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The Economy & Jobs in 2018

Congressional Battleground Research

To: Interested Parties

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A battleground survey of base Democratic and swing voters conducted for the DCCC¹ reveals the strength of the new Democratic economic agenda.

Both base Democrats and swing voters are deeply dissatisfied with the direction of the economy and their place in it. **The core problem is that incomes have not kept up with the cost of living, and the result is that nearly half of these voters (42% swing and 47% Dem) would struggle to deal with a sudden \$500 expense.**

Democrats have an opportunity to offer a platform that addresses job creation and economic growth and calls for concrete action on the issues that matter most to Americans. Our research reveals that the strongest framework for the Democrats' new agenda does the following:

- (1) Acknowledges, but does not dwell on the economic challenges many Americans face;
- (2) Introduces the new Democratic agenda as an affirmative solution built on positive action to spur growth;
- (3) Conveys action with concrete economic concepts that align with voters' priorities in both the Democratic base and the swing electorate; and
- (4) Aggressively contrasts with commitment to reforming unpopular special interests.

Such an agenda draws a powerful reaction from both Democrats and swing voters.

The Economic Reality for Democratic & Swing Voters

The economy is not working the way it should: for too many Americans, incomes are not keeping up with the cost of living.

¹ These results are based on an online survey of 2,000 registered voters – 1,000 Democrats and 1,000 swing voters – across 52 battleground Congressional districts, conducted from June 27 to July 7, 2017. Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation in a panel rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. If this were a probability sample, the margin of error would be +/- 3.1% for each sample, and higher among subgroups.

- Just 17 percent of Democrats and 22 percent of swing voters say their **personal financial situation is improving**.
- A 44 percent plurality of both groups think **jobs available to them don't pay enough to live on**.
- Despite signs of an economic recovery nationally, **only about one in three respondents think there are more opportunities for them now** than there were a few years ago.

Yet, voters are not looking for sympathy. They want to know that Democrats understand times are tough, and that we as a party will do something about it.

Introducing a Powerful Economic Agenda

There are **two important components to a powerful Democratic message on the economy**. The first is a set of actions that give people a fair chance by focusing on growing the economy so that workers can get better jobs, better wages, and better skills and tools for the future.

Many concrete concepts fit within such a framework, but a few in particular are high in Democratic and swing voters' top tier of priorities. Across both groups, the following tested best out of about 20 economic policy proposals:

- **Increasing wages** and supporting a **living wage**
- Pro-growth policies that boost **small businesses** while helping workers garner higher wages
- **Making college more affordable** and supporting **skills/career training** and **apprenticeships** for Americans who will not attend a four-year university
- Cracking down on the rising cost of **prescription drugs**
- **Keeping jobs** in the U.S.

The second critical part of the message is a **strong commitment to reform and taking on the powerful special interests and dark money**. Both Democratic and swing voters blame Congress, big corporations, the Trump Administration, and Wall Street for a stagnant economy. Both groups strongly support measures to reform government and Wall Street to help ordinary Americans.

- **Limiting the amount of money** big corporations and other special interests can spend on political campaigns and requiring PACs to disclose their donors;
- **Closing loopholes** that big corporations use to avoid paying their fair share in taxes;
- **Eliminating tax breaks** for companies that outsource jobs; and
- **Preventing corporations from becoming monopolies** so that consumers have more options and lower prices.

Democrats are in a position to alter the economic debate in a compelling way with a commitment to reform and a concrete agenda that conveys action and not just talk.