



# Road to Resurgence

# Who We Are

The Main Street Partnership encompasses a broad alliance of Republicans, including more than 60 sitting members in Congress, dedicated to enacting commonsense, bipartisan legislation on issues including healthcare, equal pay, childcare, higher education, infrastructure, and other quality of life initiatives. Our members run and win in the most highly contested swing districts in the country.

Main Street members share a commitment to government that works to better American communities. We know how to reach across the aisle to build initiatives that not only work but endure. We have a long track record of crafting and passing effective legislation.

The future of the Republican Party is changing exactly the way Main Street America is. It's more diverse. It's populated by people who maintain their fierce independence but who understand that our schools, our environment, and the health of our families demand solutions that reach across ideological boundaries. It's fiscally responsible and socially inclusive. And it is represented today by the Republican Main Street Partnership.

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With the departure of President Trump from office, the Republican Party is in a critical phase for new and rising leadership and in a moment to clarify who we are as a Party, the principles we hold, and the vision we have for America's future. Now is the time for a critical look back at the successes and failures of the past and how we can create a stronger Party—and a stronger nation.

# Mission

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# Looking Back

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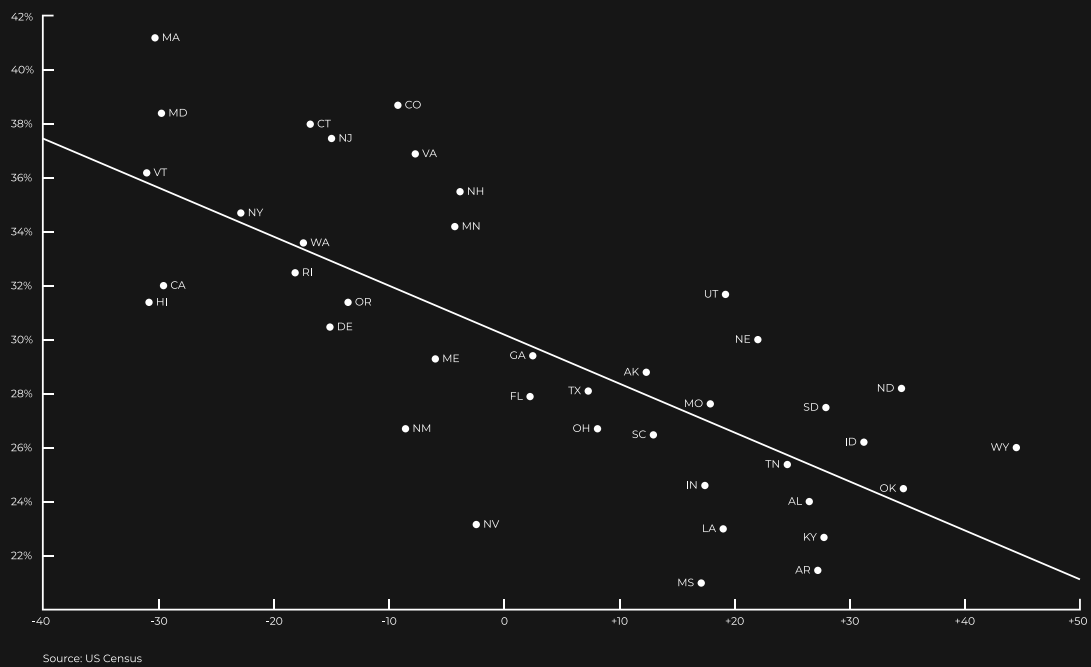
Pollsters, demographers, pundits, and political operatives are still sifting through the ashes of the 2020 election to determine what happened and why. To a certain extent, those answers will remain unclear. In the meantime, we can dive into some of the clear shifts that we've seen in the last four years, what they mean, and how we can rebuild a Republican Party that can be successful going forward.

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# Key Insight 1

## US: College Graduates are the Driving Force Behind Democrat Gains for President Since 2016

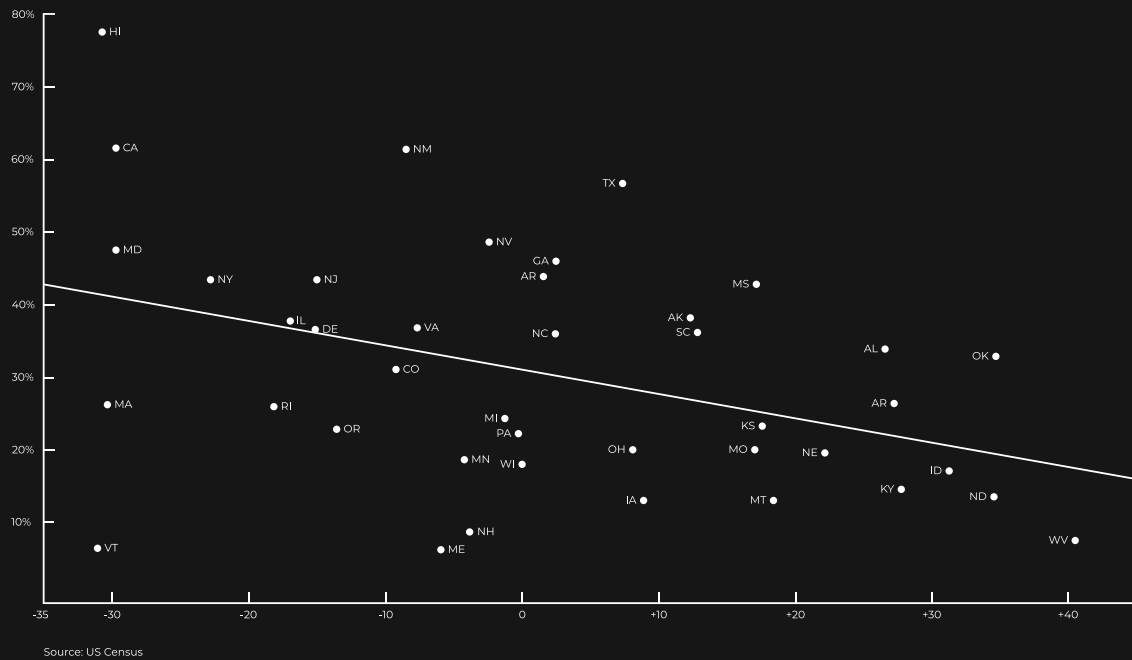
Percentage of the Population 25+ with a College Degree by Average R Presidential Net 2016 & 2020



# Key Insight 2

## Ethnicity Remains an Important Factor in Partisanship

Average Republican Performance by States Non-White Ethnicity

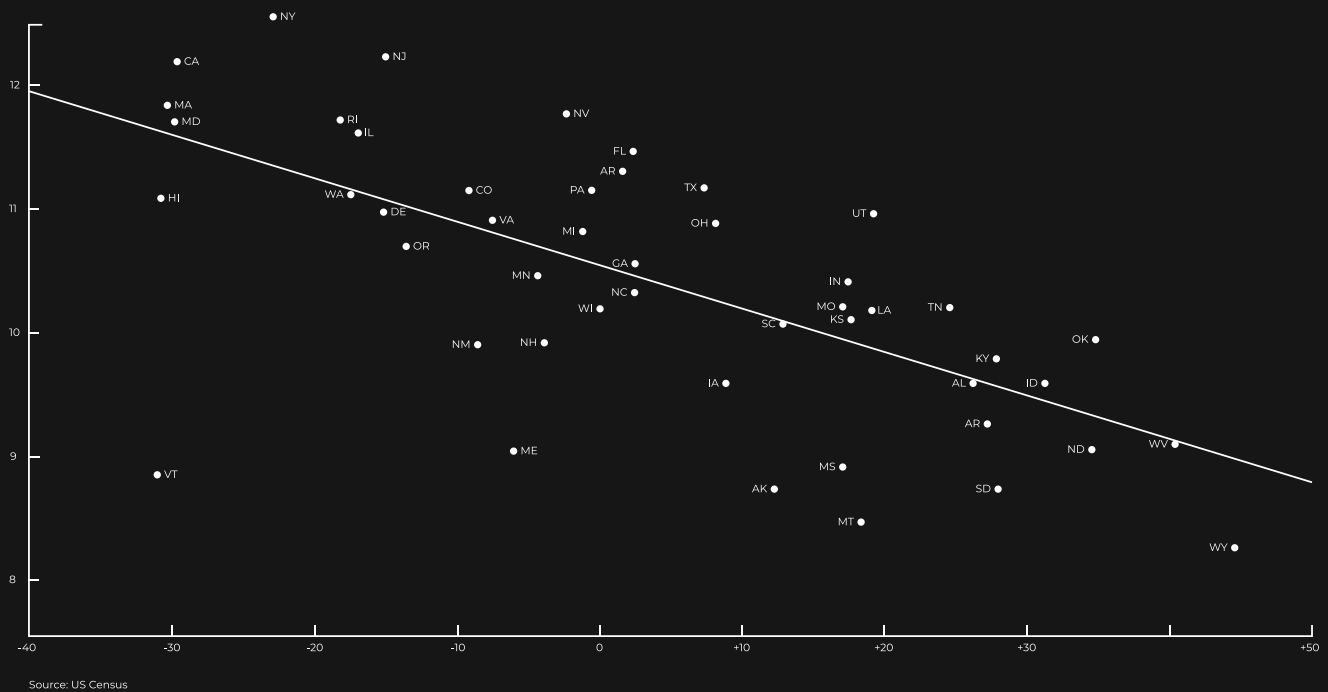




# Key Insight 3

## The Urban vs Rural Political Gap: Voters are Increasingly Aligning with their Neighbors

Average GOP Presidential Margin (2016,2020) by Urbanization



These key findings are a challenge for the future of the Republican Party because college education is growing, urbanization is on the rise, and ethnic diversity is expanding.

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# The Ascendancy Hurdle

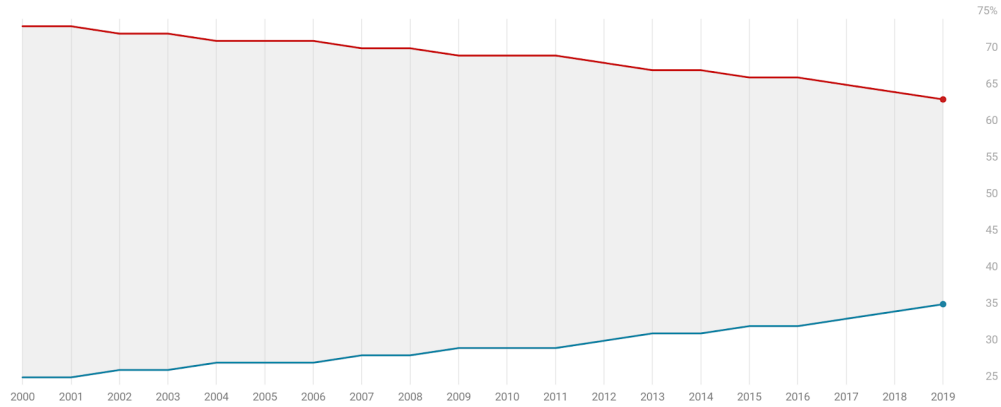
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### College education is growing

In 2019 the college educated population surpassed 35% for the first time among adults aged 25+.

— 4 years of college or more — 3 years of college or less

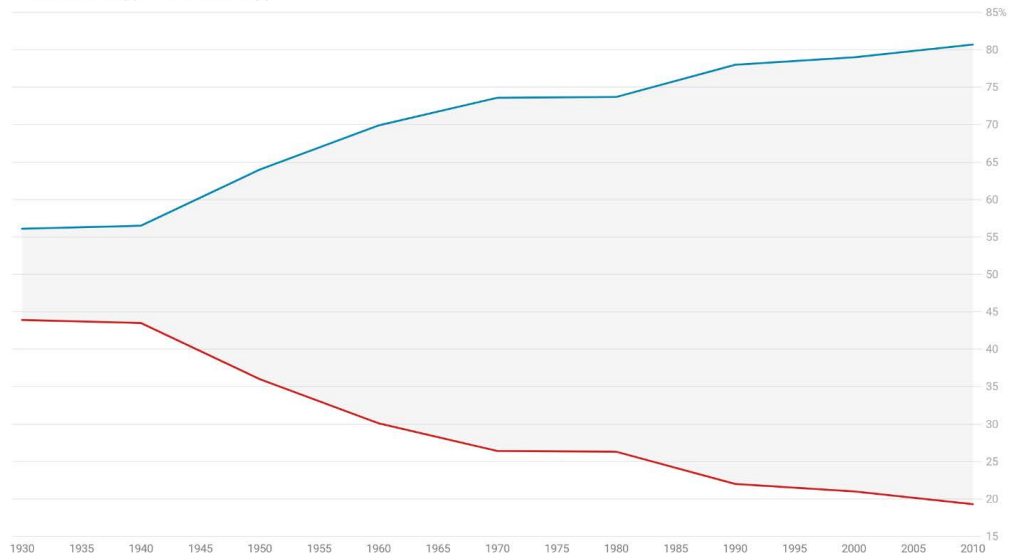


Years of school completed by people 25 years or older 2000 - 2019.  
Source: American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

### Urbanization is on the rise

For the first time in American history, the population living in an Urban area surpassed 80%.

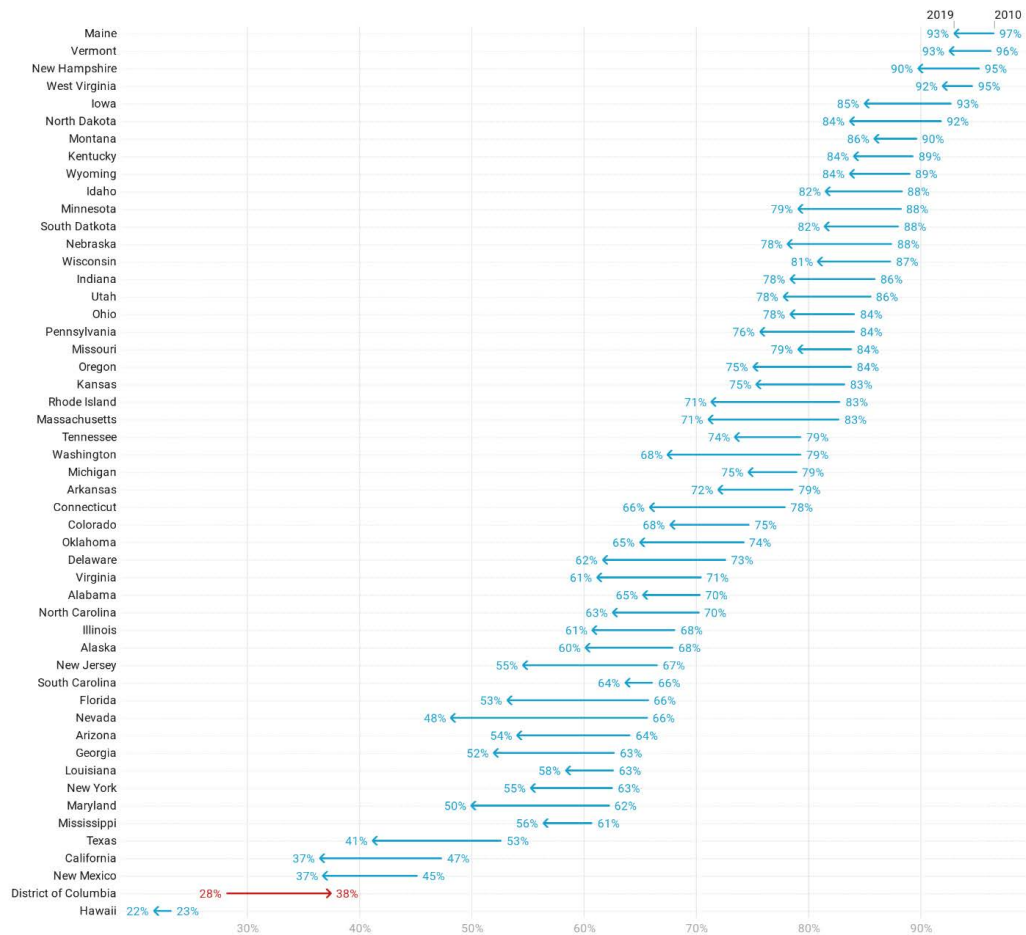
— Urban Population (%) — Rural Population (%)



Percentage of the total population in urban areas 1930-2010  
Source: US Census • Created with Datawrapper

### Ethnic diversity is expanding rapidly

The non-hispanic white population is approaching less than 60% of the U.S. population.



# Demographics Aren't Destiny

A regression to the mean is just as likely as a trendline continuing in one direction. But the party must find ways to be more competitive among key groups by building a winning coalition, focusing on the right messages, meticulous candidate recruitment, executing campaign tactics, governing effectively, and getting results.

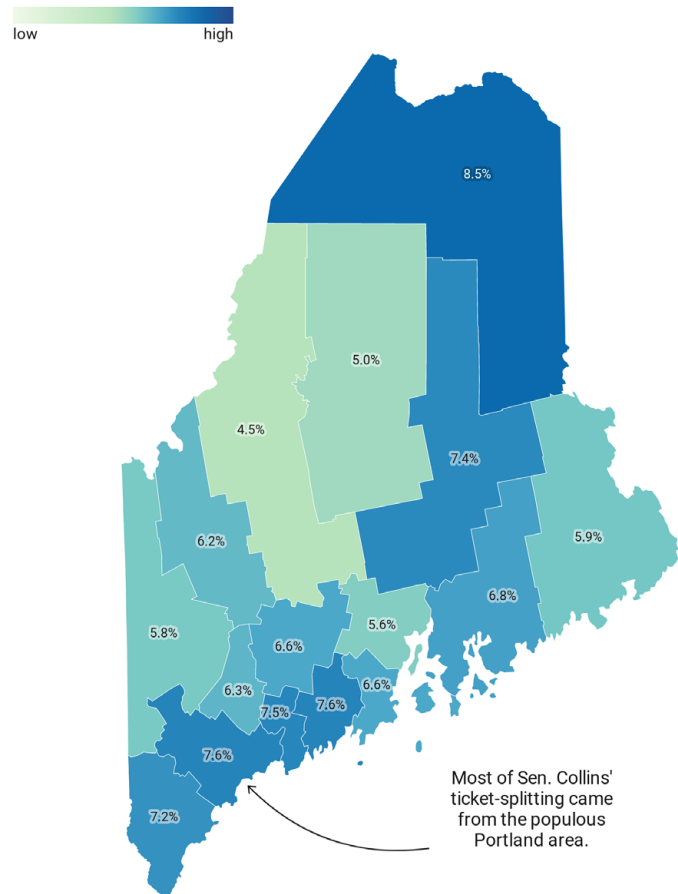
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## Demographics Aren't Destiny

Senator Susan Collins (ME) outperformed President Donald Trump on the ballot in all 16 Maine counties.

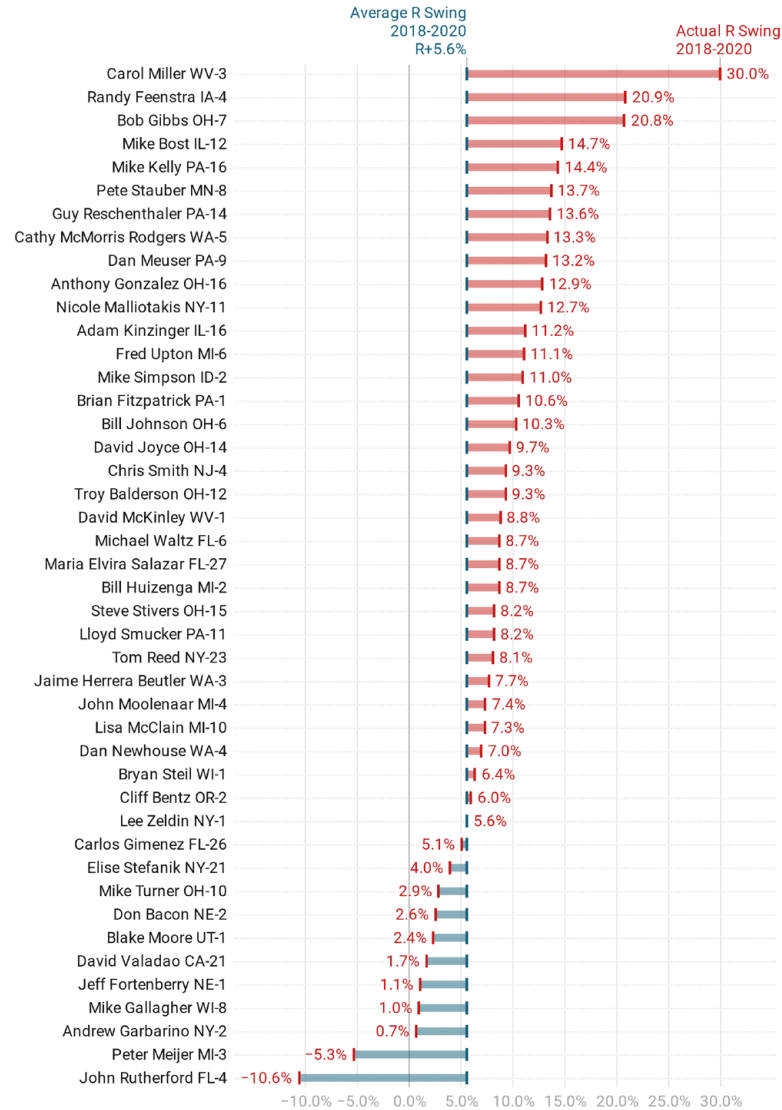


Percentage difference between Sen. Susan Collins (ME) and President Donald Trump in Maine, 2020  
Source: Politico; Associated Press • Created with Datawrapper



## House Republican Main Street Members Outperformed Their Colleagues in 2020

Republican Main Street Partnership members percentage Republican swing versus the average 2020 Republican swing.



Source: Cook Political Report • Created with Datawrapper

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# Building a Winning Coalition for the GOP

The nation is truly divided, and the current make up of the GOP helped win back seats in the House but lost the Senate and the Presidency. Our party can have incredible success in the future, but we must maintain the new Republican voters Trump created, win back those we lost, and expand to new demographics.

## MAGA Republicans

42% of GOP would vote for President Trump in 2024 if given the opportunity, and he holds a 75% job approval rating among Republicans (*Morning Consult/Politico survey conducted Jan. 8-11*). These numbers are significantly smaller than they were in November. This shouldn't be a surprise based on the recent events, but the "Trump" wing of the party is large and will continue to wield influence in the coming year whether he runs again or not.

The Trump wing of the GOP did not arise out of thin air: It existed before the President and will continue long after. Donald Trump's nomination and presidency were inevitable outcomes of a clear chain of events:

**Dissatisfaction with GOP Leaders and Politicians:** The end of the Bush presidency left many conservatives feeling used—claiming Republicans did not deliver enough on the issues they cared about most. There was brewing frustration in the right side of the party and anger towards "elites" looking for an outlet.

**The Great Recession:** The housing bubble burst and economic downturn created fear, unease, and anger toward Washington and the policies that led to the disaster.

**Bailouts:** As people were looking for help, they saw leadership send bailouts to big businesses and banks, money going overseas to China, and "crony capitalism" run wild.

**Obama victory:** The large defeat of the moderate maverick, Senator John McCain, helped convince conservative voters that moderate politicians were a path to failure.

**Obamacare:** President Obama and the Democrat Congress moved aggressively to pass the Affordable Care Act, and the fears of the Right were realized as our country took a major step toward nationalizing healthcare.

**Tea Party Movement:** The Obama Administration's rush of stimulus and healthcare bills created the protests that led to the birth of the Tea Party movement. It pulled together a new coalition supporting Constitutional ideals and opposing increased spending, government growth, debt, and "establishment" candidates. It comprised the Right of the Republican Party, along with new blue-collar voters.

**2010 Election:** The Obamacare vote led to the ousting of Democrats nationwide. Republicans retook the House with a new brand of candidate—the "outsider."

**Leftward slide of the Democratic Party:** The Obama and Pelosi party has moved further left and focused more on an extreme social agenda—leaving socially conservative, moderate Democrats feeling less at home.

All these events led to a new group of voters inside the GOP. They are deeply angered by America's direction—believing the country and

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government are headed toward socialism, run for and by special interests, and that no one in Washington is stopping it. They fear losing the America they love—watching its slow decline, feeling powerless and voiceless. They despise the mainstream media, Hollywood, Ivory-tower elites, lobbyists, and pushovers inside the GOP.

They demand that candidates be fighters, as they believe the stakes are too high – and the Left is too aggressive – for negotiation or compromise.

Do not kid yourself by believing this movement will wane in a post-Donald Trump political world—it is an important wing of the party and must be included in any plan to win in the future.

### **Independent Suburban Women**

In most recent elections, the focus lands strongly on winning more of the middle-class female vote—the “Soccer Moms” of the ‘90s and the “Security Moms” of the ‘00s. A gender gap between Republicans and Democrats is nothing new. The difference in support for Democratic candidates has averaged about 8% in the last 10 presidential elections. In 2020, the gap did not expand as many predicted, but held steady around eight percentage points, as it did in ‘12 and ‘16. We must find ways to close the gap.

Digging down more, President Trump saw a large erosion of support in Independent suburban women in four years. The Democrats have done a good job of using issues like abortion, race, and immigration policy to push more women to their camp, but it is likely the tone and personality of Trump himself that caused the greatest movement.

Simply put, they do not believe Republicans care about them and others like Democrats do.

### **Latinos**

Between 2010 and 2019, the Latino share of the total U.S. population increased from 16% to 18%. Latinos accounted for 52% of

all U.S. population growth over this period. They are the country’s second largest racial or ethnic group, behind white non-Hispanics (*Pew Research*). For years, Republicans have talked about making strides with this demographic, but little has been accomplished. The rhetoric surrounding the border wall and immigration has certainly overwhelmed any overtures made to attract this group. Despite small gains over the last eight years, nationwide we are losing them at a rate of 2-1.

Republicans face erosion of support inside of key Southwestern states like Texas, Arizona, and Nevada, and better messages to Latino voters could help reverse the tide.

There is reason to be optimistic. In Florida, the Cuban-American vote grew and helped secure the state for Trump. In Nevada and Texas, he also made gains over his 2016 performance with Latinos. As a growing demographic with socially conservative values, there is great reason for the GOP to spend a great effort in growing support among these voters.



The biggest challenge ahead for the GOP message is reshaping a brand that preserves and grows Trump's gains with blue-collar Independents and minorities but, also has a compelling reason for suburban women and Latinos to give Republican candidates a chance. Much of this is a delicate balance as the harsh tone and rhetoric of President Trump was crucial to his success among one group and a cause for failure among others—a double-edge sword.

# Message

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# Defining the Problem

If we can agree with our target voters on the problem and demonstrate we are as passionate about it as they are, Republicans will come a long way in earning their trust. The problems/our enemies need to be specific and tangible—generalities lack power.

So what would MAGA voters, Independent suburban women, and Latinos agree as a problem?





# Communist China

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a magnifying glass on the impact China can have on our nation. We watched their lies and mismanagement in the onset of the virus contribute to deaths of loved ones, the upheaval of our economy, and the destruction of our everyday life. We have seen our security put at risk by our over-reliance on the country for the manufacturing of drugs and other essential materials. We know they hack and steal our intellectual property. We witnessed their violent oppression of pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong and civil rights abuses of the Uyghurs. Outgoing Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe called China's actions "the greatest threat to America today" and to "democracy around the world since World War II."

China seeks to replace the United States as the world's superpower in order to reshape the world to its advantage. Just as President Reagan rallied our nation to defeat the Soviet Union and President Bush confronted terrorism, this is our new greatest threat to our economy, infrastructure, technology, and Western values around the globe.

By defining Communist China as the problem, we can unify Americans around the goal to protect our nation from an outside threat. We can raise our eyes beyond the internal battles that only embarrass us globally and weaken our standing in the world.

Republicans have an inherent advantage in foreign affairs, and it is time to remind voters of this.

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# Insiders & Instigators

Confidence in government and our institutions are at record lows—skepticism is riding high. Voters believe there is a political class that is busy feathering their own nests at the expense of the rest of us. The news media, social media, and politicians in both parties have a vested interest in fanning the flames of division, forcing people to “pick sides,” and devote more of their lives to consuming politics.

It is time to call them out and take the high ground. Certainly, the issues matter—but at the expense of our neighbors and nation? Voters have become pawns in the hands of insiders and instigators to gather votes and make money, leaving a wake of destruction in our lives.

We must take back our government from the people who have made it their personal vending machine and restore focus on our citizens and civility.

America is at an inflection point.

We have an opportunity to stop the fighting and start solving problems after a year of epic violence. This is the moment to bring America together, end the politics that divides us, and accomplish things for the American people. Our better future begins with openness, tolerance, acceptance of alternative views, free debate, and compromise, as well as an end to censorship and the isolation of extremism.

Ronald Reagan said if we agree on 80% and disagree on 20%, we should focus on the 80% we agree on.

Let us begin an Era of Engagement where people come together to get things done and consign the screaming, shouting, and scoring of political points to yesterday. We are effectively a 50/50 nation, and that should encourage us to work together, debate openly, compromise to get things done, and serve the people, not ourselves.

Historically, Americans look to Republicans to fix and build our economy.

It is Republicans who voters believed held a moral backbone with strong American family values.

It is Republicans who can be trusted to protect our nation's safety and security.

But Democrats have worked to call these all into question. They claim we are only for a better economy for the wealthy. They believe we are a morally bankrupt party of angry bigots who hate minorities, women, and refugees. They claim, falsely, that our support for security is merely a facade for racism.

It is time to reclaim what rightfully belongs to Republicans under a new mantle of Positive Populism—defending Main Street. Voters must believe the GOP cares about them because right now, they do not.

**It's time for solutions over rhetoric.**

# Finding the Solution

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## Prosperity

Prior to COVID-19, America achieved a level of economic success like never before. This was not only a “Trump” accomplishment but a “Republican” accomplishment. It is time to move beyond Trump and embrace the Republican governance that gave us the best economy in our lifetime, created more jobs, and expanded opportunity for all.

We are not a party of one person. We are a party of many—and always have been. Celebrate the good news of how Republicans expanded support among women, Blacks, Latinos, and other minorities from coast to coast. We accomplished this not through programs or promises, but through significant real-world victories. We got the job done, and we can do it again because we are driven by new ideas and better solutions.

Republican leadership delivered more opportunity to women and minorities. Republicans deregulated the economy, promoted job-creating tax cuts, and put Main Street first.

We can continue this work by empowering women and working to close the wage gap. It lifts families as a whole. Supporting women in the workplace ultimately ensures American families and the future generations they are raising are set up to succeed.

We are the party of prosperity.

## Family

Republicans must reclaim our ethics and moral standing in the eyes of votes. This should not look anything like the family values/Moral Majority politics of the past.

There is nothing families care about more than their children. Republicans need to refocus on the future of our nation. Healthy families create a healthy nation.

We are the working class, middle class, and newly arrived. We value work, honor our responsibilities, and treat everyone as we wish to be treated. We are tired of the fighting and of the mindless division. Our kids play together and shake hands after a good match because teamwork works.

Our vision is simple: We want to live in freedom, relax in an affordable home, walk on safe streets, send our children to good schools, have access to affordable healthcare, live in financial security, and support our national security so America is safe. We love America's history, heritage, and culture, and celebrate our countless achievements. We believe in the rule of law. We oppose the politics of division, “cancel culture,” and extremism of any kind. It is time to return to our founders' vision and restore this great republic and our Republican values.

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Being a Main Street Republican means we protect affordable healthcare access for people with pre-existing conditions, seek to lower out-of-pocket costs of prescription drugs, stop surprise billing and grow medical transparency.

We believe in improving maternal health, mental health, and fighting the opioid crisis which is plaguing families across America.

We can pave the way in helping families access childcare by increasing employer-provided dependent care assistance and expanding access to childcare support for low-income parents attending college.

We must ensure our families are raised in a healthier environment with cleaner water and encouraging new energy technology.

We need to connect our ideals and policies to each individual family—why it matters directly to them. We must speak in moral terms of right and wrong, not Left or Right.

Family, faith, common sense, responsibility, respect, and a love of country are the values we hold dear. In a culture at war with these ideals, we must hold firm.

### **Security**

The need to be safe is one of the strongest impulses in humanity. As a party, we must demonstrate we are the best choice for a secure America.

Democrat mayors across the nation put their mismanagement on full display last summer. We saw what appeasement of lawlessness brings—more lawlessness. Because they sold out to the extreme Left, countless businesses were destroyed, cities were torched, billions of dollars were lost, and worse yet, lives were lost too.

We are a party that respects the rules and our laws. The terrible events at the Capitol harmed our standing in the eyes of some, but we must not own those lawless acts.

We must be open to continual criminal justice reform and find the best ways to protect our communities while promoting renewed lives.

We respect the men and women in blue and those who put on the uniform to defend us nationally. We are thankful for the role they play in keeping our society safe so we can live, work, and play in peace.

We must call out Communist China for the threat it is. We need to encourage the restoring of American business and jobs—not only because it is good for our economy but also for our security.

A message means nothing  
without messengers.

Our candidates carry our  
message, and choosing the  
right candidates is crucial.

What are the qualities of  
candidates who can carry  
the new banner for the  
Republican Party?

# Candidates

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### **Strong and Passionate**

Our voters are looking for unflinching leadership willing to fight hard for the people they represent. This does not mean they are vulgar and disrespectful. They are willing to speak the truth to power and challenge the insiders and influencers wrecking America.

### **Relatable and Likeable**

People are inundated with information every day and have less and less time to process it. They are increasingly more skeptical of political messages, so they are looking for ways to short-circuit the process by judging people on their character. If they trust you, the rest takes care of itself. Candidates who are relatable and likeable will hold an advantage.

### **Powerful Biography and Personal Stories**

We need candidates with great stories to tell and strong biographies that inspire voters. Lawyers and career politicians are expected—we need candidates that carry with them the amazing tapestry of experiences that make American life.

### **Populist**

Candidates must be deeply focused on the people they represent. They must show passion for giving regular Americans more opportunity and prosperity, and challenge the big business and big government insiders.

### **Diverse**

People like people who are like themselves. We must encourage women, younger people, Latinos, etc. to run. Our party is far more diverse than it appears, and we must highlight it. Voters need to feel like their leaders understand them and care for them, and a simple way we can do this is by demonstrating it in our leadership.

### **Compelling Communicators**

In the social media-saturated world we live in, skilled personal communicators are extremely effective. Knowing how to be interesting, entertaining, frank, and non-conventional is vitally important in the new world we live in.

### **Connected to the Community**

People who have served their area, not necessarily in the political sense but through charity, job creation, etc. have demonstrated to voters they have a history and passion for service. Showing voters they have already given to their community will make them much more attractive in voters' eyes.



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# Rules of Engagement

How do we bring all of this to the people? We need an intentional approach to our message that touches on the right issues and strikes the right tone. An approach that connects with our base who fought hard for us and still builds bridges with those who still believe they have no voice. As we work to engage with voters, consider that our most effective communications will be those that connect with people emotionally.

## **Tough, Not Angry**

We won't build bridges if the rhetoric remains angry Right vs. angry Left, but being a Main Street Republican isn't weakness either. Our strength comes in picking the right fights for the right reasons. It comes when we pick fights on behalf of the people we represent. We'll continue to work with both sides for common-sense solutions to real problems but we do it within a set of guiding principles.

## **Earning Trust**

People won't care about your opinion if they don't trust you. Building trust is an ongoing process that you must work at every day. Nothing screams "self-serving politician" like being silent for months or years and then reaching out just before a pending election. This means communicating all year long.

**Be Accessible:** People need to see your face and hear your voice. It's not enough to just do social media posts and press releases. They know you have staff for that. Get in front of the camera and talk to them.

**Be Authentic:** Reading a prepared script doesn't get the job done. Share the real moments.

**Be Transparent:** Work to be open and transparent with your constituents. Share the saga with them.



### **If Your Tactics Smell Like Tactics, You'll Lose**

Polling, analytics, and big data dominate our strategic discussions, and they have their place, but if people in your district think your primary mission is to score political points to manipulate the electorate, you will make yourself a generic politician; a reed to be blown about by the political winds of the day and your message will be looked upon with skepticism and your motives will be suspect.

### **People Hate Math**

Still Republicans are insistent on showing the formulas behind their policies.

**Stop it. It's boring and people don't pay attention to boring things.** We keep letting the left appear to care about people while we respond with, "we can't afford that."

### **We Are the Party of Individual Freedom**

Ours is the only movement that believes in people and cares about their future.

**Don't help them do their taxes. Help them dream.**

### **How We Lost Tax Reform**

Republicans made a series of difficult decisions that ultimately led to the most prosperous economy in 50 years. But, we got very little credit beyond staunch conservatives and this historic accomplishment was barely a blip on the political messaging landscape. Why? We failed to connect the policy to the people. Until COVID, this was a policy that was on its way to helping people change their lives, realize dreams, find value in who they are, and rebuild their hometown. Instead, we boiled that great big thing down to a "tax cut" and the main GOP message was limited to how many extra dollars a family of four would receive. When we reduced that great achievement to a message about what you will get, it was like an accountant's analysis of your tax return. Worse, it allowed Nancy Pelosi to actually use it against us by talking about winners and losers (who got more and who got less).

**Tax reform wasn't about what you get. It was about what you'll do with what you earn. It was about what you can be. It was about what you can dream. It was about what you can build.**

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## Four Steps to Emotional Engagement

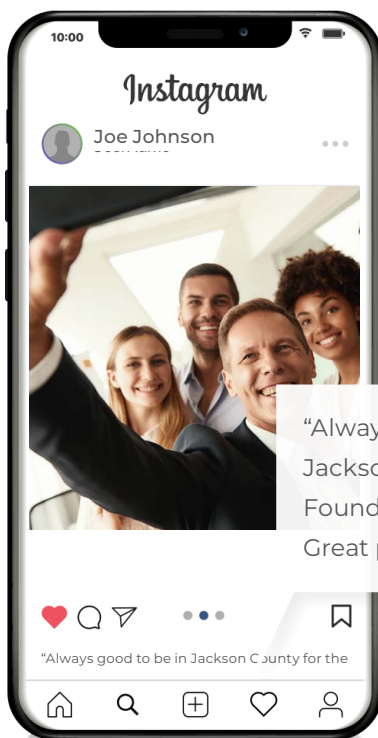
### Listen to Find Stories

Wherever possible, our messaging must be delivered through the eyes of the people we represent. Be intentional about finding stories from the district that help define a problem, then demonstrate how it impacts real people and leads to your solution.

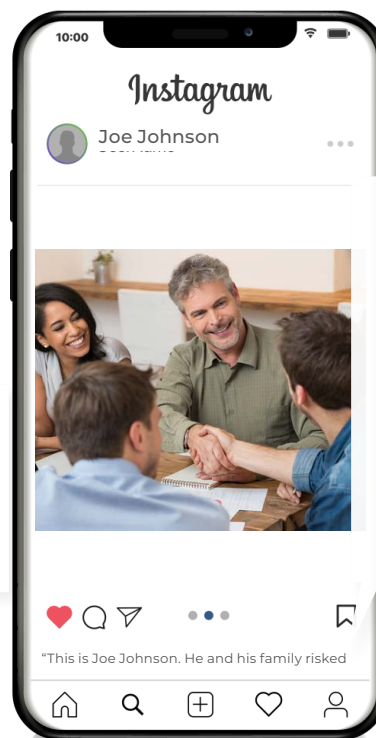
### Tell Stories

Our communications should be more than a list of accomplishments and our accounts of the day. Everything we talk about should have a human face behind it. Right down to our social media posts which should be more than a journal entry from the day.

#### DON'T SHARE A POST



#### SHARE A STORY



Finding families who are impacted and helped by our policies is a much more impactful way to connect with people.

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### **Keep the Stories of Greatest Impact**

Authentic stories connect with people emotionally. Be sure your digital team can monitor the engagement and impact. Your communications strategy should be more than pushing content at people. It should be communicating with people and among people. The feedback you get is powerful and usable.

### **Amplify the Best Stories**

People are most skeptical at election time. That's why we should set aside budget to tell these stories all year long. Start now!

If we find a powerful story, move it to television. If we find a particular audience responding and engaging with us, target them with direct mail and digital.

A slow steady burn throughout the next year will help create real and lasting relationships with the people we represent.

### **If We Do It Right ...**

- Constituents will know that we care about people like them.
- Our policies will make more sense.
- It will be very difficult for opponents to attack our motives.
- Our members will develop a real relationship with constituents.

[www.republicanmainstreet.org](http://www.republicanmainstreet.org)

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