



TO: Republican Candidates in Swing States and Districts
FROM: Whit Ayres
DATE: August 28, 2018
**RE: How Republican Candidates in Swing States and Districts
Should Talk About the Mueller Investigation**

For Republican candidates running for office in 2018 in swing states and swing districts who need both Republican and Independent votes to win, talking about the Mueller investigation can be perilous.

In some ways the two groups could not be more different, according to a recent national survey of Republican and Independent voters. Republicans want the investigation shut down by 65 to 20 percent, but Independents want it to continue by 50 to 34 percent. Republicans think the investigation is "a witch hunt" by 71 to 19 percent, but Independents disagree, 48 to 38 percent. By 66 to 19 percent, Republican voters think the Mueller investigation is "a biased and partisan effort to attack Donald Trump." But by 44 to 36 percent, Independents think it is "a fair and impartial effort to get at the facts."

But the survey also offers guidance on messages with which overwhelming majorities of both groups agree. Sixty-eight percent of Republicans think "It is important for the Mueller investigation to follow the facts wherever they lead," as do 77 percent of Independents. Eighty-four percent of Republicans, and 90 percent of Independents, agree that "Nobody is above the law, not even the President."

Moreover, both groups agree that Donald Trump should not shut the investigation down himself. Only 11 percent of Republicans who want the investigation shut down think Trump should be the one to do it. Similarly, only 11 percent of Independents who want the investigation shut down think Trump should do it. Half of Republicans and Independents who think the investigation should be shut down want the Department of Justice to do it, while 29 percent of Republicans and 33 percent of Independents prefer Congress to do the deed.

Why don't Republicans and Independents want Donald Trump to shut down the investigation? Because they think that would make him look guilty and could get him impeached. As one Republican voter said, "The subject of an investigation should not be able to stop the investigation." Sixty-nine percent of Republicans, and 79 percent of Independents, agree with the following argument:

If Donald Trump fires Robert Mueller, it will look like he has something to hide, and that could get him impeached. If he has done nothing wrong, it is in his interest to let the Mueller investigation go forward to its conclusion so he can be officially exonerated of any wrongdoing. If Trump stops the investigation, the allegations will dog him forever.

Overwhelming majorities of Republicans and Independents also think that Mueller should follow the evidence wherever it leads. Sixty-three percent of Republicans, and 72 percent of Independents, agree with the following:

If a policeman stops someone for speeding and sees illegal drugs on the passenger seat, the policeman is obligated to pursue a violation for drugs as well as speeding. Similarly, if Mueller is conducting an investigation of collusion with Russia, and finds evidence of illegal money laundering or illegal campaign contributions, or trying to obstruct an investigation, he is obligated to investigate those crimes. He should not just turn his back. Mueller should follow the evidence wherever it leads.

Republican candidates in deeply red states and districts who can win elections with only Republican votes can adopt Donald Trump's perspective on the Mueller investigation. But Republican candidates who need both Republican and Independent votes to win can appeal to both groups with the following arguments:

- **Nobody is above the law, not even the President.**
- **The Mueller investigation should follow the facts wherever they lead.**
- **Donald Trump should not shut down the Mueller investigation, because doing so would make him look like he is guilty of wrongdoing and has something to hide.**

Methodology

This national survey was conducted with 1000 registered voters, 464 Republicans and 536 Independents. All respondents were surveyed online by SSI, through their panel and listed samples. The margin of error for Republicans is +/- 4.6 percent; for independents it is 4.2 percent. The survey was conducted July 25-29, 2018.