.

More generally among the electorate, voters still feel they are not heard, but also that lawmakers do not pay attention even when voices are heard. Although there are concerns about Congress not getting things done, voters cited examples of legislation being passed that did not reflect their priorities. As a result, even when some legislation is passed, voters may not feel they are heard. Throughout the focus group discussions, the passage of Obamacare was frequently cited as an example of voters' voices not being heard.

*Pittsburgh Female Voter: [My voice] hasn't been heard, for the last eight years, maybe more than that. It hasn't been heard. We've had meetings, and things have been changed, things have been done that I think would be harmful. But it hasn't been heard.*

*Orlando Independent Voter: No one ever played it out to say, "Well, you're all going to pay more [for Obamacare], and you're cool with that, right?" It never came down like that. It was just a forced mandate, force-fed to us all, and so now I have to save up more money to pay for that. I'm not thrilled with it, and that's just one of two or three dozen things that my voice never mattered on.*

*Pittsburgh Female Voter: I strongly disagreed with Obamacare...It was pretty much that I didn't vote for this, but since he was elected, this is how it had to be.*

## Origins of Change

As we heard throughout the qualitative discussions, the desire for change started several years ago, well before the last election cycle. As many described, the most recent election was driven by the desire for change that they had expected President Obama's election to produce, but which they did not believe it had delivered.



*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: We voted for change...was what people thought was going to happen during the 2008 election. And I don't think people felt they were being heard because of the type of change we got. That wasn't what we were looking for.*

## **Role of the Media**

Throughout the focus groups and the discussions about what the election meant to voters, there was consensus about the unhelpful role of the media and how the media is contributing to national division, with one person feeling that during the campaign “it was hard to sort through the wheat and the chaff to know what is fact.” Another stated that “all I heard was negative about either [candidate].”

Based on voter descriptions, it was not that the media was deliberately misleading; the problem was that they presented selective facts and an incomplete view. Some said that they watched CNN and Fox to hear both sides' interpretation of news, and then merged the two interpretations together as an attempt to discern fact from opinion.

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: I think they are driven - obviously, they have their own agendas... I'll put on CNN for 20 minutes and FOX for 20 minutes. And just the way one side will attack one half of the same story to the other, it's like they can't be talking about the same thing. You honestly think that...But then they just take it and it is 45 minutes of them talking, five panelists. And then they bring on somebody with a different point of view and they yell at them. And I'm like, “Why did you even bring him on, you just yelled at him for 10 minutes of the thing.” So they have their own agenda, they do what they want. So you can't put much stock in it.*

*Orlando Independent Voter: There is no true source of news. So you have to either listen to both and decipher, or not listen to either, and just kind of figure out on your own what the [heck] is going on. And it's just really sad, I don't trust anything anymore.*

## **Direction of the Country**

In the aftermath of the election, the overall mood of the country remains cautiously pessimistic (39-44 right direction-wrong track), and not unexpectedly, Republicans are more optimistic than other groups about the direction of the country (52-35 right direction-wrong track), with a very large percentage of Republicans expecting significant positive change (56%). However, based on qualitative discussions with many swing groups, there was some level of positive anticipation about the changes that the incoming administration might make, although with an acknowledgement that there were many unknowns.

## Concerns About Congress



In terms of current concerns about Congress, the top concerns are the way Congress spends money, not getting things done and lack of accountability. Voters were asked to rate each concern on a scale of 1-9, with 1 being not concerning at all, 5 neutral and 9 extremely concerning. These top priority concerns are consistent with the 2016 research for Congressional Institute that showed lack of accountability being one of the top concerns about Congress.

Overall	Republican	Independents
Mean	Mean	Mean
The way Congress spends my money (7.57)	The way Congress spends my money (7.70)	Lack of accountability (7.72)
Not getting things done (7.52)	Lack of accountability (7.48)	Not getting things done (7.67)
Lack of accountability (7.50)	Not getting things done (7.42)	The way Congress spends my money (7.65)
Influence of special interests (7.35)	Influence of special interests (7.31)	Influence of special interests (7.46)
Not presenting a clear plan to voters and following through (7.30)	Not fulfilling its Constitutional role (7.31)	Not presenting a clear plan to voters and following through (7.43)
Not fulfilling its Constitutional role (7.26)	Not presenting a clear plan to voters and following through (7.21)	Not fulfilling its Constitutional role (7.32)
Your voice not being heard (7.14)	Your voice not being heard (6.95)	Your voice not being heard (7.18)
Partisanship (6.79)	Partisanship (6.74)	Partisanship (6.79)
Gerrymandering of Congressional districts (6.48)	Gerrymandering of Congressional districts (6.28)	Gerrymandering of Congressional districts (6.54)

Among Republicans overall as well as conservative Republicans, spending and accountability are the top concerns, while independents are slightly more concerned about accountability and not getting things done.

## Most Important Personal Outcomes

In order for lawmakers to effectively deliver the kinds of changes voters are seeking, it is necessary for them to start by having a clear understanding of what voters are facing in their personal lives and households. Based on responses generated from qualitative discussions, we posed a series of sixteen personal outcomes and asked voters to evaluate each one in terms of personal importance, with 1 being important, 5 very important and 9 being extremely important<sup>1</sup>. In addition to the broad changes they want to see in the country, voters prioritized economic



items and security for personal outcomes they want to see in their own lives. More specifically, voters' most important personal outcomes are having a secure retirement, being able to have quality affordable health care, being safe from terrorism and not having to worry about paying next month's bills.

BASE/ MIDDLE	Overall	Conservative Republican	Republican	Independents
Ranking	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Having a secure retirement (7.63)	Being safe from terrorism (8.12)	Being safe from terrorism (7.97)	Having a secure retirement (7.78)
2	Being able to have the quality affordable health care that you need (7.61)	Having a secure retirement (7.85)	Having a secure retirement (7.70)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.62)
3	Being safe from terrorism (7.61)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.68)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.54)	Being safe from terrorism (7.61)
4	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.47)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.63)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.51)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.39)
5	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.17)	Having a society that rewards work so that more people contribute to the economy (7.35)	Seeing jobs come back from overseas so that more jobs are available (7.31)	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.13)

Like many other groups, Republicans and conservative Republicans prioritized economic outcomes, but were even more concerned about terrorism.

<sup>1</sup> A complete list of the sixteen personal outcomes is located in the appendix.

OPPORTUNITY GROUPS	Union	<50K	Some College	High School Grad or Less
Ranking	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Having a secure retirement (7.78)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.66)	Having a secure retirement (7.73)	Being safe from terrorism (7.95)
2	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.76)	Being safe from terrorism (7.56)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.68)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.93)
3	Being safe from terrorism (7.66)	Having a secure retirement (7.52)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.66)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.69)
4	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.56)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.48)	Being safe from terrorism (7.61)	Having a secure retirement (7.55)
5	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.37)	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.08)	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.29)	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.41)

Among some opportunity groups, having a secure retirement was the most important personal outcome, and as we heard in qualitative discussions, many voters particularly in the low and middle income groups cannot get to retirement because of cost of living and stagnant wages.

COALITION GROUPS	Women	Independents	50-75K	Hispanics	18-29
Ranking	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.81)	Having a secure retirement (7.78)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.75)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.34)	Having job security (7.23)
2	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.81)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.62)	Having a secure retirement (7.74)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.21)	Being able to have quality affordable health care that you need (7.04)
3	Having a secure retirement (7.80)	Being safe from terrorism (7.61)	Being safe from terrorism (7.71)	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.19)	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.02)

COALITION GROUPS	Women	Independents	50-75K	Hispanics	18-29
Ranking	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
4	Being safe from terrorism (7.77)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.39)	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.50)	Paying off personal or family debt (7.19)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (6.98)
5	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.35)	Being able to effectively manage cost of living (7.13)	Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills (7.47)	Having a secure retirement (7.16)	Being safe from terrorism (6.89)

Of the groups needed to build a majority coalition, *not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills*, and *being able to have quality affordable health care that you need*, generally topped the list of priorities. Also in the top several priorities was *having a secure retirement*, except among 18-29 year olds, who focused instead on *having job security*. *Being safe from terrorism* and *being able to effectively manage cost of living* were also in the top tier among these coalition groups.

## Changing Views of Retirement

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: I came back here, the steel mills were just going down. I worked at Gimble's warehouse, I worked at Kaufmann's warehouse. Then I switched. I went to an electronics school, I worked at a dialysis clinic, I worked at Mellon Bank. You know, I've been everything. I'll never have a good job that I can retire from. If something happened financially to make it where I could retire - or...get a good-paying job, that would be something to me.*

The concerns about retirement go beyond traditional concerns about Social Security. Retirement is now viewed as the culmination of a person's economic activity throughout a lifetime, and for many working people, they have spent a lifetime working. As described in the quote from the middle



income voter in Pittsburgh, many people may not be able to retire at all. Because of a longstanding situation of rising cost of living, and difficulty with obtaining and affording health care, compounded by stagnant wages, the ability to retire is not a possibility for many voters, with personal economic situations driving their decisions in the election last fall.

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: My husband feels like he will never be able to retire. He says, "I'm just gonna have to work until I die."*

Given the rankings in the personal outcomes above, retirement is an ultimate end goal, but is significantly affected by other times on the list, especially health care, being able to manage cost of living, and the ability to pay next month's bills.

## Value of Individual Contributions

In terms of the value that the middle class feels, a majority of the electorate feels that it is up to individuals to determine their contribution to society and define their value (53%), rather than that *because of the current economic situation, your ability to contribute to society is limited* (35%). Across income groups, voters share the belief that it is up to individuals to determine their contributions, with a closer margin among lower income (42-46), but with more voters in the low income bracket still believing that it is up to individuals to define their value.

Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Overall	<50k	50-75k	75-100k	100k+
<b>Because of the current economic situation, your ability to contribute to society is limited</b>	35	42	37	31	25
<b>It is up to every individual to determine their contribution to society and define their value</b>	53	46	56	61	63

One of the groups that is more inclined to believe in the limited status of individuals is millennials, with the 18-29 age group seeing their ability to contribute as limited by their economic situations (46%) rather than that individuals determine their contributions and define their value (38%).

It is not that the middle class does not feel value; the question is who or what recognizes their contributions. As shown in the next chart, more than half the electorate (52%) agrees with the statement that the middle class feels value in what they are doing and the work that they do, but are not valued by the nation's elites and institutions. This is consistent among low income and middle income groups.

Which statement do you agree with more?	All Voters	<50K	50-75K
<b>The middle class does not feel needed or useful in what they are doing and the work they do.</b>	27	28	27
<b>The middle class feels value in what they are doing and the work that they do, but are not valued by the nation's elites and institutions.</b>	52	53	52
<b>The middle class feels value in what they are doing and the work that they do, and are valued by the nation's elites and institutions.</b>	12	8	15

Given this outlook, it is not surprising that three in four voters (73%) believe that *elites do not understand the problems I am facing* (73-15 believe-do not believe). This belief is generally consistent across demographic groups, including party, gender, race and income level.

## Voter Definitions of Change

In the survey, we asked voters to rank a series of fifteen potential changes that were discussed by policymakers and candidates during the election, and they ranked them in order from 1 to 15.<sup>2</sup> In this set of questions, a lower mean indicates a higher priority issue. Among voters overall, *jobs coming back to the US* was the number one change they wanted to see, followed by *dealing with ISIS and terrorism* and *upholding the Constitution*. Among many of the swing groups such as women and middle income voters, economic outcomes were ranked even higher than foreign policy outcomes. Among Republicans, repeal of the ACA ranked as a significantly higher priority than it did among other groups. This prioritization of jobs as well as security is consistent with what we heard in the qualitative discussions.



BASE/MIDDLE	Overall	Conservative Republican	Republican	Independent
Priority (Top Five)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Jobs coming back to US (6.37)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (5.34)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (5.66)	Jobs coming back to US (5.93)
2	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (6.46)	Jobs coming back to US (6.05)	Jobs coming back to US (6.20)	Upholding the Constitution (6.36)
3	Upholding the Constitution (6.95)	Repealing/replacing Obamacare (6.54)	Increasing border security/addressing immigration (6.95)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (6.59)
4	Increase in incomes (7.47)	Upholding the Constitution (6.69)	Upholding the Constitution (7.09)	Fiscal responsibility (7.02)
5	Fiscal responsibility (7.48)	Increasing border security/addressing immigration (6.82)	Repealing/replacing Obamacare (7.10)	Relief from cost of living increases (7.62)

Among Republicans, repeal of the ACA and border security/immigration ranked as significantly higher priorities than among other groups. Their high prioritization of dealing with ISIS and jobs coming back to the US, however, was similar to other groups such as independents, women, and the overall voter average. Independents, meanwhile, ranked *upholding the Constitution* as their second most important outcome after increasing jobs. Rather than border security/immigration or Obamacare repeal, they listed the finance-related outcomes of fiscal responsibility and relief from cost of living increases to round out their top five priorities.

<sup>2</sup> A complete list of the fifteen potential changes is located in the appendix.

OPPORTUNITY GROUPS	Union	<50K	Some College	High School Grad or Less
Priority (Top Five)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (6.46)	Jobs coming back to US (6.14)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (6.27)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (5.82)
2	Jobs coming back to US (6.49)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (6.85)	Jobs coming back to US (6.28)	Jobs coming back to US (6.06)
3	Upholding the Constitution (6.93)	Upholding the Constitution (6.88)	Upholding the Constitution (6.65)	Upholding the Constitution (7.01)
4	Increase in incomes (7.25)	Reducing poverty (6.91)	Fiscal responsibility (7.31)	Relief from cost of living increases (7.16)
5	Relief from cost of living increases (7.52)	Increase in incomes (7.18)	Increase in incomes (7.36)	Increase in incomes (7.24)

The opportunity groups of union members, those making under 50k, those with some college education, and those with a high school degree or less, shared the priorities of dealing with ISIS/terrorism and jobs coming back to the US. In addition, each of these groups listed *upholding the Constitution* as their third most important change they would like to see. However, for their fourth and fifth outcome priorities, these groups turned toward a mix of increased income, relief from cost of living increases, reducing poverty, and fiscal responsibility. They were more focused on these economic and personal financial outcomes than on immigration or Obamacare.

COALITION GROUPS	Women	Independents	50-75K	Hispanics	18-29
Priority (Top Five)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (5.99)	Jobs coming back to US (5.93)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (5.59)	Reducing poverty (5.72)	Reducing poverty (5.81)
2	Jobs coming back to US (6.10)	Upholding the Constitution (6.36)	Jobs coming back to US (6.32)	Relief from cost of living increases (6.24)	Increase in incomes (7.08)
3	Upholding the Constitution (6.88)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (6.59)	Increase in incomes (7.04)	Increase in incomes (6.44)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (7.22)
4	Increase in incomes (7.24)	Fiscal responsibility (7.02)	Increasing border security/addressing immigration (7.25)	Dealing with ISIS/terrorism (6.72)	Fiscal responsibility (7.36)
5	Relief from cost of living increases (7.29)	Relief from cost of living increases (7.62)	Upholding the Constitution (7.30)	Upholding the Constitution (7.18)	Jobs coming back to US (7.56)

Among the coalition groups, there was some greater diversity in outcome priorities. While women, independents, and 50-75k income voters prioritized both jobs coming back to the US and dealing with ISIS in their top three, Hispanics and young voters broke from this pattern. While both groups did list ISIS/terrorism in their top five, Hispanic voters did not rank jobs coming back to the US in their top five at all, and young voters had it at the very bottom of this list. Both of these groups instead listed *reducing poverty* as the top change they would like to see, and included increases in income and relief from cost of living increases, indicating an even greater focus on personal economic outcomes. Independents and young voters were also looking for fiscal responsibility; women joined those making 50-75k, young voters, and Hispanics in looking for increased income; and cost of living rounded out women and independents' top concerns. All of these coalition groups except young voters listed *upholding the Constitution* as an important outcome.

## Measurable Progress

Many voters expressed that as part of the changes they were seeking, they wanted to see measurable progress and to have some sense of metrics to follow. They did not necessarily expect significant change to happen quickly, but they wanted to at least be able to see and understand how progress was moving forward, particularly on the economy.

*Orlando Independent Voter: Just start to actually measurably see that progress happen - see the country actually turn around, see some jobs come back, or see new jobs created. Those are things that to me are showing that we are being heard.*

## Prioritization of the Economy

While there were a number of large scale changes that voters want to see, most of those changes center upon the economy. Across all groups, the economy/jobs is the top issue, and the view from voters is that by focusing on the economy, this will help solve other problems especially issues surrounding entitlements.

*Orlando Republican Voter: I believe that what this whole election was about - what I think would be a problem solver is jobs. I think that's the bottom line with everything. That's going to grow the economy. And I think that's going to...more people will be off the entitlements. It will just cure a lot of problems.*

While not getting things done has been an ongoing frustration with Congress, there is also a feeling among voters that lawmakers do not focus on priorities like the economy and jobs, which undermines their effectiveness. More than half (56%) of the electorate agrees that *lawmakers try to do too many things and don't focus on priorities like the economy and jobs*, rather than *lawmakers don't address enough issues* (36%). This concern about lawmaker focus is even pronounced among Republicans (63-30).

## How Voters Want to Be Heard

When asked how they would know that their voices were heard, they were not fully clear on how that would happen, but they were looking to actions taken by Congress and the incoming administration to enact changes they voted for - particularly on the economy - as evidence that they were heard.



**Reflecting the Constitutional role of Congress being closest to the people, voters hold their elected representatives in Congress responsible for having the largest role (43%) in whether their voices are heard - more than themselves (27%), the President (11%), or the media, which was last (7%).** In the discussions, many said that because of their work and family schedules, they did not have time to “call people daily” to make their voices heard, so they would vote a certain way and hope that

lawmakers would act on voters’ priorities.

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: When we elected Obama it was for change, but we got more of the same government running over us. Then how are you heard? I’m a father of two. I work 55 hours a week. I can’t call people daily to complain, so I’ll never be heard. This is our one chance to be heard. Hopefully we were and it works this time.*

Similarly, voters are also looking to Congress as having the largest role in determining the scale of changes that can be made in the country (Congress, 40%; the President, 25%; You - the voter, 21%; the media, 6%). While the new President was viewed as the instigator of change, many in the qualitative groups believed that it would ultimately be up to Congress to determine the scale of change that was implemented - either positively or negatively - working with the President.

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: [The President] is not going anywhere without Congress. Congress runs the country. He’s just the administrator, so to speak. Without Congress, nothing is going to change.*

## Voter Engagement for Change: “Bottom of the Ninth... Two Outs”

As a result of the last election, one out of two voters (50%) describes themselves as more engaged and interested in the political process, with 41% saying about the same and only 7% describing themselves as less engaged. Among opportunity groups, significant percentages of each group say that they are more engaged, particularly voters in union households (55%).

OPPORTUNITY GROUPS	Overall	Union	<50K	Some College	High School Grad or Less
Percentage saying “more engaged and interested”	50	55	42	49	39

Similarly, among traditional majority coalition groups, significant percentages describe themselves as more engaged.

COALITION GROUPS	Overall	Women	Independents	50-75K	Hispanics	18-29
Percentage saying “more engaged and interested”	50	45	41	62	44	47

While large percentages of voters view themselves as more engaged, their motivation for engagement is because they are looking for change and to see if things will be different.

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: I would say more engaged also, because I’m now just constantly trying to watch to see who they are appointing and if really there is going to be something different than there ever was before. So I would say for that reason I’m more engaged.*



*Pittsburgh Female Voter: I’m a little more engaged, because I’m looking for change.*

Throughout all of the qualitative sessions, participants described their expectations for the incoming administration as “hope for change” - cautious optimism but with many unknowns that remain. The desire for change has been in place for several years, but now voters feel a sense of heightened urgency. Their expectations for the new administration and incoming Congress resulted from their views about the serious state of problems in the country, with one Pittsburgh middle income voter stating that “this is the bottom of the 9th and there are two outs.”

*Pittsburgh Middle Income Voter: I think if it is ever going to happen it is going to happen with this election cycle. This is the first time in the history of our country that we have somebody serving who was never in the military, and who was never in politics or government. He has the right formula and we have the branches of the government all lined up now—the House, Congress—it’s all controlled by the Republicans and things are not going to be the same... This is going to be different, I really believe that. Something has to change. **The middle class is shrinking and this is our last chance. This is the bottom of the ninth and there are two outs.***

## Methodology

This report is a summary of qualitative research among conservative Republicans and independent voters in Orlando on December 5; middle income voters and women in Pittsburgh on December 20; and a national survey of 1000 registered voters conducted January 14-16, 2017.

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## Appendix

### Personal Outcomes

You will be shown a series of issues to rank on a scale of 1-9. The goal is to understand how you view these issues in relation to one another.

On a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 being important, 5 being very important, and 9 being extremely important, how important are the following personal outcomes to you? (ROTATED LIST BELOW)

Means ranked highest to lowest

	MEAN
Having a secure retirement	7.63
Being able to have the quality affordable health care that you need	7.61
Being safe from terrorism	7.61
Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month's bills	7.47
Being able to effectively manage cost of living	7.17
Having a society that rewards work so that more people contribute to the economy	7.08
Having the government be focused on accountability to citizens like you	7.03
Seeing jobs come back from overseas so that more jobs are available	7.00
Ensuring that everyone has the chance to make the most of their lives no matter where they start	7.00
Having job security	6.97
Paying off personal or family debt	6.81
Kids being able to get jobs	6.57
Being able to afford my child's education and college costs	5.95
Being kept safe from climate change	5.83
Being able to start a business	5.52
Being able to fill out your tax return on a postcard	4.71

## Definitions of Change

In terms of the kinds of changes you would like to see the most, rank the following outcomes and policy items from 1 to 15, with 1 being the most important, and 15 being the least important. (ROTATED LIST BELOW)

Means ranked in order most important to least important

	MEAN
Jobs coming back to the US	6.37
Dealing with ISIS and terrorism	6.46
Upholding the Constitution	6.95
Increase in incomes	7.47
Fiscal responsibility, including balanced budget and lowering the debt	7.48
Relief from cost of living increases	7.61
Reducing poverty	7.79
Reforming the tax code	8.23
Increasing border security and addressing immigration	8.28
Greater protection against cybersecurity threats	8.33
More business startups in the US	8.50
Businesses growing	8.82
Reducing regulations that burden small businesses	9.00
Repealing and replacing Obamacare	9.33
Rewarding work	9.37