

To: U.S. Justice Action Network
From: Brian Nienaber
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Re: Key findings from statewide surveys in Florida, North Carolina, Nevada, Kentucky, Missouri, and Wisconsin

Voter enthusiasm

- As seen below, likely voters in these states are already highly engaged. At least seven-in-ten voters in all of these states indicate that they are extremely likely to vote in November.

State	Extremely likely
Florida	71%
North Carolina	76%
Nevada	73%
Kentucky	71%
Missouri	71%
Wisconsin	78%

- This level of engagement is impressive and notable for this period in the election cycle. Many likely voters are attentive and open to persuasion on key issues, even at this early stage.

Generic Ballot

- As one would expect in these states with competitive U.S. Senate races, the generic ballot has significant variation across the states. Republicans hold notable advantages in Nevada, Kentucky, and Missouri while Democrats hold a notable advantage in Wisconsin. In Florida and North Carolina, the parties are at parity in terms of generic support.

State	GOP	Undecided	DEM
Florida	44%	15%	41%
North Carolina	42%	17%	41%
Nevada	45%	17%	39%
Kentucky	50%	16%	34%
Missouri	47%	14%	40%
Wisconsin	42%	12%	46%

Views on Direction of Country

- In contrast, there is strong consensus across all of these states that the country is on the wrong track. As seen below, there are at least a strong majority of voters in all of these states who think the country is on the wrong track.

State	Right Direction	Unsure	Wrong track
Florida	33%	9%	59%
North Carolina	25%	11%	63%
Nevada	31%	6%	62%
Kentucky	23%	8%	69%
Missouri	25%	8%	67%
Wisconsin	32%	8%	59%

- This dissatisfaction with the national status quo suggests that voters in these states will be open to considering making reforms to federal programs.

Statements on Criminal Justice Reform

- Voters are presented with four statements about criminal justice reform and asked if they agree or disagree with this statement. As seen below, there is broad consensus that the federal criminal justice system jails too many non-violent criminals and spends too much on jailing nonviolent offenders. In addition, there is consensus agrees that rehabilitation and finding employment for released prisoners should be goals of our criminal justice system.

Statement	Agree (FL)	Agree (NC)	Agree (NV)	Agree (KY)	Agree (MO)	Agree (WI)
Our federal prisons house too many non-violent criminals.	69%	66%	64%	62%	66%	61%
The federal government is spending too much tax money keeping nonviolent offenders behind bars.	74%	71%	70%	68%	67%	70%
The main goal of our criminal justice system should be rehabilitating criminals to become productive, law-abiding citizens.	79%	77%	71%	78%	73%	78%
The federal government should remove barriers that make it more difficult for released prisoners to find jobs.	63%	67%	62%	57%	61%	63%

- This consensus about the foibles of our criminal justice system and this consensus about the appropriate goals of this system demonstrate that voters will react positively to reforms that are presented as being designed to correct these flaws and to meet these goals.

Proposed Criminal Justice System Reforms

- Voters are read two proposed reforms to the federal criminal justice system – one on giving judges more discretion in sentencing and one on allowing sentencing changes to apply to all prisoners, even ones currently serving their time. As seen below, both of these reforms have majority support in every state tested.

Proposal	Favor (FL)	Favor (NC)	Favor (NV)	Favor (KY)	Favor (MO)	Favor (WI)
Changing the way that non-violent criminals are sentenced so judges can use their discretion to impose a range of sentences instead of having a one-size-fits-all mandatory minimum system.	80%	74%	72%	75%	73%	79%
Applying sentencing changes to <u>all</u> federal prisoners, even those who have already been sentenced, to see if a different punishment is now more appropriate.	66%	56%	57%	58%	59%	58%

- This favorable reaction to these reforms illustrates that voters will react positively to proposed criminal justice reforms that fix the problems that voters perceive.

Conclusions

In a political climate where voters hold strongly negative views about the direction of the country and where more than four-in-five voters have already retreated to a partisan corner in the U.S. Senate race in their state, finding the amount of consensus about both philosophy and policies on such a potentially controversial issue as criminal justice reform is remarkable. This is clearly one of the rare issues on which Congress both implement needed reforms and meet the expectations of a broad cross-section of their constituents.