

To: Interested Parties

From: Joey Teitelbaum and Anastasia Scourtes, Global Strategy Group

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Re: Lessons Learned Countering Anti-Trans Attacks in 2025 Elections

Over the course of 2025, Global Strategy Group conducted research on the role anti-transgender attacks were playing in Virginia, New Jersey, and Wisconsin races and explored how to message around this issue. The key findings below show that while anti-trans attacks can be damaging absent a strong messaging strategy, Democrats can effectively ward off these inflammatory and dangerous anti-trans attacks while staying true to our values.

What Happened

- In 2025, Republicans like Winsome Earle-Sears spent millions on anti-trans attacks. Polling in Virginia shows these clearly broke through: by mid-October the vast majority of likely Virginia voters indicated they had heard anti-trans attacks on Spanberger, and nearly half (47%) say they heard “a lot”.
- But through inoculation and response, Democrats won. Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger even grew her vote share from 50% in May to 52% in October after nearly \$4 million in anti-trans attack ads – the [focus of the majority of Earle-Sears' ads](#).
- Just 7% of voters even name transgender issues as a top concern in their vote.
- Spanberger’s approach worked. Public and private polling show she is more trusted on transgender issues (+12 Spanberger – [best approach to “transgender rights”](#)).

Key Findings

Voters are not focused on trans people and are frustrated by their elected officials spending so much time on it. Even after Winsome Earle-Sears spent millions demonizing trans people, only 7% of Virginia voters said transgender issues were a top concern.

Republicans are convincing voters that Democrats are driving the conversation. In May, Virginia voters said Democrats were 33 points more likely to be focused on transgender issues than Republicans. We cannot continue to allow this falsehood to stand.

But voters are put off by Republicans’ approach to this issue. Just 14% of voters across these three states say, “being transgender is wrong.” These voters may have hesitations about Democrats’ approach absent hearing from us directly, but they are absolutely not on board with Republicans’ aggressive tone and outright discrimination against transgender people.

Anti-trans attacks are damaging – like any attack – because they suggest Democrats are:

- Extreme, not focused on issues that matter to voters (e.g., costs)
- Elevating a subset of the population rather than all of their constituents
- Putting kids, specifically girls, at risk by creating loopholes ripe for exploitation.

While they damage candidates’ vote share, like any effective attack, they are not a death blow.

However, we have responses that consistently overpower the GOP's attacks. Wisconsin research shows we can beat back the attacks: Susan Crawford started with an 8-point lead over Brad Schimel. Crawford's lead in the poll narrowed to 3-points after voters heard a series of anti-trans attacks but jumped back up to net +8 once she responded. **The bottom line is that these attacks are beatable – if you respond.** While we should take them seriously, like we do with attacks on a myriad of other issues, we should not run scared.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH:

Virginia: Global Strategy Group conducted a phone and text-to-web survey of 800 Virginia likely voters with an oversample to reach 200 interviews of Black voters between May 5 and May 10, 2025. This survey was preceded by four online focus groups among Virginia 2025 likely voters on April 1 and April 3, 2025. Global Strategy Group also conducted a phone and text-to-web survey of 800 Virginia likely voters between October 9 and October 13, 2025.

Wisconsin: Global Strategy Group conducted a phone and text-to-web survey of 800 Wisconsin likely voters between February 20 and February 24, 2025. This survey was preceded by four online focus groups among Wisconsin 2025 likely voters on January 28 and January 29, 2025.

New Jersey: Global Strategy Group conducted a phone and text-to-web survey of 800 New Jersey likely voters with an oversample to reach 200 interviews of Hispanic voters between August 7 and August 11, 2025. This survey was preceded by four online focus groups among New Jersey 2025 likely voters on July 8 and July 9, 2025.

The margin of error for all surveys at the 95% confidence level is +/- 3.5%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.