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People Who Were Pushed Down Push Back Post-Election Survey and Election Result Analysis

To: Interested Parties

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In the country's first electoral judgment of the Trump administration, victories for pro-equality Democrats Tuesday night at the congressional level revealed an American electorate pushing back against an Administration bent on dividing people and attacking vulnerable populations. By flipping at least 23 seats in the House, the country ended the conservative monopoly on our federal government.

A post-election survey commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign explores some of the reasons why Democrats succeeded in taking the House.¹ The survey shows a significant number of voters who voted Democratic did so expressly to stand up for "immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ people and others targeted by Trump and the Republicans."

The survey demonstrates an outsized role played by Equality Voters—a group of voters modeled to support LGBTQ issues and instrumental in HRC's activity this election cycle—in this victory. An 83 percent majority of these voters supported Democratic candidates. Moreover, voters also support the Equality Act by an impressive margin and oppose Donald Trump's recent plans to exclude transgender people from civil rights protections.

¹ This memorandum reflects a survey of 1,000 2018 voters, including an oversample in the congressional battleground. The margin of error is +/- 3.10. As is always the case in early post-election research, these data are subject to further weighting based on additional election results and updated voter lists. A list of the battleground districts for this survey can be found in the appendix.

Key Findings

- **Voters delivered a verdict on Trump.** However he may spin this election on Twitter, a 54 majority of voters disapprove of the President’s performance in office (just 43 percent favorable). This criticism jumps to 84 percent disapprove among Equality Voters.
- **Equality issues played a significant and direct role in the new Democratic majority.** Obviously, Democratic messaging this cycle was dominated by the health care issue and that issue’s impact cannot be overstated. But in this survey, and in pre-election qualitative research by HRC, we found that voters recognize in Trump a significant threat to the values of the country. Trump and Republican messaging at the end of the campaign likely amplified this fear. Among Democratic who voted mostly FOR a candidate (rather than against his or her opponent), the leading reason for their support is, “they stand up for immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ people and others targeted by Trump and the Republicans.”

Figure 1: Best reason to vote for Democratic candidate – Democratic Voters

	Total
They stand up for immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ people and others targeted by Trump and the Republicans.	48
Their support for expanding and lowering the cost of health care.	42
Their support for gun violence prevention and common sense gun laws.	41
Their support for protecting Social Security and Medicare.	35
Their support for abortion and women's issues.	24
Their opposition to Donald Trump.	22
Their support for increasing economic opportunity for working people and the middle class.	21
Their refusal to accept campaign contributions by special interests and big money donors.	18

Equality issues also played a big role in voters who mostly voted “against” the Republican candidate.

Figure 2: Best reason to vote against Republican candidate – Democratic Voters

	Total
Republican and Trump attacks on immigrants, people of color and LGBTQ people.	38
Their opposition to a woman's right to choose, women's issues and their support for Brett Kavanaugh.	36
Their support for a health care law that increases costs, made the elderly pay more and gutted protections for pre-existing conditions.	35
Their support for a huge tax cut for the wealthy that threatens Social Security and Medicare.	34
Their support for Donald Trump.	29
Trump's rhetoric leading to right-wing violence	25
Their position on guns and opposition to common sense gun laws.	19
Their acceptance of huge campaign contributions from special interests and big money donors.	14

- **Equality voters and LGBTQ voters, among others, led this victory.** As is the case in any campaign, a number of different groups made a huge difference in this victory. The Democratic margin among women, for example, nearly doubled in network exit surveys from 2016 to 2018. But Equality voters delivered an 83 percent to 16 percent margin for Democrats in this election.

In both this and national exit surveys, self-ascribed LGBTQ voters made up around 6 or 7 percent of the 2018 electorate. In national exit surveys, 81 percent of LGBTQ voters supported Democrats. Among major demographic groups, only African Americans voted at higher levels.

- **Voters reject Trump's anti-LGBTQ agenda.** By an impressive 2:1 margin, voters oppose Trump's plans to define gender entirely by birth gender and thereby remove civil rights protections for transgender people (60 percent oppose, just 31 percent favor; 85 percent oppose among Equality voters). Even groups who supported Republicans last night oppose this proposal: 55 percent oppose among seniors, 60 percent oppose among non-college voters.

Similarly, voters support the Equality Act by a 65 to 25 percent margin.

Equality Act:

As you may know, there is no federal law explicitly protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination, and 31 states still lack fully-inclusive non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people. There is a proposed Federal Law called the Equality Act. The Equality Act would make it illegal to deny services to LGBTQ people and would ban discrimination in employment and housing. Do you favor or oppose this law?

- **Equality issues are part of the new agenda.** With the conservative monopoly on federal governance ended, 2018 voters have reset the national agenda. The progressive “to do” list is long, but equality issues constitute a significant part of the new program.

Figure 3: Issues voters want to hear more about

Highest Issue/Top Two or Three	Total
Reducing the influence of big money and special interests in politics.	41
Policies that provide civil rights protections for all people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.	34
Protect and improve the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare.	32
Providing career training for kids who do not go to college.	31
Policies that provide Medicare for All, which would cover everybody, paid for by higher taxes.	27
Lowering taxes further.	27
Building a wall on our southern border to keep out illegal immigrants.	26
Providing paid sick leave to workers.	26
Increasing spending on the military.	25

Conclusion

Yesterday, Donald Trump and the Republicans learned the lesson most bullies learn eventually. You cannot push people down without someone pushing back. Equality issues and equality voters played a major role in this come-uppance.

Appendix

The battleground for this survey included the following districts. Of these, Republicans held 62 of 69 seats before the election, and Democrats held 7 of 69 seats. Today, Republicans hold or are leading in 35 of 69 seats and Democrats hold or are leading in 34 of 69 seats.

State	District
Republican Districts	AZ-02, CA-10, CA-21, CA-25, CA-39, CA-45, CA-48, CA-49, FL-16, FL-18, FL-27, GA-06, GA-07, IA-01, IA-03, IL-06, IL-12, IL-13, IL-14, KS-02, KS-03, KY-06, ME-02, MI-07, MI-08, MI-11, MN-02, MN-03, MN-08, NC-09, NC-13, NE-02, NJ-03, NJ-07, NJ-11, NM-02, NY-01, NY-11, NY-19, NY-22, OH-01, OH-12, OH-14, OH-15, PA-01, PA-06, PA-07, PA-10, PA-16, TX-02, TX-07, TX-23, TX-31, TX-32, UT-04, VA-07, VA-10, WA-03, WA-05, WA-08, WI-01, WI-06
Democratic Districts	AZ-01, AZ-09, MN-01, NH-01, NV-03, PA-17