

targetsmart



DATE: February 13, 2020  
TO: State Innovation Exchange  
FROM: Ben Lazarus and Gabby Weisberg, TargetSmart  
RE: Key Findings from the Arizona Statewide Issues Poll

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## Executive Summary

Building on two previous waves of similarly timed research dating back to January of 2018, TargetSmart recently conducted a statewide poll of registered voters in Arizona<sup>1</sup>. Thematically, the public opinion story in this poll is remarkably consistent year-over-year. On a litany of topics, current Arizona public policy - specifically its regime of de-regulation; austerity; privatization; regressive, pro-industry tax policy; and reactionary, oppressive social policy - is vastly out-of-step and out-of-line with the expectations of Arizona voters.

What's more, Arizona voters are open to a boldly progressive agenda that invests in the state's core responsibilities, prioritizes working families over big corporations, protects public lands, embraces reforms to the criminal justice system, and safeguards Arizonan's right to vote. On education, voters see a clear need for more funding for neighborhood public schools, voice a loud and nearly unanimous call for substantial and permanent pay increases for Arizona educators, and are broadly supportive of medically accurate and age-appropriate sex education for all public-school students. Finally, Arizona voters are less drawn to inflammatory rhetoric around sanctuary cities than they are to arguments that anti-immigrant legislation is overtly political and tends to embarrass the state.

## Voters Strongly Support Progressive Fiscal Policies that Prioritize State Investment

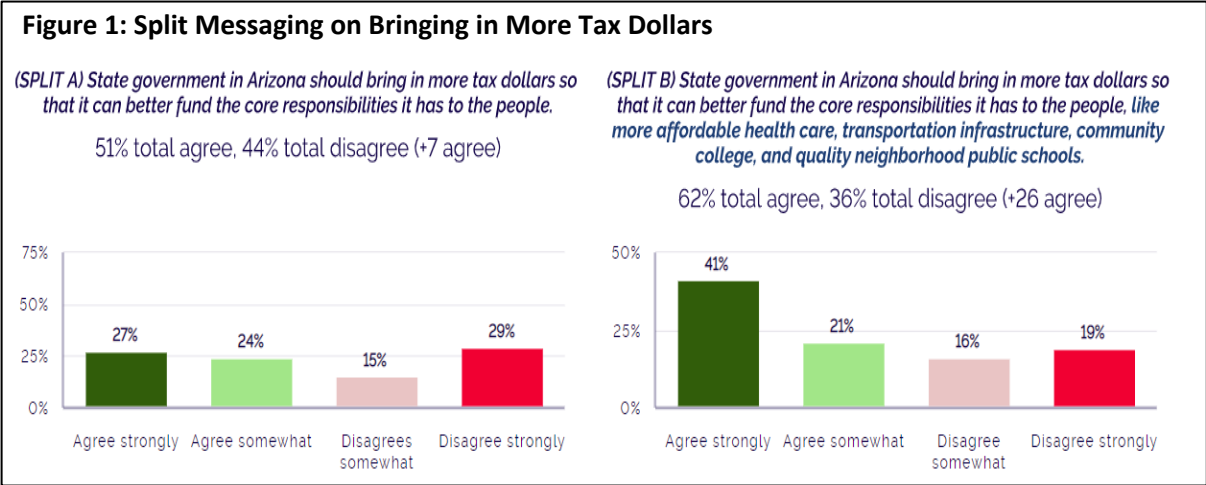
This poll reveals that the Arizona electorate is very open to progressive fiscal policies that focus on investment in the state's core responsibilities and ensure businesses and the wealthy pay their fair share in taxes. Nearly three-in-four voters (72 percent more, 58 percent a lot more) prioritize state investment in services like health care and education over tax cuts for businesses and individuals (21 percent more). Notably, voters across the partisan spectrum prioritize government investment in core responsibilities like health care and education over more tax cuts, though the intensity behind this agreement differs by partisanship. Self-identified Democrats almost unanimously prioritize government investment in core responsibilities (93 percent), independents overwhelmingly follow the same trend (69 percent), and even a majority of self-identified Republicans prioritize government investment (55 percent). What's more, in the event the Arizona state government runs a budget surplus, we find that over 2-in-3 voters

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<sup>1</sup> TargetSmart designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. The survey reached 600 adults, age 18 or older, who indicated they were registered to vote in Arizona. The survey was conducted January 28 to February 2, 2020. The sample was randomly selected from TargetSmart's enhanced voter file. Seventy-two percent of respondents were reached on wireless phones (75 percent weighted). Quotas were assigned to reflect the demographic distribution of registered voters in Arizona. The data were weighted by gender, age, region, TargetSmart High School Only Score, race on file, and party registration on file to ensure an accurate reflection of the population. The overall margin of error is  $\pm 4\%$ . The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding.

would want the budget surplus money invested in services (66 percent) rather than saved for a future emergency (17 percent) or used on tax cuts for businesses that create jobs (12 percent).

Tax increases on the wealthy are also broadly popular with this electorate, receiving overall support from a majority of voters and *strong* support from nearly 4-in-10 voters (38 percent strongly support, 53 percent total support, 40 percent oppose). Furthermore, a majority of Arizonans agree that the state government should bring in *more* tax dollars to better fund its core responsibilities (51 percent). Notably, a split messaging exercise reveals that this agreement broadens and intensifies when the government’s core responsibilities such as education, affordable health care, and infrastructure are enumerated for survey respondents (see Figure 1 below).



**Near-Unanimity Around a Progressive Agenda for Working Arizonans**

This poll finds that there is almost no marketplace for opposition to a number of progressive reforms aimed at supporting working people in Arizona. Nearly 9-in-10 voters (88 percent) support overtime protections for those making \$35,000 or less a year when they work more than 40 hours a week. Overtime protections receive intense support from this electorate as 68 percent of voters *strongly* support the policy, while just 11 percent oppose it overall. Likewise, 8-in-10 Arizona voters agree that every working person should be guaranteed paid family leave to deal with a personal health crisis or help a loved one (83 percent), with two-in-three voters *strongly* agreeing (65 percent) and just 16 percent in disagreement across the state.

**Progressive Education Policies Widely Supported by Arizonans**

The progressive education policies tested in this poll are all broadly popular and receive support from majorities of voters across the state. Over 8-in-10 voters support increased state funding for neighborhood public schools (84 percent total support, 64 percent strongly support, 14 percent oppose). Likewise, roughly 8-in-10 voters support providing state funding to community colleges (78 percent), while just 1-in-5 voters oppose (20 percent).

Furthermore, permanent and significant pay increases for teachers and educational staff receives widespread and intense support from the Arizona electorate – over 8-in-10 voters support this policy (84 percent total support, 63 percent strongly support), while just 15 percent oppose it. Voters also

support reforms to Arizona’s charter school system, including cracking down on charter schools that profit off taxpayer dollars and banning elected officials from having financial investments in charter schools (69 percent total support, 51 percent strongly support, 26 percent total oppose).

### Widespread Support for Medically Accurate Sex Education in Public Schools

Arizona voters are also broadly supportive of medically accurate and age appropriate sex education in all public schools – 75 percent of voters support this policy while just 23 percent oppose it. Moreover, the intensity by which voters support medically accurate and age appropriate sex education is much stronger than the opposition as a majority of voters (53 percent) *strongly* support it while fewer than 1-in-5 voters *strongly* oppose it (18 percent). Democrats almost unanimously support medically accurate and age appropriate sex education in public schools (96 percent), while roughly three-quarters of independents (73 percent) and 6-in-10 Republicans (59 percent) do the same.

### Policies to Protect Arizona’s Public Lands Are Broadly Popular

This poll reveals that responsible stewardship of Arizona’s vast public lands is extremely popular with the electorate and that voters want investments made to expand and protect the state’s public lands. Nearly 9-in-10 voters agree that investing in parks, open spaces, and access to the outdoors is a smart investment for their community, family, and future (86 percent total agree, 13 percent total disagree), with 57 percent of voters strongly agreeing with this statement. Additionally, voters overwhelmingly support restoring the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund to support local, regional, and state parks, trails, open spaces, and cultural sites – 79 percent support restoration of the Fund (52 percent strongly support), while just 17 percent oppose this policy.

### Solid Support for Policies that Safeguard Arizonans’ Right to Vote

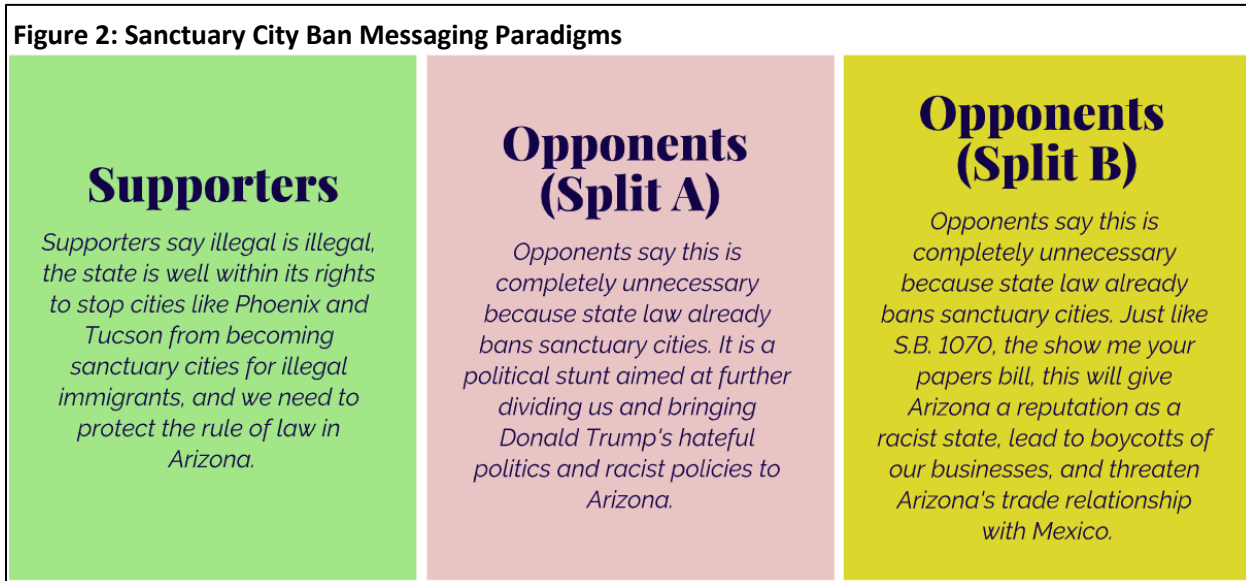
As the only state that does not provide citizens with a constitutional right to vote, we measure strong and widespread support for enshrining the right to vote in Arizona’s constitution. Nearly 3-in-4 voters support adding it to the state’s constitution (73 percent), with almost half of the electorate indicating they *strongly* support this measure (49 percent), and fewer than 1-in-5 voters opposing the measure overall (18 percent). Voters also support voting rights restoration for formerly incarcerated Arizonans who have served time and completed their sentence by similar margins – 3-in-4 voters support voting rights restoration (75 percent support with 45 percent of the electorate indicating they *strongly* support this policy and just 21 percent in opposition).

### Voters Embrace Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform in Arizona

Findings from this poll reveal that criminal justice reform is broadly popular with the Arizona electorate – over 3-in-4 voters support comprehensive criminal justice reform (77 percent), with half of the electorate *strongly* supporting it (50 percent), and just 13 percent of voters in opposition. Moreover, when asked whether judges or prosecutors should have more say in determining criminal sentences, 72 percent of Arizona voters say that judges should have more say (34 percent much more say), while just 1-in-6 voters believe prosecutors should have more say (16 percent total more say).

## Arizona Voters Oppose Sanctuary City Preemption by a Narrow Margin

Despite a statewide sanctuary city ban in Arizona, the state legislature is considering measures that would further ban localities from enacting their own “sanctuary city” policies. In the poll, we presented voters with the conservative argument for this policy against two potential counter arguments<sup>2</sup> to assess where public opinion lands on the measure after respondents are informed on the debate (see Figure 2 below for full language of arguments).



Following exposure to the arguments, we find that a narrow majority of voters oppose the measure regardless of how the opposition counterargument is framed. Overall, there is no measurable difference between the split opposition messages as both result in opposition toward sanctuary city preemption outpacing support for this measure by 8-points (see Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Sanctuary City Ban Frequencies**

	Split A	Split B	Combined
<i>Total Support</i>	42%	43%	43%
<i>Total Oppose</i>	50%	51%	50%
<i>Support – Oppose Margin</i>	-8	-8	-8

Interestingly, public opinion on this measure shifts as we look at the state by varying levels of population density. Following the presentation of arguments for and against sanctuary city preemption, we find the debate is evenly divided among voters in rural census blocks (43 percent support, 45 percent oppose), while voters in urban census oppose the measure (41 percent support, 53 percent oppose) by a double digit margin. Furthermore, there is a striking suburban divide on the measure as voters in exurban census blocks support the measure by a 9-point margin (52 percent support, 43 percent oppose), while voters in the more densely populated suburban census blocks oppose the measure by a 20-point margin (36 percent support, 56 percent oppose).

<sup>2</sup> Respondents were randomly presented with one of the two progressive opposition arguments.