

Signal

What Precision's 50 State Network of political strategists and practitioners see heading into the midterms and beyond

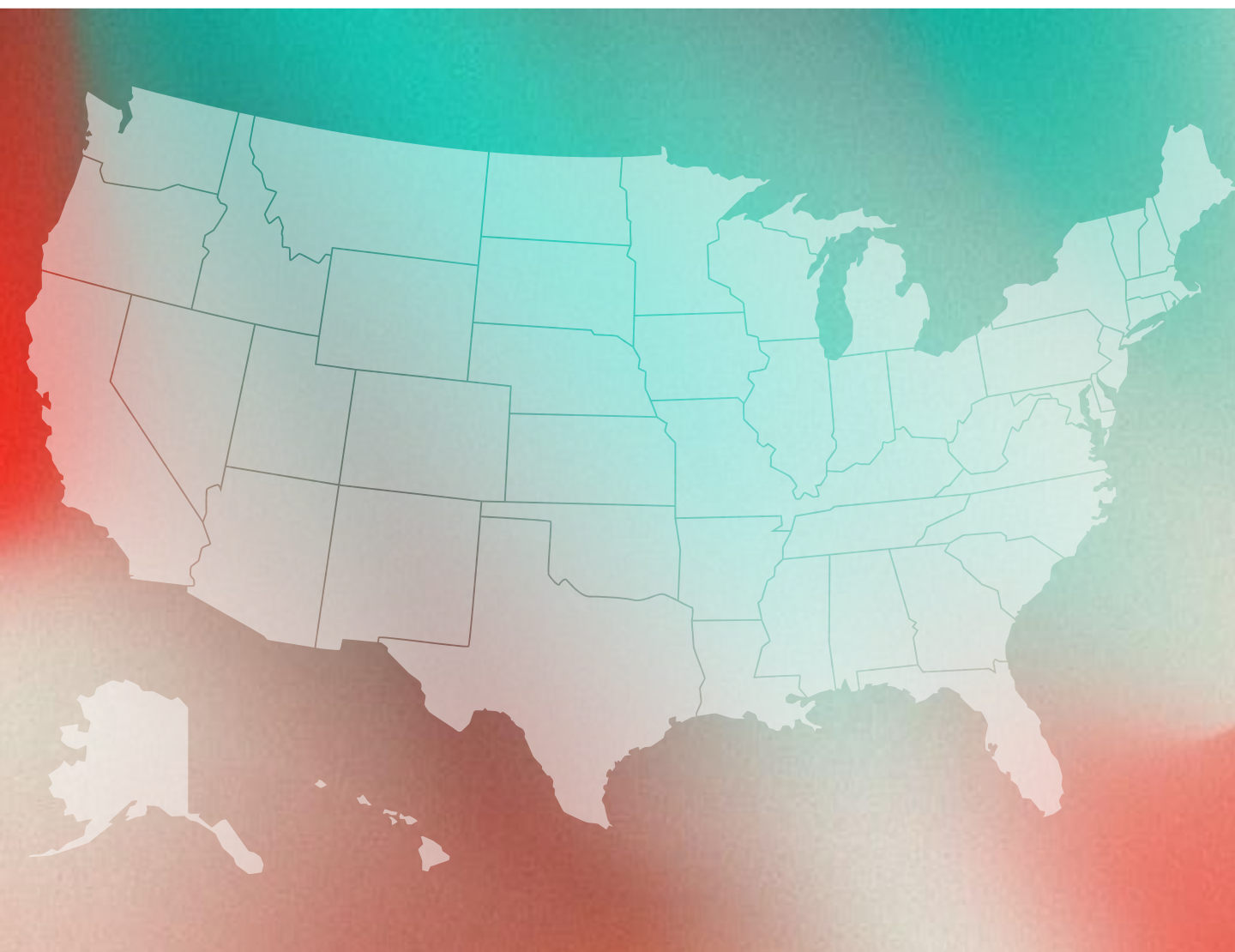
PRECISION STRATEGIES

The 50 State Network · October 2026



Introducing Signal

Signal leverages Precision's 50 State Network – more than 300 political strategists and practitioners deeply networked across all 50 statehouses – to gather insights and help our clients understand the issues and opinions that are driving policy outcomes in Washington and in state houses nationwide.



Signal surveys our proprietary network of former elected officials, campaign and official staff, party leadership, community leaders and other highly connected individuals who are deeply in tune with the political and policy landscapes of their respective states.

Signal's value comes from its breadth and the deep expertise of its participants: it captures how seasoned political veterans operating across vastly different political landscapes are reading the issues. Because of that, the results are best read as a snapshot, not a state-by-state partisan comparison or statistically significant quantitative poll.

In our inaugural survey this fall, we asked high level bipartisan party insiders in all 50 states about the issues that will be dominating in voting booths in November, as well as the halls of power in Washington and in statehouses across the country post-election.

Methodology

Respondents were contacted directly by Precision’s field network manager with a link to complete the survey. Every respondent works in politics or public affairs in the state they are answering about. The sample includes:

- **Overall.** All 50 states are accounted for in this research.
- **By party.** 38 Democrats, 41 Republicans, 11 independents or other.
- **By role.** 36% communications and public affairs, 32% lobbying and government affairs, 23% political and campaign consultants, with the remainder in advocacy, nonprofits and elected office.

Fieldwork was conducted from September 17 – October 7, 2026. Outside data is used sparingly, visually separated and sourced on the page where it appears.

How to read this report

A poll of a representative sample of voters can tell you what the country thinks. Signal tells you something different: what the people who read a state’s politics for a living are seeing on the ground.

- **What political strategists and practitioners perceive, not what voters think.** Every finding describes what our proprietary network of experts sees happening in their states. None of it is a measurement of public opinion.
 - **No margin of error, no significance testing.** Neither applies to a sample built this way, so we report neither. Differences are described as large or small, never as statistically significant.
 - **Open ends are coded and counted.** Respondents wrote in their own words on a number of questions, which Precision captured and included directly throughout the report. These answers were also coded into themes and reported as counts rather than percentages. Obvious typos in quoted material are silently corrected; nothing else is changed.
 - **A deliberate sample, not a probability sample.** These are people Precision knows and works with. They were selected for their vantage point, not drawn at random.
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Executive summary

Political strategists and practitioners in both parties describe a national environment running hard against Republicans — and a state-level executive and legislative map they expect to remain fairly unchanged.

Both of those are true at once, and holding them together is a central finding of this research. Nearly two-thirds of respondents name Democrats as having the momentum in their state, including a majority of Republicans. The same people expect roughly three-quarters of state legislative chambers to stay exactly where they are.

- **Democratic momentum is broad, and Republicans are the ones describing it.** 56% of Republicans give Democrats the edge in their own state, against 22% who claim it for their own party.
- **Republican political strategists and practitioners describe their own coalition fraying.** Asked which voters might move, they named groups drifting away from their party nearly half of the time: independents and soft Republicans, women, men under 35, Hispanic voters, the suburbs.
- **Where Republicans expect to hold, the argument is structural.** All 19 political strategists and practitioners who named a Republican advantage sit in states Trump carried in 2024. Sixteen cite registration margins, supermajorities and statewide office-holding. None cites a favorable national environment.
- **Affordability decides the election, but may not drive the session.** 56% name the economy and affordability the single biggest factor in their state's electoral outcome, four times the next answer. Yet only 30% expect their legislature to prioritize it in the next session.
- **Data centers are what political strategists and practitioners expect to consume the next session.** Nearly all respondents call state policy action likely, and 49% name it as the likeliest area of bipartisan movement — seven times the next policy area.
- **Thanks to highly visible enforcement efforts, immigration no longer has one national read.** Political strategists and practitioners in Trump-won states say it benefits Republicans 62% to 13%. In Harris-won states they reverse it, 57% to 20%.

For anyone planning state-level work in 2027, the practical consequence is that the national environment and the state legislative environment are moving at different speeds — and a plan built on one will misread the other.

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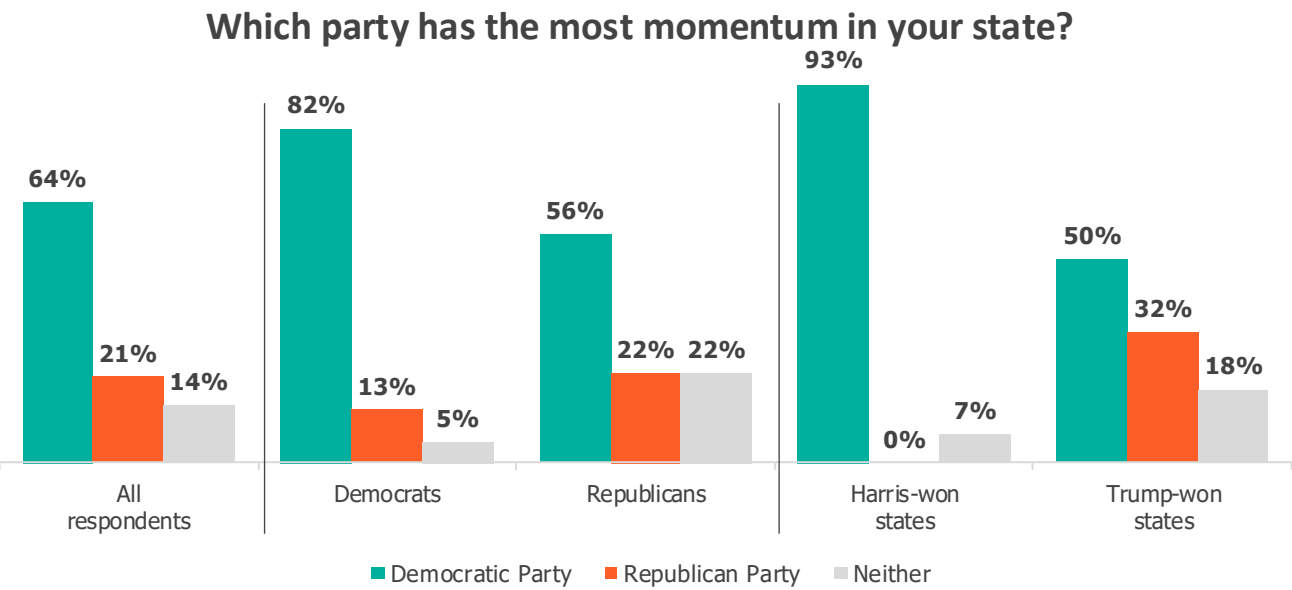
National mood heading into the midterms

What this network sees in the environment, in
the map, and in the electorate underneath both.



Democratic momentum stretches to the far corners of the country

Most Republican respondents give Democrats the edge in their own state — and attribute that momentum to high prices and an unpopular President rather than what Democrats have done.



30 of 60

political strategists and practitioners in Trump-won states name Democratic momentum.

Democratic momentum is not confined only to Blue states. Half of political strategists and practitioners in Trump-won states describe it in their own state, as do 19 of the 21 in the current battleground states — and a majority of Republicans do nationwide.

What they credit is just as notable. Asked why Democrats have the momentum in their states, political strategists and practitioners from both parties name prices and presidential approval. These professionals see the coming election as a referendum on the party in power rather than an endorsement of Democrats or Democratic policies.

“Macros are in Dem favor: economy, war, Trump, trade, costs.”

– New Hampshire Republican

“Gas prices, affordability, Iran conflict... Do I need to keep going?”

– Florida Republican

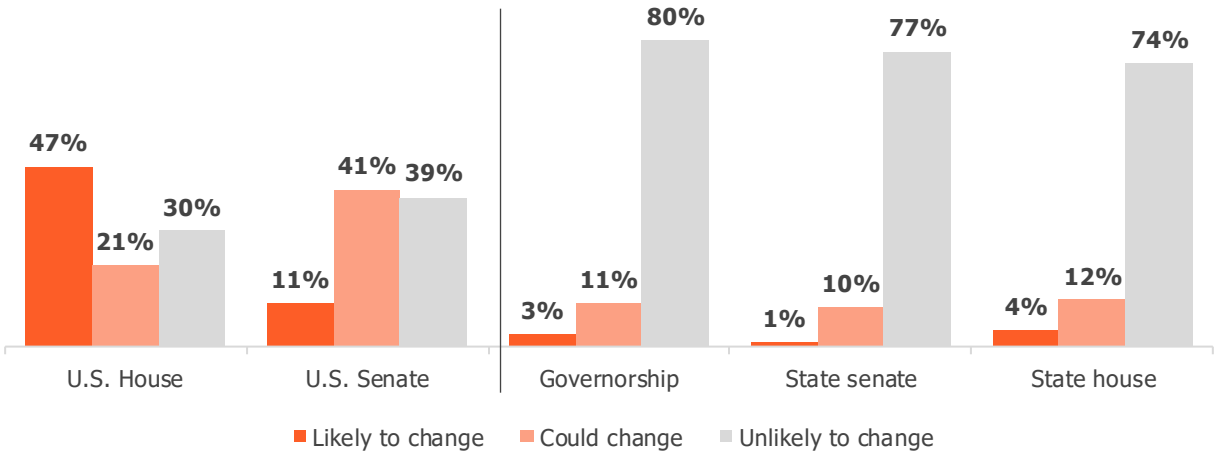
“The Republican President is highly unpopular and the current economic environment is ripe for Democrats to dominate at the ballot box. The #1 issue is cost of living.”

– Georgia Republican

Political strategists and practitioners expect Washington to change hands, not their own states

The clearest expectation of change anywhere in the survey sits in the U.S. House. Three-quarters of state chambers are expected to stay exactly where they are.

Expected to change party control this November



NOTE: Governorship figures include races not on the ballot in 2026 (14 total states), which is part of why the expectation of stability is so high.

47%

expect the U.S. House to change hands.

77%

expect their state senate not to.

A wave and a firewall, described by the same people. Respondents see national control as genuinely in play and their own states' as more settled. The Senate sits between the two — live but not necessarily moving, with 41% calling it a ‘could’ rather than a ‘likely.’

Whatever happens in Washington, the 2027 state policy landscape is expected to look substantially like 2026’s in most states. As was the case in 2018, the expected blue wave is likely not enough to create substantial change in control in state governments.

“RI has been a blue state for decades. **There are no credible Republicans to challenge the D institution.** Here, it’s a battle between moderate and radical D’s.”

– Rhode Island Republican

“It’s North Dakota — **it will take an act of God to elect a Democrat in this state.**”

– North Dakota Independent

“Enthusiasm gap, inflation, gas prices, Trump approval in the mid 30s, **map expanding in Dem direction for US House and US Senate.**”

– Texas Republican

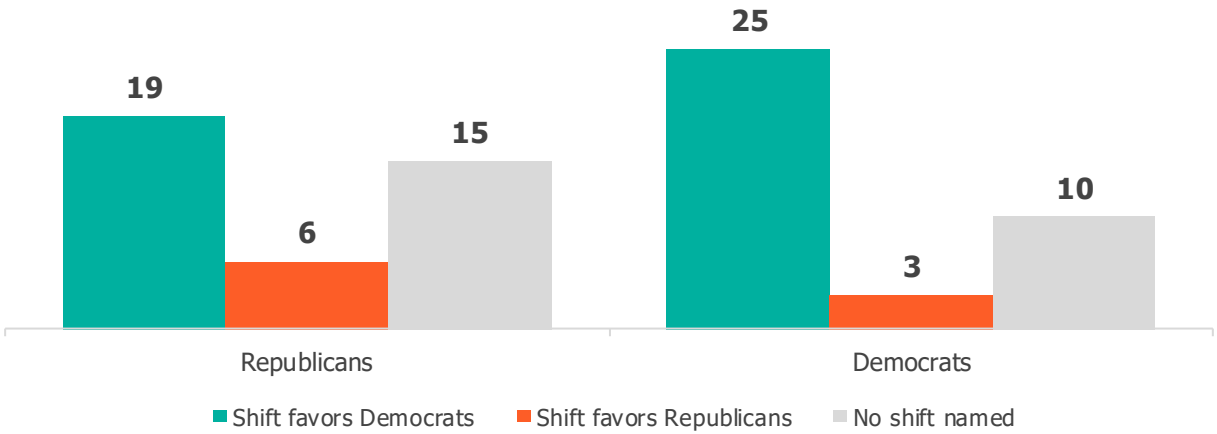
“Marsha Blackburn will win the Governorship ... We have a supermajority in the GOP in both our state house and state senate, 5-0 GOP state supreme court and a conservative attorney general.”

– Tennessee Republican

Republicans describe their coalition fraying

Asked which voters might move, Republican political strategists and practitioners named groups drifting away from their party more than three times as often as groups moving toward it.

Direction of the shift each respondent volunteered



Open-end responses, coded by Precision and reported as counts.

This question provides insight into how vibes are shifting among subgroups on political strategists and practitioners’ own turf. The groups Republicans named were specific and consistent: independents and soft Republicans, women, men under 35, Hispanic voters, and suburbanites.

Unlike the broad headwinds moving against Republicans, the counter-currents are driven by state-specific dynamics: Black voters moving toward Republicans in Michigan, new-resident growth reinforcing Republican areas in South Carolina, independents leaning Republican in Minnesota.

Turnout, meanwhile, is driven by a distaste of the other party. 47% of Democrats say sentiment toward Trump will drive their own party’s turnout, while 41% of Republicans name the other party’s extremism. Affordability is the only driver both parties name at a similar rate.

“Women will vote further to the left and toward Democrats. **Republican women will stay home.** Rs could lose the western congressional seat as a result.”
– Montana Republican

“Hispanics moving away from Trump threatens recent South Texas gains and statewide slate margin.”
– Texas Republican

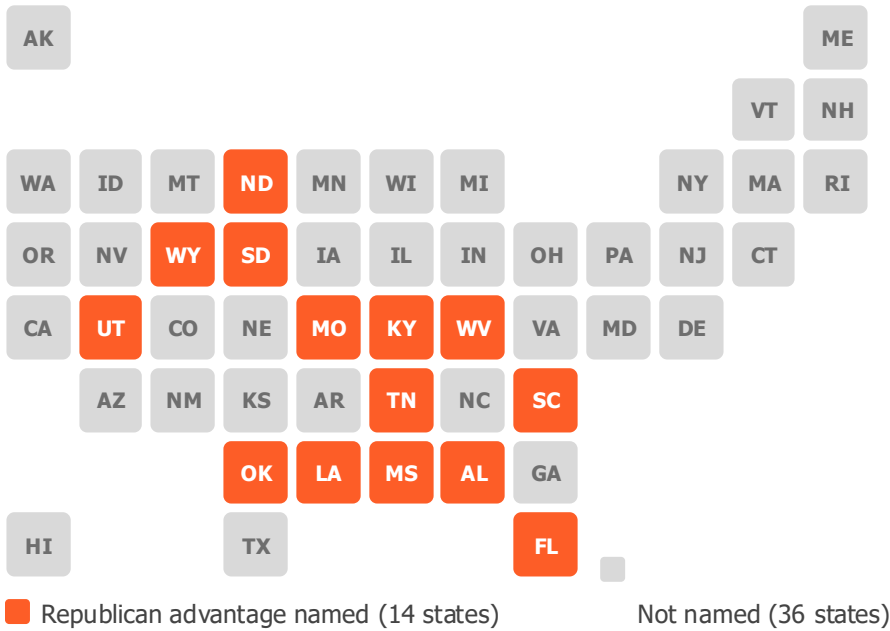
“Independents and soft Repubs are breaking against Repubs.”
– Florida Republican

“In the general election, I would expect to see many in the agriculture community to turn against the Republican candidates. And also there will be an interesting issue of LDS women supporting the abortion ballot measure.”
– Idaho Democrat

A 'Blue Wave' is seen as unlikely to flood GOP high ground

Every political strategist and practitioner who named a Republican advantage sits in a state Trump carried in 2024 — and argues from a structural perspective, not from the national environment.

States where at least one respondent named a Republican advantage



19 of 19

respondents naming a Republican advantage are in states Trump carried in 2024.

They are not disputing the headwinds. They are arguing their state absorbs it. Sixteen of the nineteen cite structural facts — registration margins, legislative supermajorities, statewide office-holding. Seven cite thin Democratic infrastructure. **No one argues the environment favors Republicans. The argument is about whether a given state’s fundamentals are strong enough to hold against it.**

“R’s will gain a congressional seat due exclusively to redistricting... Also, the LA Democratic Party is lost and fangless.”

– Louisiana Independent

“SC Republicans continue to benefit from a strong structural advantage... SC Democrats face organizational and funding challenges.”

– South Carolina Republican

“The state Democratic party does not have the resources or infrastructure to do year-round work necessary to elect Democrats at scale.”

– Oklahoma Democrat

02

The issues

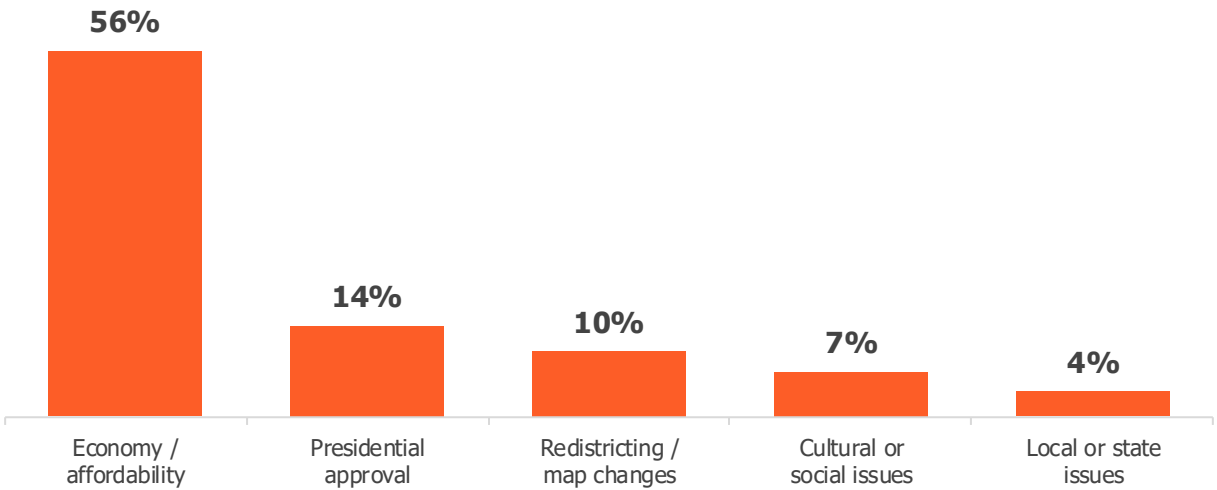
Affordability, data centers, immigration
— and two national fights the states
do not expect to have.



Affordability is the driver of this election

Political strategists and practitioners name it the single biggest factor shaping their state’s outcome by a four-to-one margin — and national polling puts voters in the same place.

Single biggest factor driving the electoral outcome in your state



Political strategists and practitioners and voters are reading this the same way. Public polling has consistently put cost of living at the top of what voters want to hear about. This network puts it at the top of what will decide the election.

Underneath it, the specific pressure differs by geography. Gas and transportation lead overall at 32%, then groceries at 22% and housing at 21%. But housing is the top concern for 33% of respondents in Harris-won states against 15% in Trump-won states — the same issue carrying very different weight depending on where you are.

“Most of the local door knocking has reported that affordability is the biggest issue, so the president’s disconnect on that is significant.”

– Connecticut Democrat

“Money in voters’ pockets. Most people feel poor right now — working very hard for dollars that do not go very far.”

– Utah Democrat

“Trump is focused on Iran and having his name on buildings in Washington. Voters are thinking about cost of living increasing and their income is not keeping up.”

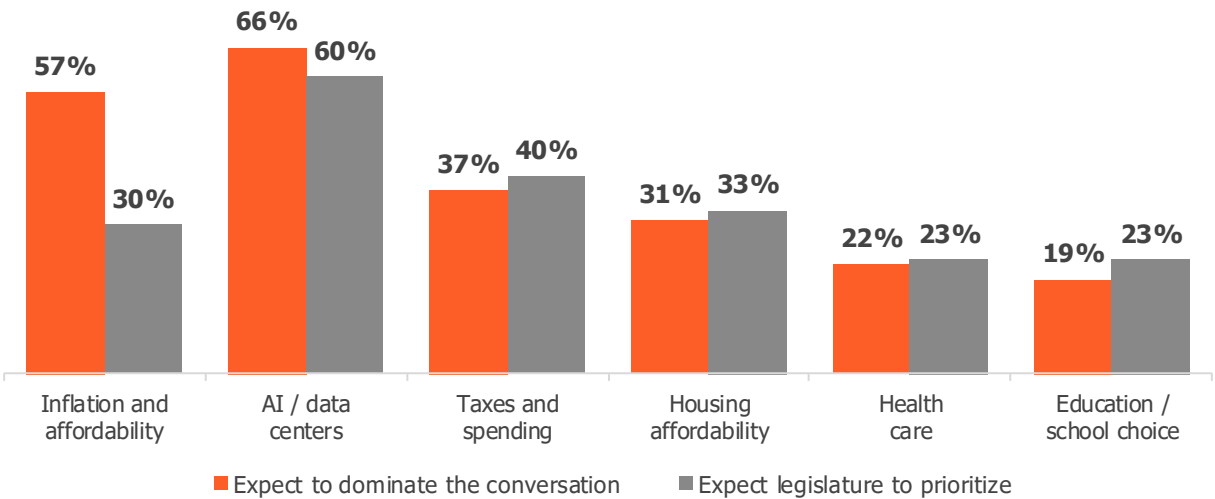
– Mississippi Republican

Outside context — Pew Research Center, American Trends Panel, July 6–12, 2026 (n=2,779 registered voters). Open-ended: the one issue voters most want to hear congressional candidates discuss. Economic issues were the most common answer at 29% net, with cost of living and affordability at 15%, ahead of government ethics (9%) and immigration (7%).

...but not necessarily the focal point of the next session

Affordability is the one issue where what respondents expect to be discussed and what they expect to be acted on come apart.

Expected to dominate the conversation vs. land on the legislative agenda



27 points

the affordability gap — the largest in the survey on this measure.

≤ 6 points

the gap on every other issue tested.

This is a capacity gap, not a priorities gap. Political strategists and practitioners are saying state government has few levers that move the price of groceries, fuel or rent, so the session agenda migrates to what a chamber can actually pass.

Asked directly what blocks legislative progress, they name budget constraints first at 24%, then partisan gridlock at 21% and a simple lack of political will at 17%.

Who is exposed. Agriculture is named the most threatened industry at 48%, tourism and hospitality following at 38%.

Asked what less salient issues are coming through in their states, respondents named a wide variety of hyper-specific policy issues - from fire mitigation and water storage in Colorado to an energy company’s monopoly in Delaware. One that permeated across states was state budget shortfalls.

“The gap is finding policy solutions that actually make a difference on the ground in the commonwealth.”

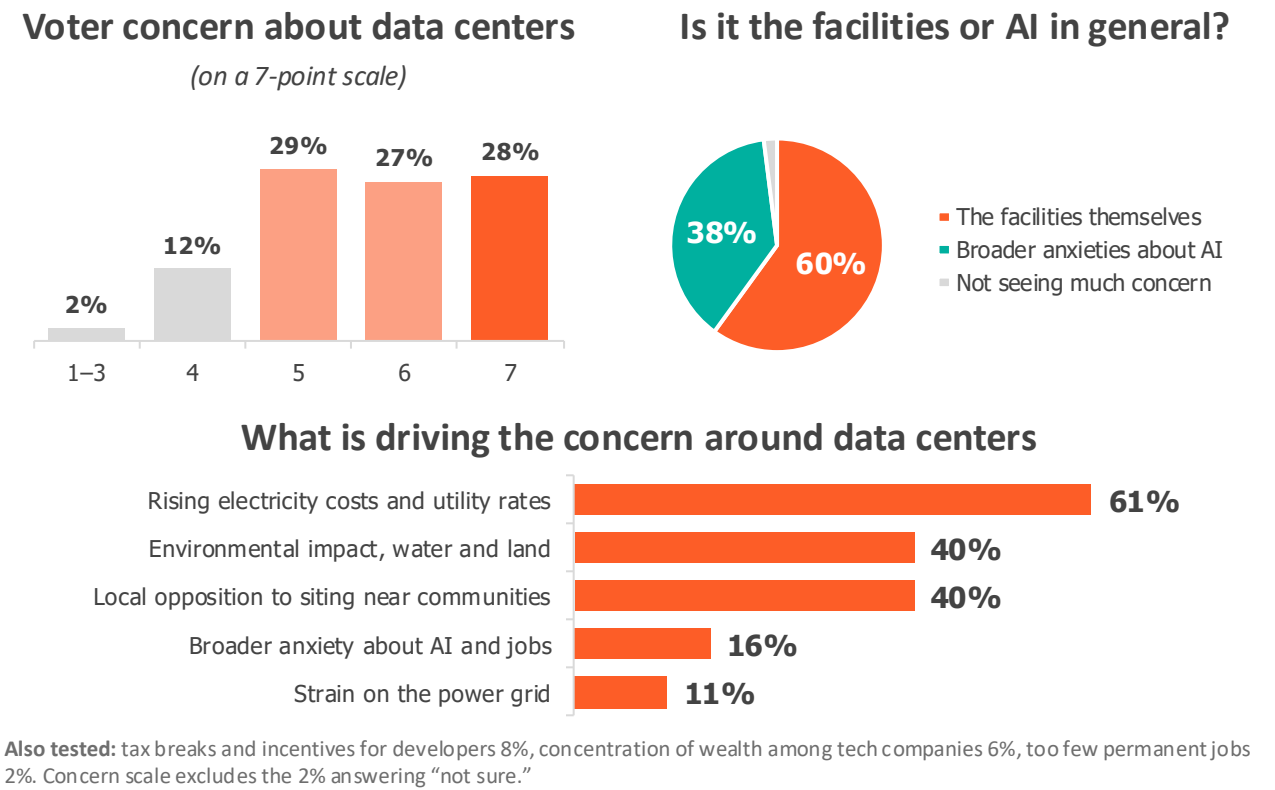
– Kentucky Republican

“State budget gutting of all of our revenue is going to lead to some painful cuts that have been staved off for too long and are no longer sustainable.”

– Nebraska Democrat

Political strategists and practitioners say voter concern about data centers is high

Four in five respondents say voters are concerned about data centers — and what they are worried about is the facilities themselves, not just AI in the abstract. Electricity and utility rates lead the drivers at 61%, well ahead of environmental impact and siting at 40% each. Broader AI anxiety sits near the bottom at 16%.



“People don’t understand the technology, but they’re pretty sure they’re getting screwed somehow. **Other people get rich and they get higher utility bills.**”

– Kansas Republican

“They are dropping \$55 billion in rural northeast Louisiana. Meta just gave \$40,000 teacher bonuses, which is a big deal here — in some places that might be an annual salary.”

– Louisiana Republican

Only two arguments in favor are landing. Asked what persuades voters and leaders in their state, respondents name new tax revenue (27%) and economic growth and jobs (23%). Nothing else reaches 15%.

According to some political strategists and practitioners, **there is still plenty of work to be done to move voters.**

“I don’t believe the benefits have been properly explained to voters”

– Virginia Republican

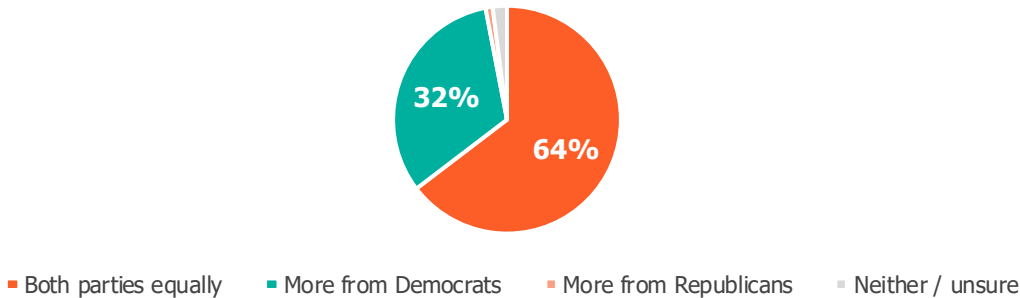
“Proponents have failed to assuage those anxieties and convince residents of the benefits and clear up the untrue accusations.”

– Michigan Republican

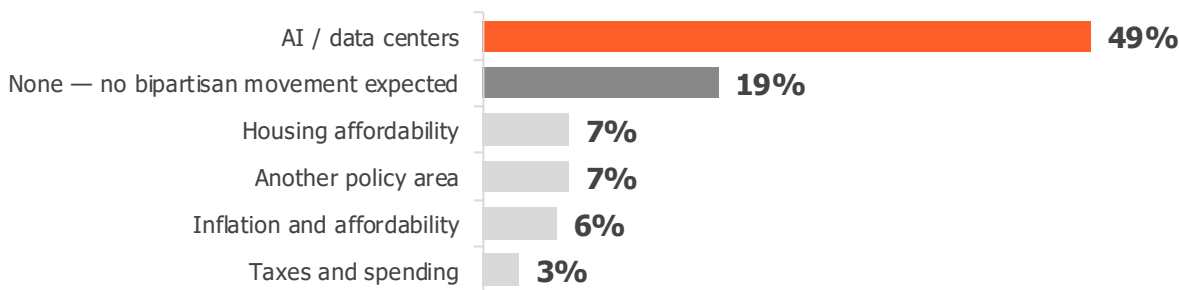
AI and data centers are seen as one of the rare bipartisan issues

Two-thirds say the concerns on these issues are coming from Democrats and Republicans equally.

Where is the concern coming from?



Most likely area of bipartisan movement next session



Also tested: crime and public safety 3%, education 2%, health care 2%, energy and climate 1%, immigration 1%.

Half of this network names the same issue — seven times as many as name the next one. What makes that mean something is the runner-up: 19% expect their legislature to find no bipartisan common ground on anything at all next session. Against that backdrop, convergence on a single issue stands out.

However, this agreement has not made this issue harmonious. Asked to describe the politics in their own words, 22 respondents reached for intensity — "toxic," "explosive," "heated," "a live wire."

And it is already being weaponized in both directions, with respondents in both parties describing opponents trying to pin data centers on the other side.

"In our recent primary elections, **data centers were a negative in both parties.** In the St. Charles County Executive Republican primary — the largest Republican county in the state — all three Republicans said they were opposed."

— Missouri Democrat

"In a state where Republicans and Democrats at every level cannot get on the same page about anything, **they seem to be on the same page about data centers.** That's made it tough sledding for hyper scalers and data center builders."

— Florida Independent

"**The debate doesn't really carry a partisan label here.** It really is a rural versus urban issue."

— South Carolina Democrat

Nearly everyone expects their legislature to act on data centers

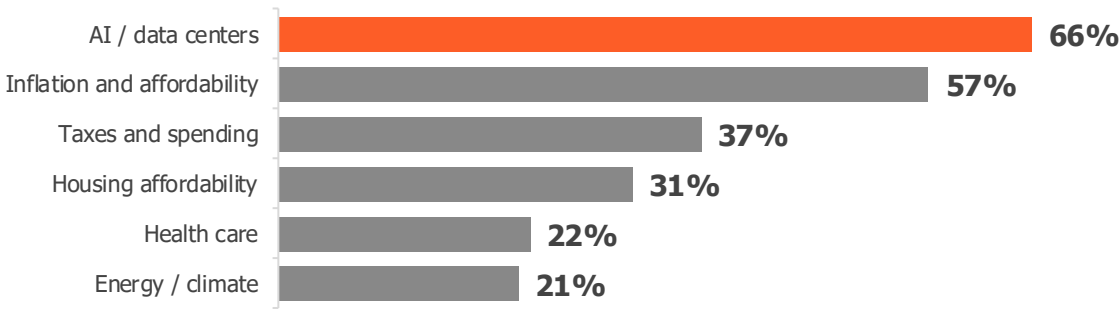
94%

call significant state policy action likely next session.

60%

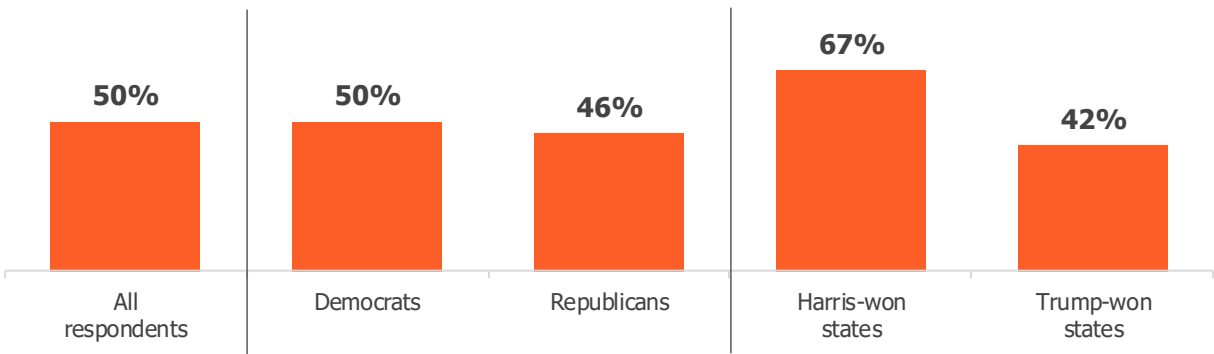
expect their own legislature to prioritize it.

Issues expected to dominate the state conversation



Also tested, below 20%: education and school choice 19%, crime and public safety 11%, immigration 7%, another issue 7%, tariffs 4%, abortion 2%, elections administration 2%, vaccine policy 1%.

Expect state action to primarily restrict or more tightly regulate



The question for 2027 is not whether a state acts. It is which posture it takes. Half expect action that primarily restricts or more tightly regulates; 42% expect a mix of restriction and encouragement. Almost nobody expects a straightforwardly welcoming policy.

And the posture is set by the state, not the party. Four points separate Democratic and Republican respondents. Twenty-five points separate respondents in Harris-won states from those in Trump-won states.

“It has shifted from how to attract them to concerns about utility costs, land use, who pays for infrastructure, and water. Restrictions were considered in 2026 and will come back in 2027.”

– Idaho Democrat

“We are pro-data center and have a ratepayer protection pledge. We can expect pro-data center policy but some restrictions on where to build them.”

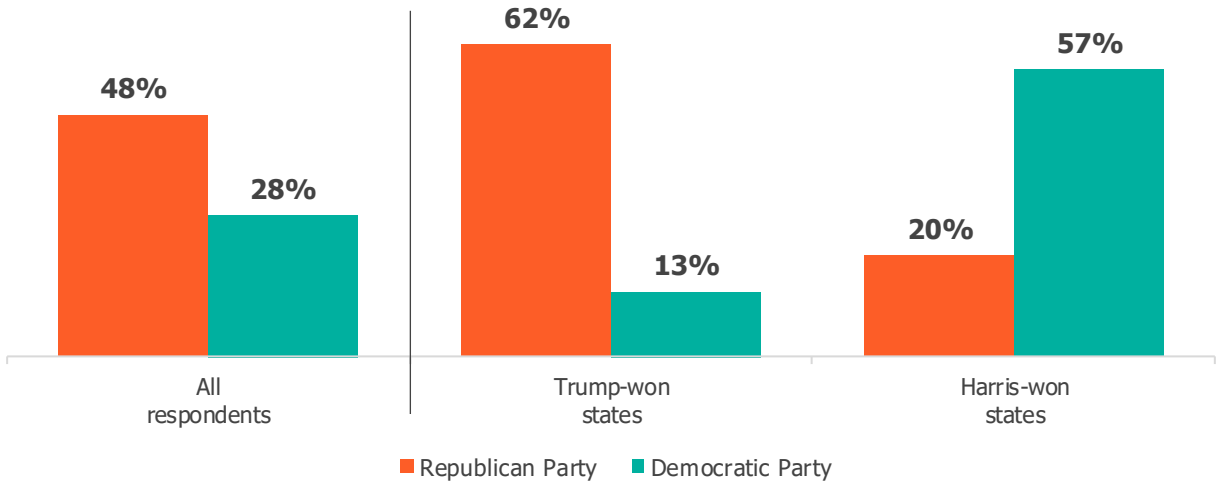
– Tennessee Republican

“I expect a Democratic trifecta to come at data centers hard: community benefit agreements, zero-cost transfers, if not even stricter requirements.”

– Michigan Democrat

Immigration benefits Republicans in red states and Democrats in blue states

Which party does the immigration issue benefit more in your state?



The party with the edge in a given state is most likely to benefit from the immigration issue.

The impact of increased enforcement visibility across states and the concerns around ICE’s tactics have allowed leaders in Democratic-leaning states to flip this issue on its head, turning it into a net positive for the party.

“It has galvanized Democrats to support Democrats and distrust Republicans even more.”
– Maryland Republican

ICE raids and workforce disruptions are having the biggest impact. This includes Republicans in states Trump carried.

“Getting control of the border is one of the things Trump did well — that has helped him in Mississippi. But the ICE brutality is hurting him and Rs. And Rs own that.”
– Mississippi Republican

“Operation Midway Blitz absolutely tore apart Chicago and surrounding communities. No one will forget it.”
– Illinois Democrat

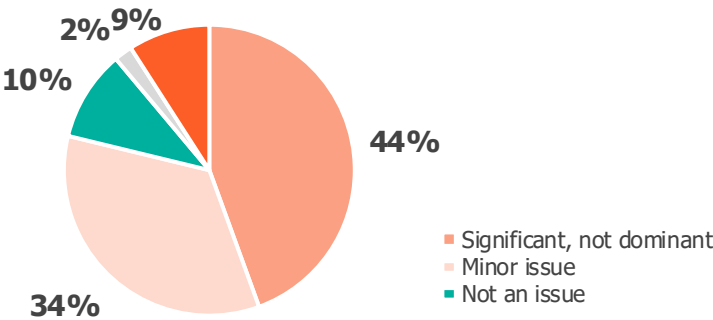
“[The most significant impact is to] agriculture and hospitality employers being able to access workers.”
– Florida Republican

“Florida is diverse and complicated when it comes to just about every issue, including immigration. It's safe to say that immigration enforcement was a driver of votes and turnout FOR the President in 2024. But, the actual practice of aggressive immigration enforcement seems to have turned off at least some Hispanics who voted for Trump two years ago.”
– Florida Independent

Few expect election security to dominate — but a majority expect it to matter

Just 9% expect it to be a dominant issue in their state. Another 44% expect it to be significant — and most of them are describing a fight that starts in Washington.

Expected prominence of election security after November



For most, this is trickle-down from Washington. Of the 48 respondents who expect the issue to matter, 24 point to national dynamics as the reason — the President, the administration, a contested national result — rather than anything happening in their own state.

“It will be an issue nationally, but in Tennessee we already have the most secure elections in the country. Not much to be done at the state level — but we will push it nationally.”

– Tennessee Republican

“Leadership takes their marching orders from the governor and Trump administration. If the Republican nominee for governor wins, they will follow national leadership on election security.”

– Iowa Democrat

“If you are talking about our system in state — it won’t be an issue. Nationwide — significant, because Trump will be a baby about it.”

– Vermont Democrat

Something concrete being on the ballot makes the issue local. Fourteen of the 48 name a specific state mechanism instead — a ballot question, a Secretary of State race, a redistricting fight. Several expect the real fallout in the 2027 session. Only 11% expect their legislature to prioritize elections next session, so for most states the argument stays rhetorical.

“Voter ID support polls at 80%, yet the Dems are adamantly opposed. It’s now a ballot question for the second time and is expected to win.”

– Nevada Republican

“If ranked choice voting is repealed, which is likely or at least possible, expect that to be used as an opportunity to overhaul the voting system.”

– Alaska Republican

“Republicans will be upset by the initiative petition amendment passing and looking to do more redistricting separately.”

– Missouri Democrat

03

What it adds up to

Two tracks, a long tail, and what to do about both.



What only a 50-state network surfaces

We asked our network of political strategists and practitioners what the key issues for their state are that national politicians are missing. Their answers illuminate what lesser-known topics matter to people on the ground in all 50 states.



“In Montana it may be natural resource policy around the roadless rule being bigger than is emphasized at the national level.”

– Montana Republican



“Water quality. There has been a heavy focus on water quality issues in Iowa and rising cancer rates... I don’t see as much national conversation about that.”

– Iowa Democrat



“Health care — the lack of access in rural states, closing hospitals and just cost. Politicians never talk about that.”

– Oklahoma Republican



“Congress has not had a fruitful discussion about the re-authorization of the Farm Bill for over three years.”

– Nebraska Democrat



“The biggest gap is in our corporate franchise. A third of our entire state revenue comes from it, and some companies are starting to leave Delaware.”

– Delaware Democrat



“The impact of the trade war with Canada affects Michigan more than any other state.”

– Michigan Republican



“Agriculture, tribal sovereignty, and rural health and education.”

– Oklahoma Democrat



“Maine has very high energy costs, top five in the country. It’s talked about very differently up here than in other places.”

– Maine Republican

None of these clears a reporting threshold for a traditional poll. In a way, that's the point. Each was raised by one or two respondents, which in a national survey would make it noise. Here it is the signal — a specific, locally consequential fight that the people who work in that state can see as a broader trend.

The issues that decide state legislative sessions are frequently not the issues on any national list, and the only reliable way to find them is to ask people who are standing there.