

Coronavirus – impact on elections


An overview of the potential impact of the coronavirus on the 2020 presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial elections

June 1, 2020

Producer

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Roadmap

- 
- Overview: state of play and voting reforms
 - Presidential election
 - Congressional elections
 - Gubernatorial elections

The coronavirus outbreak has the potential to impact 2020 elections



Changes to the primary schedule

- States have postponed their presidential and congressional primary elections in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak
- Some states have also opted to make their primaries all-mail elections
- Although many states were able to easily decide to alter the dates, it is unlikely that the general election on Nov. 3rd will be postponed
- Since the general election is set by federal law, Congress would have to enact legislation to change the date



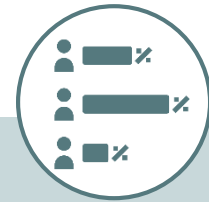
The digital campaign trail

- Campaigns have also had to suspend in-person rallies, fundraising events, and some organizing activities
- In lieu of gatherings, candidates have opted to engage voters digitally
- Joe Biden has launched a podcast and Sen. Bernie Sanders (VT) regularly posted live speeches and hosted virtual events through Facebook
- Congressional candidates will also have to turn to digital engagement as candidates self-quarantine and limit events



Voter turnout

- Before the coronavirus outbreak, the 2020 election was expected to have a high voter turnout compared to recent elections
- Turnout for Illinois' primary on March 17th was lower by about 25% than the 2016 primary and Illinois did not have extensive early voting or voting by mail measures
- Arizona's turnout for the March 17th election increased from 2016 and has extensive early voting and vote by mail measures



Incumbent performance

- The greater need for digital advertising due to lower in-person engagement is likely to favor incumbents and candidates with a financial advantage
- Incumbents at the federal, state, and local level are also likely to be judged on how they prepared and responded to the coronavirus crisis

State officials are beginning to consider expanding voting options for November in case COVID-19 still poses a threat

Existing alternatives to in-person Election Day voting

No-excuse absentee (mailed) ballot voting

- **29 states** and Washington, D.C allow any voter who requests an absentee ballot to vote via mail without offering an excuse
- 5 states have all-mail elections, meaning all registered voters are sent a ballot in the mail that they can use to vote; these states still maintain some in-person polling stations

Excuse-required absentee ballot voting

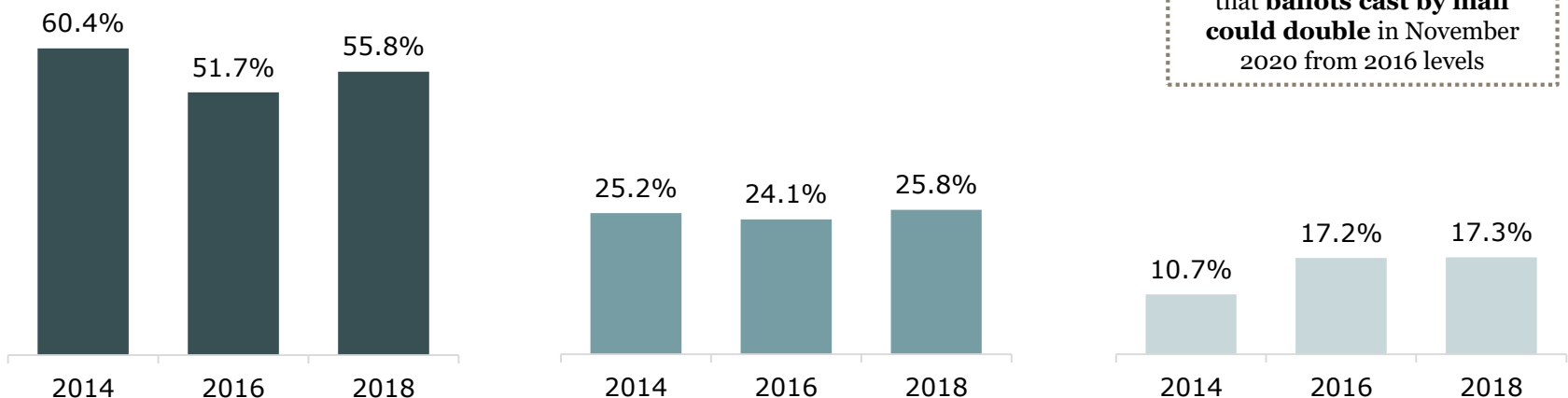
- **16 states** only award absentee ballots to voters who provide an excuse, which must be one of the specific excuses delineated by state law
- Excuses often include but are not limited to: being out of the county on Election Day, having an illness or disability, or being of an elderly age

Early in-person voting

- **40 states** and Washington, D.C. will offer an early in-person voting option for the 2020 elections
- State law dictates early voting details, (such as time, location, and duration)
- Length of early voting periods range from 4 to 45 days; the average length across states is 19 days

Percent voter turnout by voting method in past general elections

■ Election Day voting ■ Voting by mail ■ Early in-person voting



Experts in voter turnout predict that **ballots cast by mail could double** in November 2020 from 2016 levels

Sources: NCSL, Vox, The Atlantic.

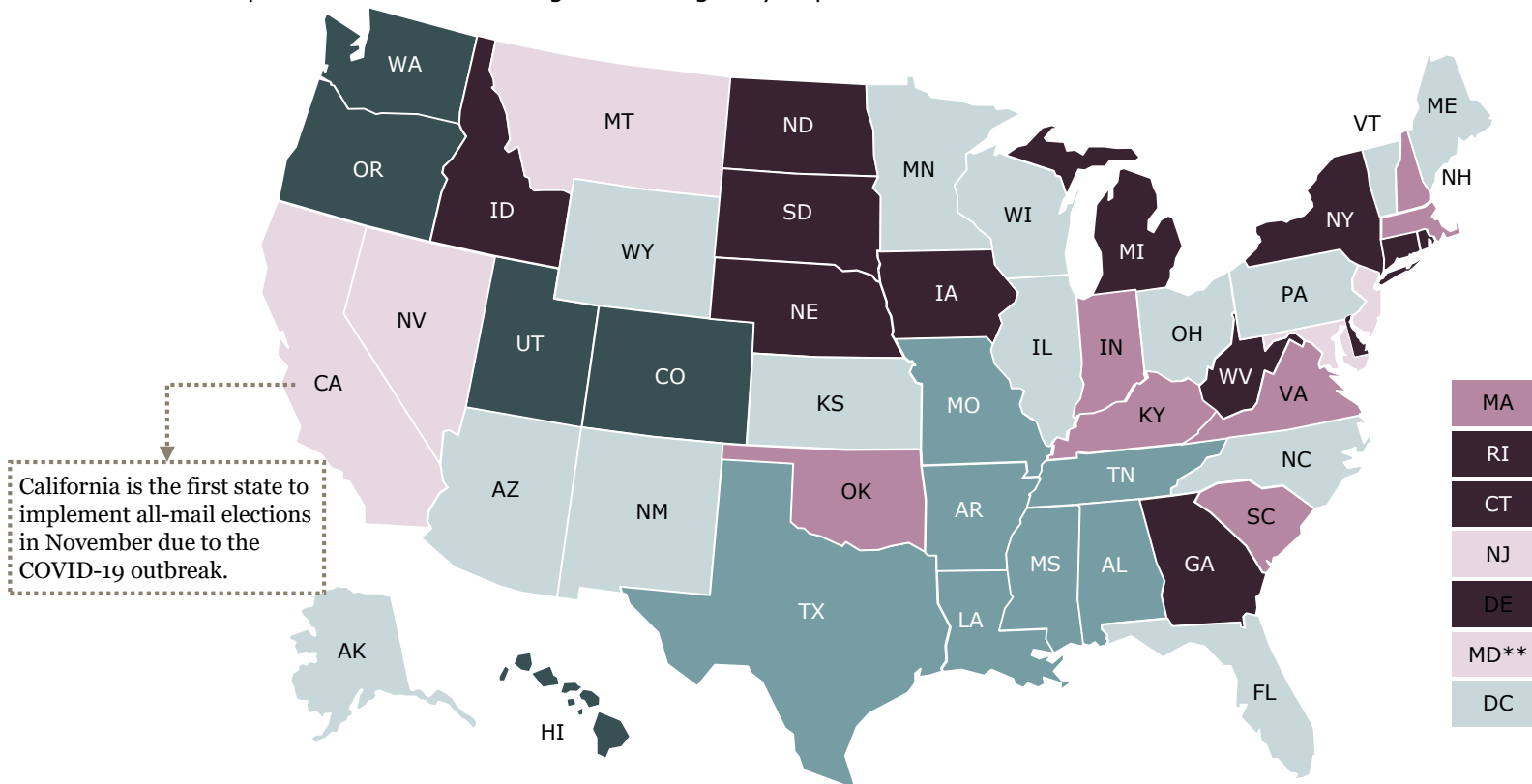
Slide last updated on: April 15, 2020

A number of states have expanded voting options for spring and summer elections due to COVID-19

Vote by mail rules for federal elections

AS OF JUNE 1, 2020

- All-mail elections
- No-excuse absentee voting
- Excuse required for absentee voting
- Automatic mail-in ballots due to COVID-19
- Automatic mail-in ballot applications due to COVID-19
- Eligibility expanded to allow voters to use absentee ballots due to COVID-19



Sources: NCSL; Axios; Ballotpedia.

** MD will hold mostly all-mail elections this spring/summer, but one voting center per county will be open

Slide last updated on: June 1, 2020

There are many policy options that could decrease crowding on Election Day

For states with excuse-required absentee ballots

- **Expanding the list of acceptable excuses** for receiving a mailed ballot in states that currently require an excuse
- **Implementing no-excuse absentee ballots**
- **Prepare for an increase** absentee ballots, regardless of expanding availability

For states with early voting

- **Increasing the length** of early in-person voting periods
- **Keeping early voting locations open** on Election Day
- **Expanding the dates** of early voting to include voting on the weekends and **expanding hours of operation**

For all states

- **Relaxing rules** associated with absentee ballot submission (e.g. requiring notarization)
- **Consolidating polling locations** to decrease the amount of poll workers needed
- **Expanding curbside voting**, whereby poll workers bring a ballot or ballot-marking device to the voter's car, which is sometimes used for voters with disabilities

Debate on elections reform

Opponents

- President Trump has argued that mailed ballots result in **increased voter fraud** and will ultimately **harm the Republican party**
- Other members of the GOP are more opposed to the **federal government dictating elections laws** and taking power away from the states, where they argue it belongs

vs.

Supporters

- Democrats and elections experts point out that using mailed ballots **does not cause voter fraud** and officials must ensure people are able to vote safely
- Despite comments by Trump, **the RNC has mailed voters** urging them to protect themselves and use mailed ballots, and **GOP governors** have begun increasing access to mailed ballots in their states

Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Ron Wyden introduced legislation in March to federally mandate expanding voting options

S.3529 — Natural Disaster and Emergency Ballot Act (NDEBA) of 2020

Introduced
3/18/20

Passed Senate

Passed House

To president

Signed into law

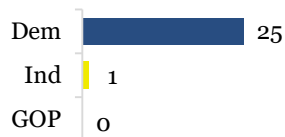


Sen. Amy Klobuchar
(D-MN)
Bill sponsor



Sen. Ron Wyden
(D-OR)
Bill sponsor

Co-sponsors: 26



Bill overview

- Ensures all states have at least a 20-day early in-person voting period and a no-excuse absentee vote-by-mail option
- Requires states to begin processing, but not counting, early votes 14 days before Election Day to avoid delays
- Guarantees the counting of all absentee ballots postmarked or signed before the close of polls on Election Day and received within ten days of Election Day
- Requires all voter registration applications submitted by mail or online at least 21 days prior to Election Day be deemed valid; states can choose a deadline closer to Election Day
- Requires states to provide downloadable and printable absentee ballots to voters who request but do not receive an absentee ballot by Election Day
- Requires a specific signature curing procedure for voters (in most states, signature verification is used to verify that an absentee ballot is sent by the intended voter)
- Authorizes necessary funds for reimbursing states for the costs of implementing the act
- Provides an additional \$3 million to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC)


Status in Congress

- **Senate:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration (3/18/20)

Sen. Warren's proposal

- Sen. Elizabeth Warren released her own proposal at the beginning of April
- Though she supports passage of the NDEBA, she believes Congress should go further and *require all states to mail every registered voter a ballot* with pre-paid postage and a self-sealing envelope

Roadmap

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2020 presidential primary schedule

AS OF JUNE 1, 2020

■ Primary for both parties ■ Democratic primary ■ Republican Primary

February

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March

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June

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August

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Conventions

Democratic National Convention: August 17-20

Republican National Convention: August 24-27

Feb. 3: IA
Feb. 11: NH
Feb. 22: NV (D)
Feb. 29: SC (D)

March 3 - Super Tuesday:
 AL, American Samoa (D), AR, CA, CO,
 MA, ME, MN, NC, OK, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA
 (D), Dems Abroad (D)
March 10: ID, MI, MS, MO, ND, WA
March 12: Virgin Islands (R)

March 14: Guam (R), Northern Mariana (D), WY (R)
March 15: Northern Mariana (R)
March 17: AZ (D), FL, IL
March 18: American Samoa (R)

States that have cancelled the Republican primary or caucus:
 AK, AZ, HI, KS, NV, SC, VA

April 7: WI
April 10: AK (D) *by mail*
April 17: WY (D) *by mail*
April 28: OH

May 2: KS (D)
May 9: WY (R)
May 12: NE
May 19: OR
May 22: HI (D) *by mail*

June 2: DC, **IN**, MT, **MD**, NM, **PA**, **RI**, SD
June 6: Virgin Islands (D)
June 7: Puerto Rico (R)
June 9: GA, WV
June 23: KY, NY*

July 7: DE, NJ
July 11: LA
July 12: Puerto Rico (D)
Aug. 11: CT

Italics and bolding indicates a postponed primary due to the coronavirus pandemic. June 9th is the DNC deadline for having primaries. If a state's primary is past the deadline it could face a penalty in the form losing delegates.

Sources: 270 to Win, The New York Times

*New York cancelled its presidential primary, but a federal judge ordered the state to move forward with the primary in June. State officials plan to appeal the decision.

The Democratic National Convention was postponed until August



Changes to the primary calendar

- States have postponed their presidential primary elections in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak
- Four states (LA, NY, KY) have primaries slated after the June 9th DNC deadline
- If a state does not complete its primary by the DNC deadline, current rules penalize the state by halving their number of national delegates
- A DNC official stated that states may be able to submit a waiver to dismiss the penalties
- In a March 17th statement, DNC chair Tom Perez encouraged states to implement all-mail voting and provide ballots to voters in lieu of postponing state primaries



Primary & debates

- The most recent Democratic debate between Sen. Bernie Sanders (VT) and Former Vice President Joe Biden that took place on March 15th was moved from California in order to reduce cross country travel
- The debate had no live audience and neither candidate had a press filing center or spin room following the debate
- The DNC had previously indicated that there would be a debate in April prior to the New York primary on April 28th but has not announced a date, media partner, or site host
- The first general election debate is currently scheduled for Sept. 29th in Notre Dame, IN



Democratic National Convention

- The 2020 Democratic National Convention was originally planned for July 13-16 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- In late March, planners for the Democratic National Convention stated they were looking into contingency options amid the coronavirus outbreak
- The Democratic National Convention is postponed to August 17-20 and will still take place in Milwaukee
- As of April 2nd, no announcements have been made regarding committee format

Lessons learned from primary contests held during the outbreak



Illinois

- Voter turnout in the Illinois primary was **roughly 25% less** than it was in 2016
- Voters experienced **significant Election Day confusion** due to last minute changes to polling locations and poll workers failing to show up
- Illinois is a state that **does not make extensive use of early voting or vote by mail**



Florida

- Voter turnout in the Florida primary was **greater than it was in 2016**, which many elections officials attribute to **heavy investment in early-voting systems** and strongly encouraging voters to **use early voting and vote-by-mail**
- Compared to 2016, **140,000 more Democrats voted by mail** and nearly 75,000 more voted early



Wisconsin

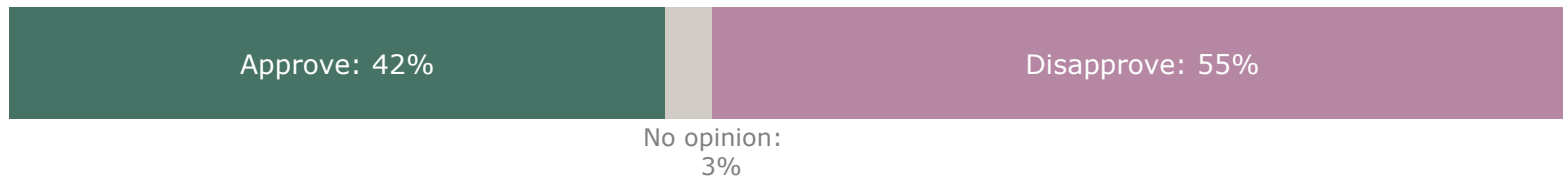
- Gov. Tony Evers (D) attempted to **either conduct their Apr. 7 elections by mail or delay in-person voting to June 9**, but **both attempts were blocked** by the either the Republican-controlled state legislature and the Wisconsin Supreme Court
- Citizens filed suit and won a one-week **extension for returning their mailed ballots via a federal court order**, giving them until Apr. 13
- However, **the Supreme Court overturned the ruling** the day before the election, meaning voters who had not received absentee ballots by Election Day would have to vote in person
- In the end, **voter turnout** in the election **decreased** by roughly 10% compared to 2016 levels
- **Over one million absentee votes were cast**, compared to 145,000 in the 2016 general election, and absentee ballots comprised roughly 80% of all votes cast

Americans generally distrust the information from President Trump about coronavirus

CNN Poll via telephone by SSRS

AMONG 1,112 ADULTS, MAY 7-10, 2020

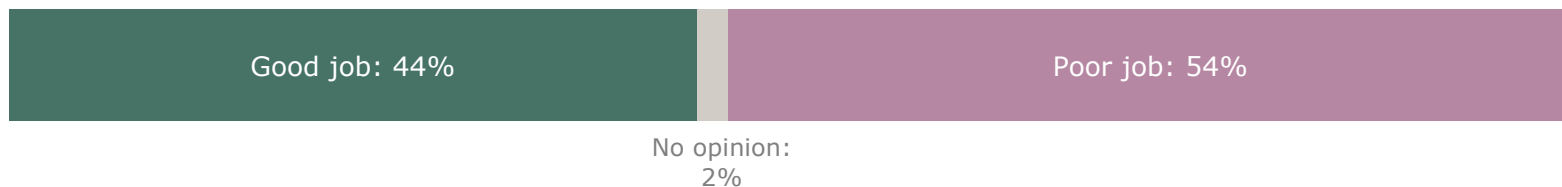
Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Trump is handling the coronavirus outbreak?



Do you generally trust or do not trust the information you get about the coronavirus outbreak from Trump?



Do you think the federal government has done a good or poor job of preventing the spread of coronavirus?



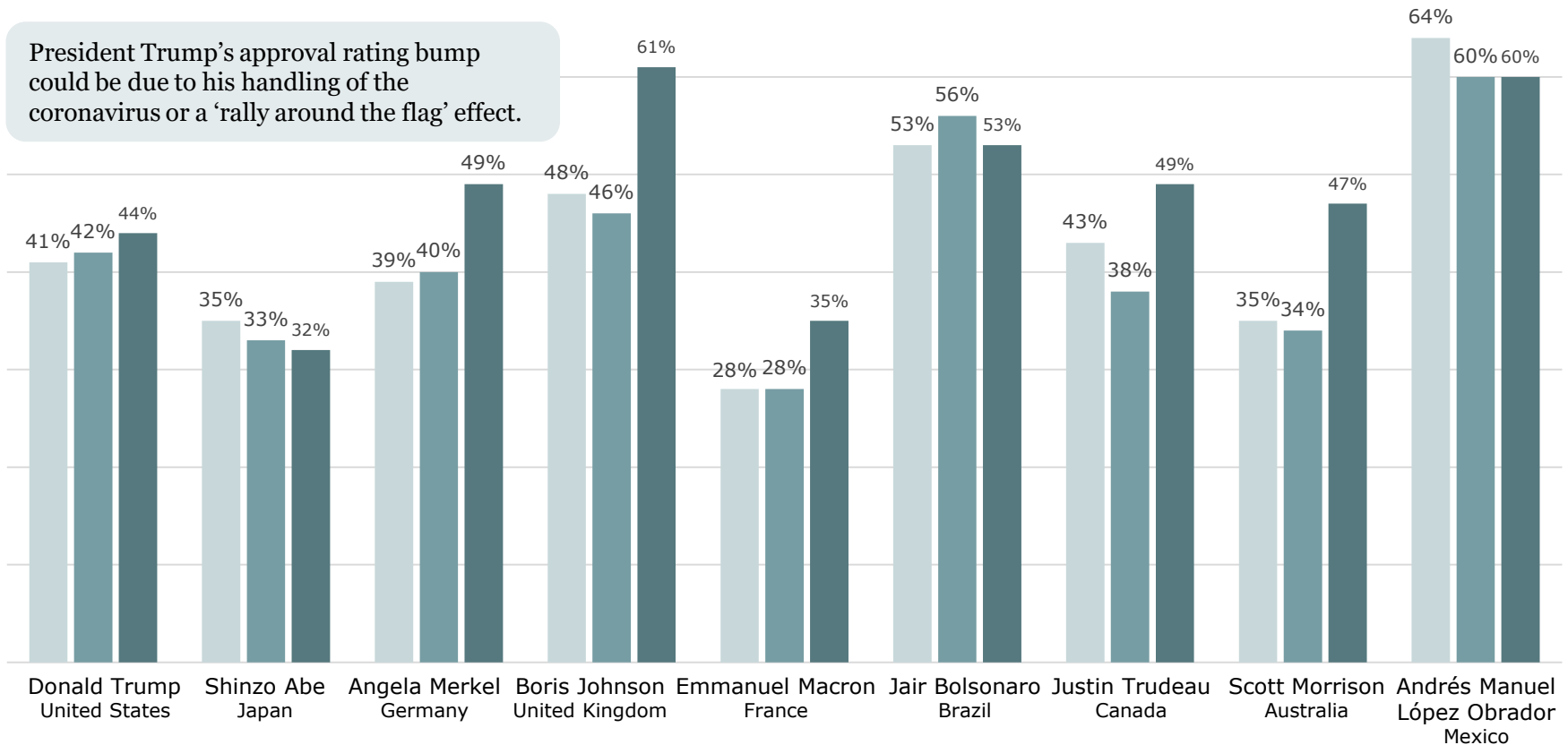
Leader approval ratings have shifted due to coronavirus response

Global approval ratings

MORNING CONSULT, AMONG ALL ADULTS

January 1, 2020 March 11, 2020 March 24, 2020

President Trump's approval rating bump could be due to his handling of the coronavirus or a 'rally around the flag' effect.



Sources: Morning Consult, FiveThirtyEight.


A potential recession due to the coronavirus could affect President Trumps re-election bid

Year	Recession in 2 years before election?	President	Reelection?
1912	YES	Taft	NO
1916	NO	Wilson	YES
1924	YES	Coolidge	YES
1932	YES	Hoover	NO
1936	NO	FDR	YES
1940	NO	FDR	YES
1944	NO	FDR	YES
1948	NO	Truman	YES
1956	NO	Eisenhower	YES
1964	NO	Johnson	YES
1972	NO	Nixon	YES
1976	YES	Ford	NO
1980	YES	Carter	NO
1984	NO	Reagan	YES
1992	YES	H.W. Bush	NO
1996	NO	Clinton	YES
2004	NO	W. Bush	YES
2012	NO	Obama	YES

6 presidents since 1912 have faced a recession within 2 years before their reelection bid

5 of those **6** presidents **lost reelection**

Roadmap

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Most states will hold their congressional primary in June or August

2020 congressional primary schedule

March

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
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May

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June

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July

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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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August

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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

March 3: AL, AR, CA, TX, NC
March 10: MS
March 17: IL

April 28: OH

May 12: NE
May 19: OR

June 2: DC, IA, ***ID, IN, MD***, MT, NJ, NM, ***PA***, SD
June 7: Puerto Rico
June 9: ***GA***, NV, ND, SC, ***WV***
June 23: NY, ***KY, VA***
June 30: CO, OK, UT

July 7: ***NJ***
July 14: ***ME***

Aug. 1: Virgin Islands
Aug. 4: AZ, KS, MI, MO, WA
Aug. 6: TN
Aug. 8: HI
Aug. 11: CT, MN, VT, WI
Aug. 18: AK, FL, WY
Aug. 29: Guam

Sept. 1: MA
Sept. 8: NH, RI
Sept. 15: DE

Nov. 3: LA

Italics and bolding indicates a postponed primary due to the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus outbreak is likely to impact congressional fundraising and races



Competitive races in the house

- The coronavirus outbreak has also caused states to delay spring primary and runoff dates, put the recruitment process for the House on hold, and limited fundraising
- This significantly benefits incumbents and puts recent entrants at a disadvantage
- Since the Democrats are on 'defense' in the House this cycle, they hold an advantage as a party
- The Cook Political Report recently shifted four Democratic races from Toss Up to Lean Democratic



Corporate PACs

- PACs may have difficulty delivering on checks pledged to campaigns at in-person fundraisers
- Many Corporate PACs still rely on delivering checks (which may require more than one signature); this may prove difficult as more and more workers shift to remote work



Party fundraising

- Committees for both parties have had to emphasize online fundraising after cancelling events
- The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee's executive director commented that the decision to cancel events "will cost us money...A large chunk of our fundraising will dry up"



COVID-19 relief efforts

- Some candidates are encouraging donations for coronavirus relief efforts
- ActBlue, the Democratic fundraising platform has received more than \$5 million in donations focused on coronavirus relief
- Sen. Martha McSally (R-AZ), whose race is rated as a Toss Up, has suspended her fundraising and pledged to donate her paycheck to COVID-19 aid

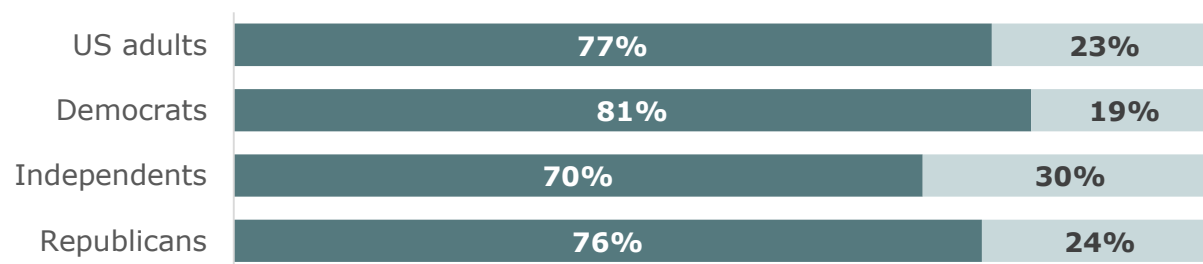
Sources: Cook Political Report, New York Times, Roll Call, KTAR News.

Most Americans support the recent coronavirus response from Congress

Poll: Do you approve or disapprove of the legislation Congress passed and President Trump signed into law on Friday authorizing \$2 trillion in spending to address the economic effects of the coronavirus situation in this country?

AS OF MARCH 30, 2020, GALLUP

■ Approve ■ Disapprove

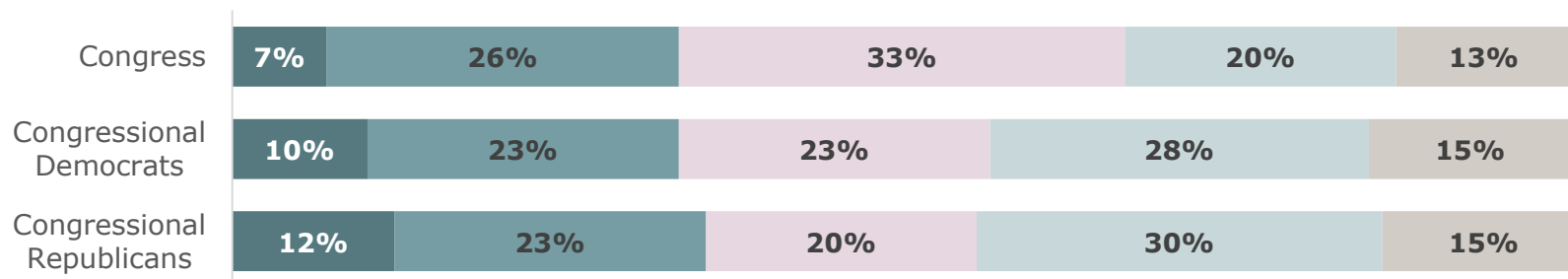


Congress has worked to pass three separate pieces of legislation as part of the national coronavirus response, aimed at helping individuals, the economy, and businesses. Voter's opinion on Congress' response could impact election outcomes.

Poll: How would you rate each of the following on their handling of the coronavirus?


POLITICO/MORNING CONSULT, APRIL 3-5, 2020

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Just fair ■ Poor ■ Don't know/No opinion



Sources: Morning Consult/Politico, Gallup.

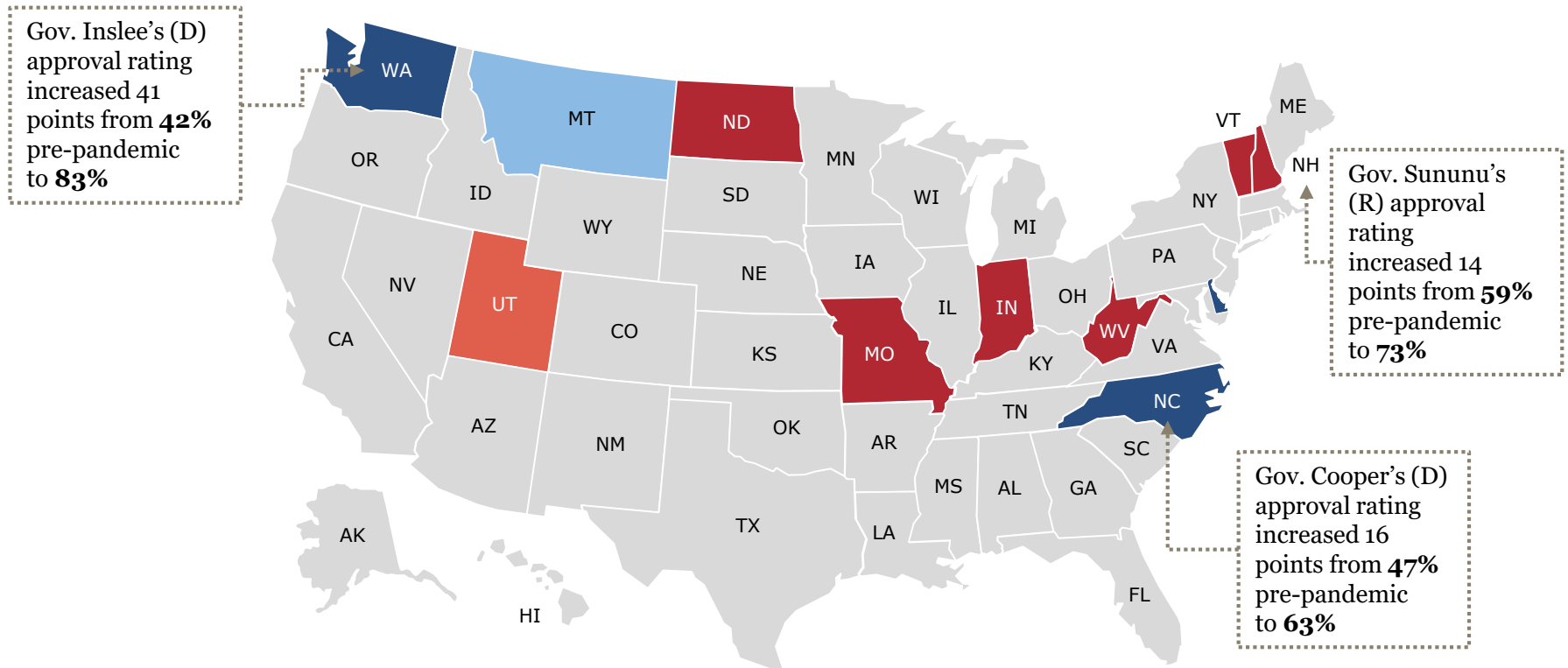
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There are 11 seats up for election in 2020

2020 gubernatorial races by incumbent and status

- Dem. incumbent (3)
- Dem. open* (1)
- GOP incumbent (6)
- GOP open* (1)

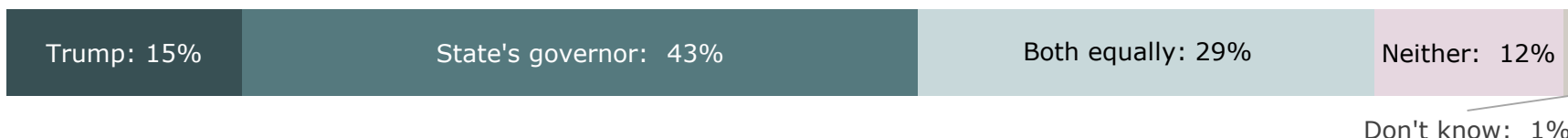


*"Open seats" are governorships where incumbent governors are term-limited, they have announced that they are not running for re-election, or lost their primary
 COVID-19 polling is not yet available for all states
 Sources: Cook Political Report, FiveThirtyEight.

Most Americans are more likely to trust their states' governor over President Trump

Poll: Who do you trust more when it comes to providing information about the coronavirus outbreak – President Trump or your state's governor, or do you trust both equally?

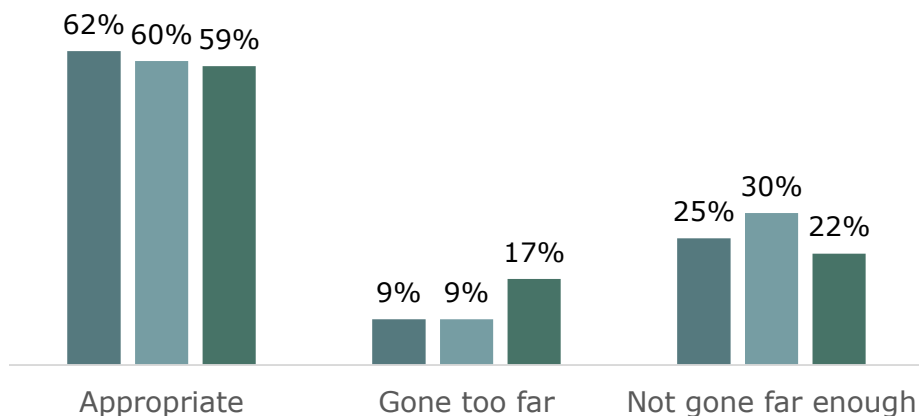
MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY, APRIL 3-7, 2020



Poll: Have the measures taken by your state government to slow the spread of the virus been appropriate, have they gone too far, or have they not gone far enough?

MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY, APRIL 3-7, 2020

■ March 2020 ■ April 2020 ■ May 2020



- Governors have been at the forefront of the coronavirus response by taking state-level actions to limit the spread of the coronavirus outbreak and communicating with their constituents.
- In addition to media attention, the public's approval of their governors has increased.
- According to the May Monmouth poll, **73% of Americans approve of the way their governor is handling the coronavirus outbreak** while only **42% approve of President Trump's handling of the coronavirus outbreak.**