

HOT TOPICS DIAGNOSTIC 6-2-2023 Version

For each issue provided below, identify the statement that most accurately reflects your personal view. After selecting a statement, please quantify how strongly the statement resonates for you on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 representing “not at all” and 5 representing a very strongly held belief.

1. The Right to Bear Arms

The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution states “a well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” In 2020/2022 the United States experienced 1,915,720,138 incidents of gun violence that ended in death, should we be discussing whether we need to revisit the Second Amendment?

- The Second Amendment guarantees the right to gun ownership and the individuals have the right to select and carry the type and number of firearms they own.
- Gun ownership has a long and rich tradition in the United States families and communities have developed cultures, for example, around hunting. Individuals are responsible to teach community members and children about gun safety and mental health.
- The Founders had no concept of the gun violence that we currently face. There should be a mandatory federal buyback of all guns.
- The Second Amendment should be updated. There are sensible safety measures that should be adopted such as a national gun ownership registration database and background checks.

How strongly do you hold this belief? 0 1 (weak) 2 3 4 5 (strong)

2. Abortion

In 2022, the US Supreme Court upended 50 years of abortion law by stating there is no federal right to an abortion. As a result of this ruling, decisions have been left up to the states. Given this, which of the following policies should states follow:

- States should not allow abortion. A full-spectrum family policy has to be about encouraging marriage and starting families. Significant funding should be dedicated to family benefits.
- Abortion in the first 20 weeks should be a safe, legal, and accessible option for women. Some restrictions should be in place for minors and late-term abortions.
- Neither the federal government nor individual states should have a role in individual decision-making, nor should they provide support or funding for individual health concerns.
- Abortions should be available as part of a free and comprehensive health care program that covers all reproductive health issues.

How strongly do you hold this belief? 0 1 (weak) 2 3 4 5 (strong)

3. National Energy Policy

The United States built the world's greatest economy by relying on the earth's natural resources, but the use of fossil fuels has become complicated as we consider a transition to renewable energy sources. What is the role of the federal government regarding future national energy policy?

- Markets work well, but they aren't always fair; therefore, an appropriate strategy would partner market incentives with market-friendly national government interventions such as pollution rights and carbon taxes in addition to encouraging environmentally friendly retirement practices through environment and social governance policy.
- It is past time to confront the short-sighted and devastating environmental effects of our current energy policy and engage in a revolutionary transformation to an economy based on renewable energy sources. Government's track record of subsidies for dirty industries is an important reminder that this revolution requires more than just electing green representatives.
- No one understands sustainability issues (i.e., clean air, water conservation) in a community better than the individuals who live there. National, one-size-fits-all approaches are flawed. Any policy related to climate change should be developed and enforced locally.
- Markets are the most effective tool human beings have ever devised to manage scarce resources. It would be a mistake to limit the power of markets, if changes in our energy infrastructure are genuinely in the best interests of society, then the market is the appropriate way to get us there.

How strongly do you hold this belief? 0 1 (weak) 2 3 4 5 (strong)

4. Cost of Higher Education

The cost of tuition for a year of higher education has increased from \$2,078 in 1963 to \$9,580 in 2020* (adjusted for inflation). As a result, the average student has \$37,584* in debt when they graduate college. To what extent should the government intervene in the affordability of college?

- A college degree in the twenty-first century is perhaps as important as a high school degree was two generations ago. As such, the cost of a college education should be completely covered through taxpayer support, just as we have successfully done for public K-12 education for one hundred years.
- It is important that individuals recognize the true cost when they pursue a college degree. Interfering with the true cost undermines this important incentive and reduces the value of a college education for those people who work hard to achieve it. Government subsidies distort the individual stake. Any support for the cost of higher education should be merit-based.
- Education is a public good because the benefits from the product extend beyond the individual who purchases it. To have an effective democracy, we need an informed citizenry. As a society we have recognized this for K-12 education, it's time to extend a modified version of this thinking to higher education. Government should offer targeted loan forgiveness using criteria such as the student qualified for Pell Grants or pursued a career in public service.
- A college education is important for those with the ability and willingness to do what it takes to succeed in a college setting. That said, it is important to acknowledge and respect our cultural institutions that provide the foundation for our educational systems in the United States. Completely "free" college degrees would be a mistake.

How strongly do you hold this belief? 0 1 (weak) 2 3 4 5 (strong)

5. Voting Rights

The Declaration of Independence outlined a bold vision for America that includes equality for all. The Constitution created an electoral process as the way America would choose its representatives through voting. How equal should the access to voting be?

- The United States Constitution is silent on balloting (i.e., implementing elections, accessing ballots, counting votes) because the founders intended states to run elections.
- The rules for how elections are implemented should be set by the states. The Federal Government has no role in the election process.
- Marginal improvement to individual access to vote has been unsuccessful. Big systematic changes are necessary for marginalized groups to feel a part of the nation. Voting should be more accessible generally, for example, a holiday should be declared for national elections. However, democracy isn't only about the voting booth and we should encourage participation across a spectrum of activities from voting to protesting.
- Voting is the basis for democracy. The ability to vote should be easily accessible to all and barriers should be eliminated.

How strongly do you hold this belief? 0 1 (weak) 2 3 4 5 (strong)

6. Social Media

Given that social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, Parler, YouTube) effectively function as the public sphere, to what extent should these private businesses regulate the speech in their space and, on the other hand, to what extent should the government regulate who is in these spaces?

- Social media sites have privatized freedom of speech - big tech effectively decides who gets to be political in their space. Big technology engages in "cancel culture" by policing speech and engaging in economic censorship. To protect the speech of all voices in the public sphere, the government should create and enforce a digital bill of rights to protect people who are having their first amendment rights taken from them.
- Social media sites are private businesses that operate in the public sphere, like shopping malls in the 1980s, but are under no obligation to provide First Amendment Free Speech coverage. Therefore, they should be free to establish and enforce their own user agreements in their space.
- In the United States, free speech is the foundational right from which all others flow. As Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendall Holmes, Jr said "the ultimate good desired is better reached by a free trade of ideas." As such, the government should move to limit the ability of private businesses to deny access to individuals in what effectively is the public sphere except when it is damaging to them such as prohibiting minors from seeing pornography.
- The fact that people's speech was prohibited by either social media sites removing users or by web service companies removing Parler, is indicative of the power big tech has over our information infrastructure. Because the internet is the modern public sphere, then the government should prioritize deliberative democracy as well as the mental health of users while governing what information is allowed.

How strongly do you hold this belief? 0 1 (weak) 2 3 4 5 (strong)

7. What Do We Owe One Another?

The United States' narrative is woven from many people's stories: some that originate in fleeing Europe, some that originate in the forcible removal, and some that were usurped by arriving peoples. Thus, this country has many different sub-cultures that have not always treated each other well. Based on this complicated history, as current members of our society, what do we owe one another?

- We have policies that balance equality and liberty, more than one culture, not disrespect any culture, just bring more cultures to the table, can't pay for the past but can make changes going forward that are more respectful that aren't financing a reparation package.
- Given the effect of racially discriminatory practices, such as redlining, the wealth of certain groups has been so adversely affected that apologies are not enough. The government needs to pay reparations to those groups who are not co-heirs of the prosperity.
- The best protection for individual stories and subcultures is for us to protect liberty and freedom, we need to respect our legal rights and protections. Individuals make it on their own, part of our heritage and needs to be respected, 400 years ago is not our current legal system.
- Groups are better off than when they came to this land. This is our American political culture, sacred, politically correct approaches come at our expense, doing hard in the name of balance, zero-sum game.

How strongly do you hold this belief? 0 1 (weak) 2 3 4 5 (strong)

8. Transgender Rights

Transgender people would like to have all the rights and privileges of other people who live in this country, including access to health care specific to their needs and to co-curricular activities in school such as sports. They would like to be treated as the individuals they are. To what extent should the government intervene to support trans people?

- There are two genders, and they are sacred. While we respect individual rights, this is doing harm to the community.
- It is important to support individual rights and fairness, however, in situations such as competitive sports where physical abilities determine success, we need rules to determine eligibility.
- Gender is socially constructed and has no real meaning. It conveniently distracts from the real struggles.
- At the recreational level, anyone who can pay, can play. At the competitive level, the league administration should make eligibility decisions based on financial impact.

How strongly do you hold this belief? 0 1 (weak) 2 3 4 5 (strong)