

**To:** David Bossie  
**The Presidential Coalition**

**From:** Kellyanne Conway

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**Re:** Virginia Goes to the Polls: Telephone Survey of 700 Likely Voters

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## [The Race to be the Next Governor of Virginia](#)

Early voting began this weekend in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Election Day is November 2. At stake are legislative seats in the State Assembly and statewide offices including governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general. As early voting began and the first debate concluded between gubernatorial candidates, Democrat Terry McAuliffe and Republican Glenn Youngkin, we conducted a survey from September 17-19 of 700 likely voters across Virginia.

These poll results track with other recent surveys in Virginia that show a tight contest for the next governor: neither candidate is above 50%, many voters remain undecided, and Virginians are focused on myriad issues as they consider who should lead their state for the next four years.

Specifically, 46% of likely voters would vote for Terry McAuliffe, and 42% for Glenn Youngkin. One-in-ten (10%) remain firmly undecided.

At 46%, the former governor and political insider McAuliffe has not convinced the majority of voters that he should get back his old job in a state that has been turning a deeper shade of blue for over a decade

The challenger, businessman and political outsider Youngkin claims 42% of the vote in this survey. He is within the margin of error and within striking distance of upsetting a McAuliffe comeback.

Biden-Harris carried Virginia by 10% in the 2020 presidential election but, as national polls also demonstrate, the Democratic President, Vice President and their policies have fallen out of favor with many Americans. This is a nagging and growing liability for McAuliffe.

Virginians support law enforcement, oppose critical race theory and are increasingly concerned about the rising prices of everyday goods and employment opportunity and security. The Democrats' \$3.5 trillion spending package is unpopular in Virginia and toxic to candidates like McAuliffe who masquerade as moderates.

COVID-19 and vaccines are also at the top of mind of the voters surveyed. Youngkin strikes the right balance in promoting others to do as he has and get vaccinated, while opposing mandates and hypocritical politicians who have rules for "thee but not for me" (see, e.g., photos of Maskless McAuliffe on an hours-long, enclosed train ride on Amtrak this summer).

It is imperative to remind voters of the Democrats’ complicity in sowing doubt about the vaccines early on; that includes Biden and Harris, who confused Americans and politicized the issue, even as they were among the 13 million Americans who received the vaccine while President Trump, whose Administration gave them three approved vaccines, was still in office.

Youngkin is growing steadily in the polls while being less known. Republicans are more enthusiastic as Democrats are more on defense. Any failing in the state belongs to the one party that rules it. It is time for balance and change.

## ANALYSIS

**The State of the State.** Virginians were evenly split on the direction of the Commonwealth, with 47% believing it is going in the “right direction” and 46% claiming it was off “on the wrong track.” Intensity among “wrong trackers” was strong, with over one-third (35%) reporting “strongly wrong track” compared to 28% claiming “strongly right direction.” Those more likely than most to feel positive about Virginia’s direction were Democrats (80%), liberals (79%), moderates (63%), African-Americans (53%), urban dwellers (53%) and college graduates (53%). Those more likely than most to be dissatisfied were Republicans (83%), conservatives (80%), and rural residents (58%).

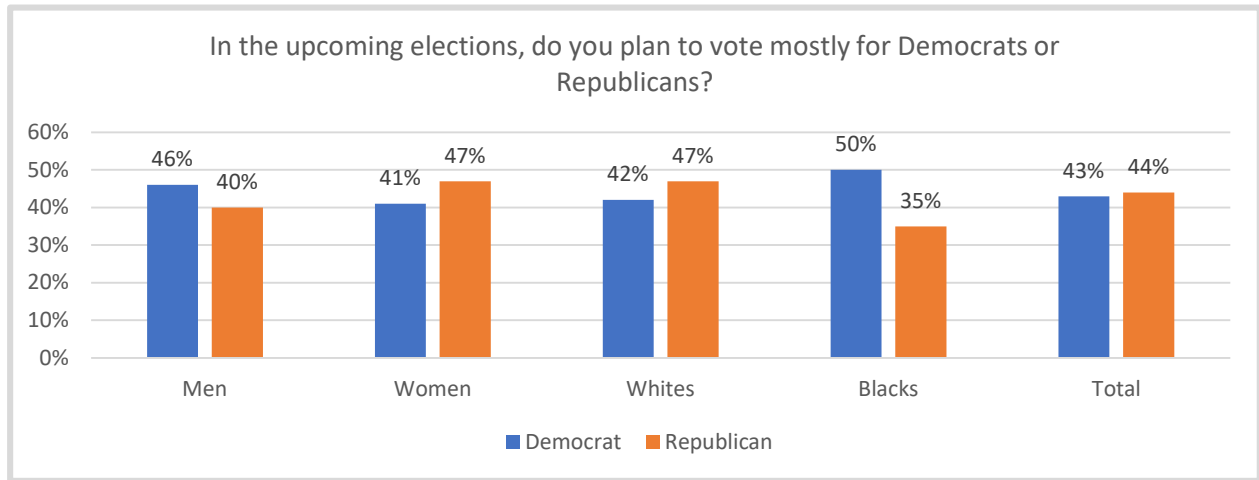
**Show me the money.** “Jobs and economy” were front and center for likely voters, as 30% selected this as one of their top two most important issues. COVID-19 and vaccinations also were prominent, with 28% citing it as a top one or two concern. Notably, economic issues garnered a full 54%, health (COVID and non-COVID related) received 50%, and security at home and abroad 33%. Undecided voters in the gubernatorial race had different slightly different priorities: 35% jobs and economy, 33% non-COVID healthcare, 28% COVID-19, 18% inflation.

**Presidential pitfalls.** President Biden’s job approval is split in a state he won by 10% less than a year ago - 49% approved and 48% disapproved. Among those that were unimpressed with the President’s performance, intensity was powerful, with 42% “strongly disapproving.” Women were more likely than their male counterparts to give poor marks to the President, with 50% disapproving and 47% approving, compared to 51% of men approving and 46% disapproving. Other groups more likely than most to disapprove of the President’s job were Republicans (92%), conservatives (83%), rural residents (62%), those who have some college or technical school education (54%), those employed (52%) and women under the age of 49 (52%).

Of the following issues, which TWO would you say are the most pressing in Virginia today, the ones you yourself are most concerned about?	
30%	Jobs and the economy
28%	COVID-19/Coronavirus/Vaccinations
22%	Healthcare (non-Covid)
18%	Education/Critical Race Theory
17%	Immigration and border security
13%	Climate change
13%	Inflation
11%	Taxes
11%	Gun laws/2 <sup>nd</sup> amendment
10%	Crime / Defund the police
9%	Abortion
8%	Election Integrity
6%	Afghanistan/National security

**Looking ahead to November.** Voters say they are highly enthusiastic (93% total) about voting this fall, with 68% “very enthusiastic.” On a generic ballot, respondents were divided on

preference in the upcoming elections, with 44% opting for Republican candidates, 43% Democrats, 6% both, and 5% unsure. This breakdown approximated their choice for governor.



**Governor’s Race is Up for Grabs.** Both Gubernatorial candidates have similar favorability ratings, while McAuliffe holds slightly higher unfavorables. Youngkin is undefined by 12%, and McAuliffe 9%, providing an opportunity for education. Those more likely than most to have not formed an opinion of Youngkin were also unsure in the generic ballot test (29%), not enthusiastic to vote (26%), from CD 04 (21%)

	<i>Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the person.</i>	
	<b>Glenn Youngkin</b>	<b>Terry McAuliffe</b>
Favorable	45%	48%
Unfavorable	39%	41%
Heard of/no opinion	12%	9%
Never heard of	4%	3%

If the general election for Virginia’s were today, would you vote for...		
Governor	Youngkin	42%
	McAuliffe	46%
	Hard undecided/DK	10%
Lieutenant Governor	Sears	24%
	Ayala	34%
	Hard undecided/DK	38%
Attorney General	Miyares	27%
	Herring	43%
	Hard undecided/DK	29%

moderates (19%), Blacks (16%), separated/widowed/divorced (16%) and live in CD 08 (16%).

If the general election was held today, McAuliffe edges out Youngkin by 4 points, with 10% of the vote still up for grabs. Moderates, African-Americans, and those with a college education lean toward McAuliffe. Those more likely than most to vote for Glenn Youngkin were Republicans (82%), conservatives (75%), rural residents (52%), and had some college education (48%).

Who are the “undecided voters”? They were more likely than most to be Independents, moderates (and urban dwellers). They are also more likely to say Virginia was on the wrong track, were more likely to vote Republican in a generic ballot and were more likely to disapprove of Biden’s job performance. Their most important issues are jobs and economy, non-COVID healthcare, COVID-19 and vaccinations, and inflation. Some 40% of undecided voters live in the

suburbs and 33% of undecided voters reside in rural areas. The Congressional Districts with the highest percent of undecided voters included CD-03 (14%), CD-08 (13%) and CD-09 (13%).

Down-ticket races show below-average advantages for Democrats, and with large numbers of undecided voters. For Lieutenant Governor, Ayala leads Sears 34%-24%, with “Mr. Undecided” faring better than both of them, at 38%. Similarly, incumbent Attorney General Mark Herring claims 43% of voter intentions, compared to 27% for Miyares, with 29% undecided. Herring’s current base of support mirrors his job approval and the generic ballot for Democrats and nothing more. Another 32% disapprove of Herring’s performance as AG, and 23% remain “unsure.”

**Critical Race Theory.** Notably, 71% consider themselves familiar with Critical Race Theory, or CRT, which has been in the news, and on the minds of parents storming school board meetings after more than a year of “screentime as schooltime”. Almost half of all voters *strongly oppose* CRT being taught in schools (49%), with nearly 6 in 10 voters opposing it overall (57%). This is more than twice the number that support CRT in the classroom (27%) Just 12% have no opinion. Those most likely to oppose CRT included Republicans (85%), conservatives (82%), rural residents (65%), women and those who have less than a college education (63%).

**Stop the Spending.** Voters across Virginia are clearly worried about economic issues. They ranked them as the top concern, and separately, took issue with the proposed \$3.5 trillion spending package proposed by the unpopular Biden and Harris, and Democrats in Congress. A majority (51%) oppose this bust-the-budget boondoggle that would increase the national debt in the midst of an inflation crisis. If passed, it would be among the largest non-emergency spending bills in our nation’s history. More voters *strongly opposed* (44%) President Biden’s \$3.5 trillion spending package than *total (somewhat or strongly) support* (41%). Those more likely than most to oppose the spending bill were Republicans (91%), conservatives (84%), rural residents (65%), women over 50 and those with some college or technical degree (56%). Overall, women were more likely than men to oppose the spending (54% compared to 47%).

**Drawing a line over the thin blue line.** An eye-popping 87% of likely voters across Virginia have a favorable opinion of the police, with more than half (58%) “strongly favorable” towards Virginia’s finest. As previously reported, security and safety were a key issue for these voters. It is therefore unsurprising that 72% say they would be less likely to support a candidate who was endorsed by groups who support the radical trope “defund the police” – and a full 60% are “much less likely”. Recently various local police leaders have vocally opposed McAuliffe for having defund the police ties, a charge for which he must be held to answer – or hed to account.

## METHODOLOGY

**The Presidential Coalition (TPC)** recently commissioned telephone survey of 700 likely voters in Virginia. This quantitative research was conducted between September 17-19, 2021 at a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) facility (60% landlines, 40% mobile phones). Sampling controls were used to ensure that a proportional and representative number of voters were interviewed from such demographic groups as age, gender, race, and geographic region. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.7\%$  at the 95% confidence interval for overall survey, M.O.E.s for subgroups are larger.