



To: Interested Parties

From: Betsy App, Change Research

Date: November 11, 2024

Re: Ads attacking Democrats on transgender issues failed to move votes in U.S. Senate races

A new poll<sup>1</sup> conducted by Change Research in eight battleground states (AZ, MI, MT, NV, OH, PA, TX, and WI) shows that negative advertisements targeting Democratic U.S. Senate candidates on transgender issues **failed to impact support for these candidates**, and voters who saw these ads found them intensely off-putting.

### Many voters saw ads attacking Democratic Senate candidates on transgender issues

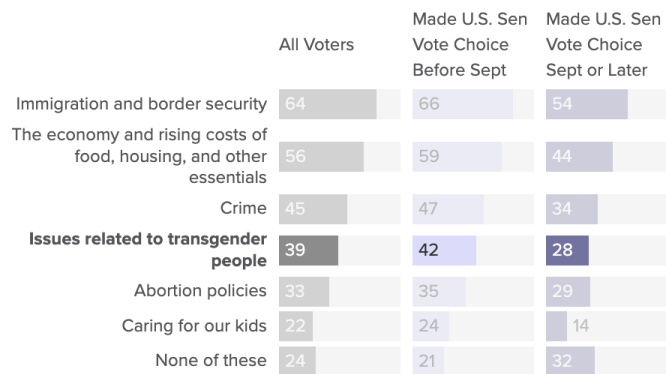
More than \$200 million was spent in the 2024 election on advertisements attacking Kamala Harris and Democrats running for U.S. Senate for their positions on transgender issues. Unsurprisingly, many voters (39%) recall having seen these ads.

While many of these ads missed their mark—the vast majority (85%) of the 39% of voters who reported seeing these ads had already decided who they would vote for before September—they were seen by more than a quarter (28%) of “late deciders” (voters who decided who they would vote for in the Senate race in September or later). These ads, along with ads attacking Democrats on immigration, the economy, and crime, had tremendous potential to impact late deciders.

### 2 in 5 voters saw negative U.S. Senate ads on transgender issues

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Q. Select all that apply. In the past 30 days, have you seen negative advertisements about [DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR U.S. SENATE]’s record on:



### Ads attacking Democratic Senate candidates on transgender issues had no impact on vote choice

A comparison to Biden’s margin over Trump in 2020 shows no differences in 2024 U.S. Senate vote choice between those who saw ads on transgender issues versus those who didn’t see these ads in the leadup to Election Day. Biden lost to Trump by 2% (42% to Trump’s 44%) among voters in these battleground states who participated in the 2020 election. In 2024, Democratic

<sup>1</sup> A total of 1,455 voters in AZ, MI, MT, NV, OH, PA, TX and WI were interviewed online November 1-5, and the survey has a modeled margin of error of 2.8 percentage points. Post-stratification weighting was performed on gender, age, race/ethnicity, state, 2024 presidential vote and 2024 U.S. Senate vote. Weighting parameters were based on voter file data and election results from each state. See the methodological statement [here](#) for full details.

candidates for U.S. Senate lost to their GOP opponents by 3%. This one-point drop in margin is exactly the same for voters who saw negative ads on transgender issues and those who didn't see these ads.

We also see no evidence that ads on transgender issues motivated 2020 non-voters to participate in the 2024 U.S. Senate elections in these states. Among those who saw the ads, fewer (6%) were 2020 non-voters than those who didn't see the ads (9%).

### No difference in Democratic margin shift between those who did and did not see negative ads around transgender issues

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	All 2024 Voters	Didn't See Transgender Ads	Saw Transgender Ads
Biden 2020	44	37	54
Trump 2020	46	51	38
3rd Party 2020	2	3	1
Did not vote 2020	8	9	6
Margin - Biden	-2	-14	16
U.S. Sen Dem 2024	47	41	56
U.S. Sen Rep 2024	50	56	41
Margin - U.S. Sen Dem	-3	-15	15
Dem 2024 Margin - Biden 2020 Margin	-1	-1	-1

### Negative ads on transgender issues had no impact on late deciders' vote choice

Late deciders are the most susceptible to heavy ad spends in the weeks leading up to Election Day, yet there is no evidence that ads on transgender issues influenced late deciders' vote choice for U.S. Senate. There was no drop in margin among late deciders who saw ads attacking Democrats on transgender issues, and a one-point drop among late deciders who didn't see them. We see no evidence that ads on transgender issues influenced U.S. Senate voting behavior among subgroups of late deciders (women and men, younger voters and older voters, and white voters and voters of color).

The three-point decline in Democratic margin among late deciders who saw ads attacking Democratic candidates on the economy and the three-point decline among those who saw ads on crime suggest that these were the ads that may have moved late deciders' votes.

### No evidence that transgender ads impacted late deciders, but negative ads on the economy and crime may have shifted late deciders' votes away from Democratic U.S. Senate candidates

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	All Late Deciders	Didn't See Transgender Ads	Saw Transgender Ads	Didn't See Immigration Ads	Saw Immigration Ads	Didn't See Economy Ads	Saw Economy Ads	Didn't See Crime Ads	Saw Crime Ads
Biden 2020	36	31	50	34	38	34	39	31	47
Trump 2020	45	50	31	47	42	46	42	48	38
3rd Party 2020	4	4	5	3	5	5	4	6	1
Did not vote in 2020	15	15	14	16	14	14	15	15	14
Margin - Biden	-8	-19	20	-13	-4	-12	-3	-17	9
U.S. Sen Dem 2024	41	36	53	36	44	39	43	35	51
U.S. Sen Rep 2024	50	56	34	51	49	51	49	52	45
Margin - U.S. Sen Dem	-9	-20	19	-15	-5	-12	-6	-17	5
Dem 2024 Margin - Biden 2020 Margin	-1	-2	-1	-2	-1	0	-3	0	-3

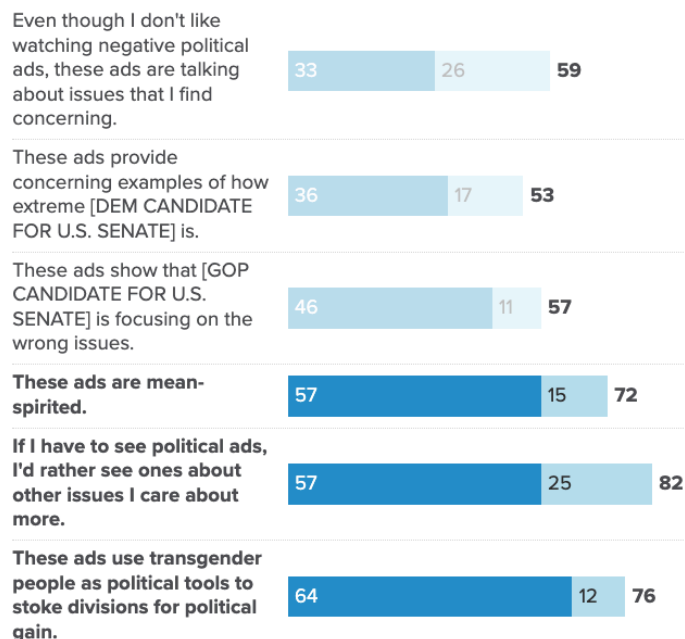
## Voters across the partisan spectrum who saw negative ads on transgender issues find them off-putting

Some voters who saw ads attacking Democratic candidates on transgender issues agree that the ads' content is cause for concern: 59% agree that these ads are talking about issues that they find concerning, and half (53%) say these ads provide concerning examples of how extreme their state's Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate is. But the majority of voters who saw these ads were turned off by them in multiple ways: 72% of all voters and half (47%) of Republicans say they are mean-spirited; 82% of all voters and 72% of Republicans say they'd rather see ads about other issues; and 76% of all voters (and 55% of Republicans) agree that these ads use transgender people as political tools, including 64% who *strongly* agree.

## Voters hold intensely negative perceptions of the ads they saw on transgender issues

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● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree



## Voters across the partisan spectrum and from key demographic groups say politicians shouldn't be focused on transgender issues

The vast majority (86%) of voters in battleground states want politicians to stay focused on the issues that matter to them, not transgender issues. More than four in five voters (82%) believe that politicians should let parents and doctors make healthcare decisions for young people who are transgender, and more than half (55%) say politicians should let local schools and sports associations set policies around transgender athletes' participation in sports.

## Voters want politicians to prioritize other issues, not transgender issues

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● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Not sure ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree

We need leaders who focus on the problems everyday Americans are facing, not politicians stirring up divisions around transgender people for their own political gain.



Healthcare decisions for a young person who is transgender should be made by parents and doctors, who know the situation best – not politicians.



Local schools and sports associations should be in charge of policies pertaining to transgender athletes, not politicians.



The belief that politicians should stay focused on the problems of everyday Americans, not transgender issues, is widely held across key partisan and demographic groups. President-elect Trump won all eight of these battleground states, but more than three-quarters (78%) of his own supporters agree that transgender issues shouldn't be politicians' focus. Nine in ten (90%) Black voters, 88% of Latinos, and 84% of men under 35 agree that politicians shouldn't be focused on transgender issues.

### Strategic takeaways

The onslaught of ads attacking Democratic U.S. Senate candidates on transgender issues didn't impact the outcomes of these elections. We have no evidence that they moved votes away from Democrats, and what we *do* know is that the people who watched these ads saw them for what they were: a mean-spirited tactic that used transgender people as political tools for political gain.

We also know that voters don't want politicians' focus to be on transgender issues, and pointing this out may be the reason why some Democratic candidates like Senator Tammy Baldwin in Wisconsin were able to come through the 2024 election victorious in an electoral environment that was fundamentally unfavorable to Democratic incumbents.

President-elect Trump and others will likely move to further restrict the rights of people who are transgender under the false impression that their attacks featuring transgender issues contributed to their victories. Democrats and other transgender rights supporters should lean in to messaging that the American people want leaders who will focus on real problems, not leaders who stoke divisions around transgender people for their own political gain.