

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP FUND



TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: CORRY BLISS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
RE: 2018 ELECTION: WHERE WE ARE NOW

In the last six weeks, the Congressional Leadership Fund has commissioned surveys in 69 congressional districts. While the survey results do show a challenging environment for Republicans, there is a path forward for Republicans to be successful. Since the passage of tax reform, both public and private polling show signs of an improving environment—but Republicans still face a challenging environment and history suggests we should lose the House.

INCUMBENTS ARE OVERPERFORMING THE PRESIDENT

Across these districts, President Trump's image remains in line with election results from 2016. Republican members of Congress' images overperform the President's image in 51 out of 60 GOP incumbent districts. For example, in TX-23, Congressman Will Hurd's image is +17, while the President's image is -7.

PELOSI IS THE LEAST POPULAR ELECTED OFFICIAL IN THE COUNTRY

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi is far and away the most unpopular politician in the country. **She is underwater in all 69 individual congressional districts polled.** Her unfavorable rating ranges from the high 40s to the low 70s. Pelosi remains toxic to Independents.

In every district surveyed, when given a choice between Paul Ryan and Nancy Pelosi, voters choose Paul Ryan as their preferred Speaker by double digits. Republicans still have a pathway to winning in many districts. Voters in these districts still prefer the agenda of Paul Ryan when placed head-to-head against the agenda of Nancy Pelosi by wide margins. For example, Trump is -4 in CA-10, but Ryan leads Pelosi as the choice for Speaker by 13 points.

TAX REFORM IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Republican incumbents have many areas where they can improve their standing within their districts, and public and private polling shows the recent tax reform legislation is the key to doing so. *The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* is underwater in 52 districts we surveyed, but there is evidence of improvement as seen in recent news reports.

In 50 districts, a plurality of voters believe the tax bill will increase their taxes. Republican incumbents have hard data on their side with this issue, and there is already evidence of improvement. Americans feel anxiety about their financial future—50 percent of Americans consider themselves living paycheck-to-paycheck, and we must show how our agenda and tax reform helps individuals. In focus groups across the country, we have seen voters reject big economic arguments; they just want help with their personal financial situations. Voters are willing to reward those who give them a tax cut. **Incumbents must begin to educate their constituents on this specific legislation and how it cuts taxes for the middle class.** There is no positive outcome in November if we do not show that we cut taxes for the middle class and are working to make their lives better. Period.

WHAT WE MUST DO TO BE SUCCESSFUL

There is no doubt that we are in a challenging environment running against opponents who will benefit from increased Democratic enthusiasm— and Republicans will likely lose some races because of it. There are three things that must be done to help us win.

First, leading up to the election, **Republicans need to communicate the benefits of The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.** If and when we are able to show voters that this legislation cuts middle-class taxes, we will be able to point to a huge accomplishment members can run on. After successful messaging on middle-class tax cuts, Republicans will have a powerful contrast with Nancy Pelosi and Democrats who called the efforts “Armageddon” and referred to tax reform benefits as “crumbs.”

Second, members must be focused and serious in building and maintaining their own image. Our polling shows incumbents can maintain their own individual images and run on their own local accomplishments. **Members need to identify the 50,000 voters they need to win and communicate with them as often as possible about what they are doing for their communities.**

Finally, Republicans must continue to use the Pelosi vs. Ryan contrast. Nancy Pelosi has been a gift to Republicans in election after election, and that will be no different this year. Americans do not want her as their Speaker—and that must be the choice of this election. Despite the challenges ahead, the path to keeping the majority is still in front of us if Republicans are laser-focused on winning. At the Congressional Leadership Fund, we are prepared to do and spend more than ever to protect the Republican majority.

Districts surveyed include: AZ-01, CA-10, CA-21, CA-25, CA-39, CA-45, CA-48, CA-49, CO-06, FL-18, FL-26, GA-06, GA-07, IA-01, IA-02, IA-03, IL-06, IL-12, IL-13, IL-14, KS-02, KS-03, ME-02, MI-01, MI-06, MI-07, MI-08, MI-11, MN-01, MN-02, MN-03, MN-08, NC-02, NC-09, NC-13, NE-02, NH-01, NJ-03, NJ-07, NJ-11, NV-03, NY-01, NY-11, NY-19, NY-21, NY-22, NY-24, OH-01, OH-14, PA-06, PA-07, PA-08, PA-15, PA-16, PA-17, PA-18, TX-07, TX-23, TX-32, UT-04, VA-02, VA-05, VA-07, VA-10, WA-03, WA-05, WA-08, WI-01, WI-06