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To: Interested Parties
From: Transgender Freedom Alliance
Re: Polling to Prepare for Anti-Transgender Attacks
Date: June 4, 2026

Overview

Anti-transgender attacks are now a core, well-funded component of Republican messaging. Pollsters should assume these attacks will appear in nearly every competitive race.

In 2024, more than \$220 million was spent in Senate and presidential races on anti-trans advertising. At the state level, this has intensified. In Virginia's 2025 gubernatorial race, Winsome Earle-Sears devoted roughly half of her ad spending to anti-trans attacks, ultimately investing more than \$11 million on the issue.

These attacks are a consistent line of contrast designed to shape perceptions of Democratic candidates.

Campaigns that fail to respond lose ground. Campaigns that anticipate, test, and resource responses can neutralize the impact. In Virginia, Governor Abigail Spanberger pre-tested responses, went up within hours, and sustained paid response—helping blunt attacks and win decisively.

Simply put, If you are not testing for this, you are leaving a major vulnerability unmeasured.

Polling on Issues Impacting Transgender People

As political spending shows us, Republicans have weaponized issues impacting transgender people as a key strategy. In many ways, these attacks do a lot of work for them - showing Democrats as out of touch, extreme, or weak on issues like safety. Going into the midterms, every campaign should have a read on where voters stand when it comes to issues impacting transgender people and be ready to respond to attacks.

In an environment where policy and political debates are conducted in black and white, issues impacting transgender people are actually a gray area for many, yet polling often does not reflect this complexity and conflict, and therefore doesn't give us a clear picture of public opinion. As we try to understand where voters really land on issues impacting transgender

people, we do ourselves a disservice by offering only binary choices that limit our understanding of shared values and complexity.

The Right is indeed manipulating this complexity and conflict to their own benefit by leaning into the issues where ambivalence or concern were at their highest: namely, young people medically transitioning before the age of 18, and rules around transgender people participating in competitive women's sports.

Sports participation is the issue on which American voters are most conflicted—in part because they ignite a visceral reaction around fairness, as most sports, by their very nature, tend to activate zero-sum thinking. There are winners and losers. Here, and on other issues in this memo, quantitative results in polls vary widely depending on how the question is asked. That's reflecting something real: voters are struggling and torn on many of these issues, not dug in, so **it matters significantly how you frame things when you ask them to provide a yes or no answer.** The truth is that American voters start out sympathetic to the concerns about unfair advantages in sports, but when it comes to who should make the rules to keep sports fair and student athletes safe, and how they should be enforced, the verdict is much more mixed, with voters having real concerns about blanket bans and one-size-fits all laws that don't take the sport (e.g., e-sports vs. soccer), age (6-year-olds vs. 18-year-olds), or level of competition (recreational league vs. varsity) into account.

Outside of sports, public opinion around health care for transgender young people is another issue where **voters are cross-pressured and the framing matters a great deal.** When it comes to mental health care, there is overwhelming support. When it comes to medical care for young people that they don't understand or fear might be irreversible, voters get more concerned. The good news is that they are cross-pressured not maliciously, but because they are concerned about the welfare of the young people involved. They are holding on to core values that most people share around the safety and protection of kids. And if voters understand more about the fact that there is a long process through which parents seek transgender-related healthcare for their child, they become much more comfortable, and indeed, defensive against politicians who may be attempting to overrule parents' ability to navigate and make complex health care decisions for their families.

Polling Guidance

1. Avoid Binary Support/Oppose Framing

Binary support/oppose questions can misstate public opinion on complex issues. They tend to force respondents into positions they have not fully formed, inflate polarization, and miss underlying ambivalence or complexity. On transgender-related issues, many voters hold mixed or conditional views.

DO:

- Provide space for conflicting opinions and complexity
- Include values in the response options
- If asking support/oppose questions, make sure to ask multiple ways to get at the range of attitudes that exist based on question phrasing

DO NOT:

- Rely on single support/oppose questions as a primary measure of where your voters are

Example polling question

Which of the following do you agree with more, even if none are exactly right?

- 1) I think transgender people are just like everyone else and deserve the same rights
 - 2) I think transgender people shouldn't be discriminated against but there have to be some reasonable restrictions on things like sports and bathrooms
 - 3) I think being transgender is wrong
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2. Healthcare: Test Decision Authority and Government Overreach

Objective: Assess voter opinion from a "who decides" frame.

DO:

- Center parents/families and doctors
- Test government interference/overreach that overrules parents' decision-making
- Use plain language ("healthcare," "medical care")

DO NOT:

- Use the term "gender-affirming care"
- Over-index on clinical detail
- Frame around "kids/minors" (use "young people" or "teens")
 - Exception, using "child" may be appropriate when used in relation to parents (e.g., a parents' child)

Example Polling Question

Which of the following do you agree with more, even if none are exactly right?

- 1) As long as parents are involved, government should not ban doctors from providing transgender health care for a patient under the age of 18

- 2) I do not personally support transgender health care for patients under the age of 18, but I don't think government should ban care that parents and doctors agree on
 - 3) I personally oppose transgender health care for patients under the age of 18 and believe the government should ban that care
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3. Sports: Test Acknowledging Concerns and Highlighting Shared Values

Objective: Assess voter opinion on blanket bans while acknowledging importance of fairness

DO:

- Test who is best suited to make rules around sports (politicians vs. sports associations)
- Differentiate by age, level of competition, and sport type (track vs. e-sports)
- -Where applicable, point to your own state laws and regulations regarding rules and participation
- Provide examples of level of competition (recess v. collegiate)
- Explore tailored rules vs. blanket bans
- Integrate shared values of fairness and safety
- Explore unintended consequences and impact of enforcement on all women and girls (genital inspection, etc.)

DO NOT:

- Field binary “boys vs. girls sports” questions
- Call transgender girls “boys” in responses to attacks

Example Polling Question

Which of the following best reflects your view on transgender individuals participating in sports?

- 1) Transgender individuals should always be allowed to compete in sports based on their gender identity
 - 2) There should be rules to keep sports fair, which should vary depending on age, sport, and level of competition
 - 3) Transgender individuals should only be allowed to compete in sports based on their sex assigned at birth
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4. Focus & Extremism

Voters are responsive to perceptions of which party is more focused on this issue and which party is more extreme on issues relating to transgender people. While we consistently see a belief that Democrats focus more on this issue, we have seen a shift in which party is viewed as

more extreme, with Republicans now being viewed as more extreme on transgender issues (which was not the case in 2024).

Polling should establish:

- Baseline attribution of issue focus by party and by candidate
- Perceived extremism by party and by candidate
- Trend perceived focus and extremism by party over time

Example Polling Questions

Which [party/candidate] do you think focuses on transgender issues more?

Democrats/Candidate A – focus much more

Democrats/Candidate A – focus somewhat more

Neither Democrats/Candidate A nor Republicans focus on this issue

Republicans/Candidate B – focus somewhat more

Republicans/Candidate B – focus much more

Which party do you think has more extreme views when it comes to transgender issues?

Democrats/Candidate A – much more extreme

Democrats/Candidate A – somewhat more extreme

Republicans/Candidate B – somewhat more extreme

Republicans/Candidate B – much more extreme

Neither Democrats/Candidate A nor Republicans/Candidate B are extreme on this issue

Democrats/Candidate A and Republicans/Candidate B are equally extreme on this issue

5. Understanding Candidate Perception

Objective: Assess how this issue impacts overall candidate evaluations.

Voters process transgender issues through broader concerns about safety, values, and priorities—not in isolation.

Polling should test:

- Whether a candidate is in touch with voters' values
- Perceptions of safety and protecting children
- Whether candidates are focused on the right priorities

Example Polling Questions

Which of the following is more concerning to you, even if neither is exactly right?

- That Republicans have gone too far on abortion, overreaching into personal medical decisions
- That Democrats have gone too far to protect transgender people

Which of the following is more concerning to you, even if neither is exactly right?

- That Republicans are too focused on transgender issues instead of lowering costs
- That Democrats have gone too far on transgender issues

Measure how much this issue is actually breaking through:

- Monitor TV and digital spending
- Track disinformation trends and peaks
- Ask open-ended questions about what voters are seeing and hearing

6. Test Candidate Biography and Values-Based Credibility

Objective: Identify which elements of a candidate's biography build trust, establish shared values, and inoculate against anti-transgender attacks.

Research shows that certain biographical traits significantly increase confidence that a candidate will approach issues impacting transgender people thoughtfully, fairly, and with the interests of children and families in mind. Polling that focuses exclusively on policy positions risks missing important opportunities to strengthen candidate credibility and resilience against attacks.

Campaigns should test which aspects of a candidate's personal story create the strongest foundation for discussing issues impacting transgender people. In particular, voters respond positively to candidates who have experience raising children, involvement with public schools, backgrounds in education, coaching youth sports, strong community ties, faith, or records of serving others. These attributes help communicate values such as responsibility, fairness, safety, and common sense before voters ever hear a policy position.

Example Polling Question

Below are several pieces of information about a candidate [reflect your candidate's biography here]. For each one, please indicate whether it makes you more or less likely to believe this candidate would take a reasonable approach to issues involving transgender people.

- Is a parent
- Has children in public schools
- Has coached youth sports
- Worked in education
- Is a person of faith

- Has a bipartisan record
- Has a background in public safety or law enforcement

Follow-up:

Which of these experiences makes you feel most confident that this candidate shares your values and would handle these issues responsibly?

COMMON MISTAKES IN PUBLIC POLLING ON TRANSGENDER ISSUES

Much of the publicly available polling on transgender issues produces misleading or incomplete findings—not because of methodology broadly, but because of **question design choices that do not reflect how voters actually think and feel about these issues**.

Common pitfalls include:

- **Binary support/oppose questions**

Force respondents into positions they have not fully formed and obscure ambivalence.

Example:

“Do you support or oppose men who identify as women being able to compete in women’s sports?”

([Rasmussen Reports, 2024](#))

- **Identity-loaded or leading language**

Predetermines the frame and measures reaction to wording, not attitudes.

Example:

“Do you support or oppose men who identify as women being able to use women’s restrooms and locker rooms?”

([Rasmussen Reports, 2024](#))

- **Policy-only questions without decision context**

Miss the central role of parents, doctors, and local institutions.

Example:

“Do you favor or oppose laws that require transgender people to use bathrooms matching their sex at birth?”

([Pew Research Center, 2025](#))

- **Failure to capture voter conflict**

Flattens mixed views into artificial “for/against” camps.

Example:

“Do you favor or oppose banning medical care for transgender minors?”

([Pew topline, 2025](#))

- **Ignoring parental involvement**

Obscures an important area of voter conflict by failing to distinguish between parental rights and broader restrictions on care. Voters who oppose outright bans may still support parental notification or consent requirements, but many surveys do not test that distinction.

Example:

“Do you favor or oppose laws and policies that ban health care professionals from providing medical care related to gender transitions for minors?”

([Pew Research Center, 2025](#))

- **Over-reliance on abstract values questions**

Overstates support that does not translate to policy or campaign context.

Example:

“Do you support laws that protect LGBTQ people from discrimination?”

([PRRI, 2025](#))

Bottom line:

Traditional question design often **overstates certainty and misreads nuance** on this issue.

Polling that captures decision-making, competing values, and voter ambivalence will provide a more accurate—and more actionable—picture for campaigns.

Conclusion

Anti-transgender attacks are a predictable, repeatable input in campaign environments. In determining your candidate’s vulnerability and strengths on this issue, polling should center shared values, raise opportunities for inoculation with candidate biographies, and allow for room for voters to hold complex or even contradictory views.

The Transgender Freedom Alliance and our partners have conducted countless rounds of research on these issues and are consistently coming out with new data. We are happy to engage in individual conversations as you conduct polling for your clients and candidates on this issue. We look forward to working together to meet voters where they are, protect transgender Americans from harm by a hostile administration, and win back Democratic majorities.

For additional guidance, contact:

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