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To: Interested Parties

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Re: Raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations is a winning issue for Democrats

With Democrats facing a challenging political environment and President Biden's Build Back Better Agenda stalled in Congress, the party is hungry for issues to focus on that will help them win races in 2022 and improve their chances of keeping Congress. Fortunately for Democrats, there is an issue that is very popular, that provides a strong contrast with Republicans, and that both Presidents Biden and Obama used heavily in the past two winning Democratic presidential campaigns: making the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share of taxes.

It's time for Democrats to stop thinking of raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations as just a way to pay for things and instead use it as the winning issue that it is, just as Presidents Biden and Obama did in their campaigns. Democratic support for this issue is a boost to the party, while Republican opposition to it represents a major vulnerability for the GOP. As a result, it **provides Democrats with a strong contrast opportunity**: while Democrats are working to make the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share of taxes to reduce the burden of rising costs on working families and seniors through passage of the Build Back Better Act, Republicans are instead fighting to protect tax breaks for the ultra wealthy and big corporations. Below we lay out in more detail why tax fairness should be a key part of Democrats' messaging in 2022.

- **Raising taxes on the wealthy is more popular than virtually any other Democratic proposal.** [Over two-thirds of voters](#) support raising taxes on the wealthy, including 68% of Independents and 53% of Republicans. While this breadth of support is impressive, the strength of this support may be an even bigger selling point. As pollsters for President Biden's campaign (and since he's been in office), we tested over 40 different economic proposals, and none generated as much intense support for Biden – both overall and with swing voters – than making the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share of taxes. Even allowing Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug costs, another extremely popular proposal, did not generate quite as much enthusiasm. Our extensive **polling on the President's Build Back Better agenda** has shown a similar trend, with proposals to raise taxes on the ultra wealthy testing at the top of the agenda both in terms of popularity and in its importance to voters.

- **The tax fairness issue was a key part of Biden and Obama’s messaging in Democrats’ past two winning presidential campaigns.** Perhaps the strongest real-world evidence of the effectiveness of raising taxes on the wealthy as a campaign issue is that both Presidents Biden and Obama made it a core part of their closing arguments in their presidential campaigns. The most frequently run [ad by Biden’s presidential campaign](#) in the fall of 2020 was on his plan to raise taxes on those making over \$400,000 and close tax loopholes for big corporations. A big reason that it was the most run ad was because it outperformed every other ad in the campaign’s internal ad testing. It was also very effective in not only rebutting Republican claims that Biden would raise taxes on the middle class but also in helping to give Biden a critical advantage on which candidate was seen as more likely to help working families.

Biden’s successful use of the issue in 2020 was reminiscent of Barack Obama’s use of it in his 2012 campaign. As [Neera Tanden said after that election](#), “President Obama did something few campaigns have done: He campaigned on higher taxes for the wealthy. That issue was in every debate, it was in every stump speech and was in his closing argument.” In contrast to President Biden and Obama’s presidential campaigns, Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign did not make raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations a core part of its message.

- **Republican support for cutting taxes for the wealthy is a major vulnerability for the GOP.** Of all the potential negative messages our firm tested against Donald Trump over the course of his presidency and the 2020 campaign, none raised more concerns among *persuadable* voters than a message about how his tax plan overwhelmingly benefited the wealthiest 1% and increased the debt. Continued Republican support for this tax plan and their opposition to raising taxes on the wealthy is a major vulnerability for GOP candidates this cycle.
- **This issue creates a clear contrast on who each party is fighting for.** Another benefit of talking about raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations is that it is easy for voters to understand, particularly *persuadable* voters who are less likely to follow politics closely. As Americans are increasingly frustrated with rising costs, this issue gives Democrats an opportunity to demonstrate how they are the party focused on providing relief to working families and seniors (through the Build Back Better Act), while Republicans are continuing to prioritize protecting tax breaks for the wealthy and big corporations.

- **Two-thirds of voters believe raising taxes on the wealthiest and corporations will *help* the economy.** If Democrats are worried that calling for higher taxes on the wealthy and corporations will make them less trusted on the economy, they should not be. Voters overwhelmingly reject the claim that raising taxes on the wealthiest and big corporations will hurt our economy. In fact, [65% believe](#) raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations will *help* the economy, while only 24% think raising taxes on these groups will hurt it.
- **Messaging about the Build Back Better Act (BBBA) should highlight that it is paid for by raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations.** This legislation represents a historic initiative by the President not only for the scale of its investments to help working families and seniors but also because it is fully paid for, nearly all by raising taxes on the rich and corporations. Whether or not BBBA becomes law, it is still likely to be a major campaign issue this year, as Republicans will attack it as a \$2 trillion tax increase on the middle class. By highlighting how the BBBA will help lower costs for working families and seniors by raising taxes on the wealthy and big corporations – and that it doesn't raise taxes on anyone making under \$400,000 a year or increase the deficit – Democrats can effectively rebut these attacks and demonstrate that they are the party focused on helping working families and seniors.
- **Democrats should go on the offensive with their plans to raise taxes on those earning over \$400,000 and close corporate tax loopholes.** Given the broad and intense support for these proposals, Democrats should be highlighting them in their messaging, just as Presidents Biden and Obama did in the past two winning Democratic presidential campaigns. ***No matter what Democrats do, Republicans will always accuse them of trying to raise taxes on the middle class.*** But if Democrats tout their plans to make the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share of taxes, they can not only help inoculate themselves against these attacks but also help drive a clear contrast on who each party is fighting for.