

To: Interested Parties
Subj: Pre-State of the Union State of Play
Date: February 19, 2026

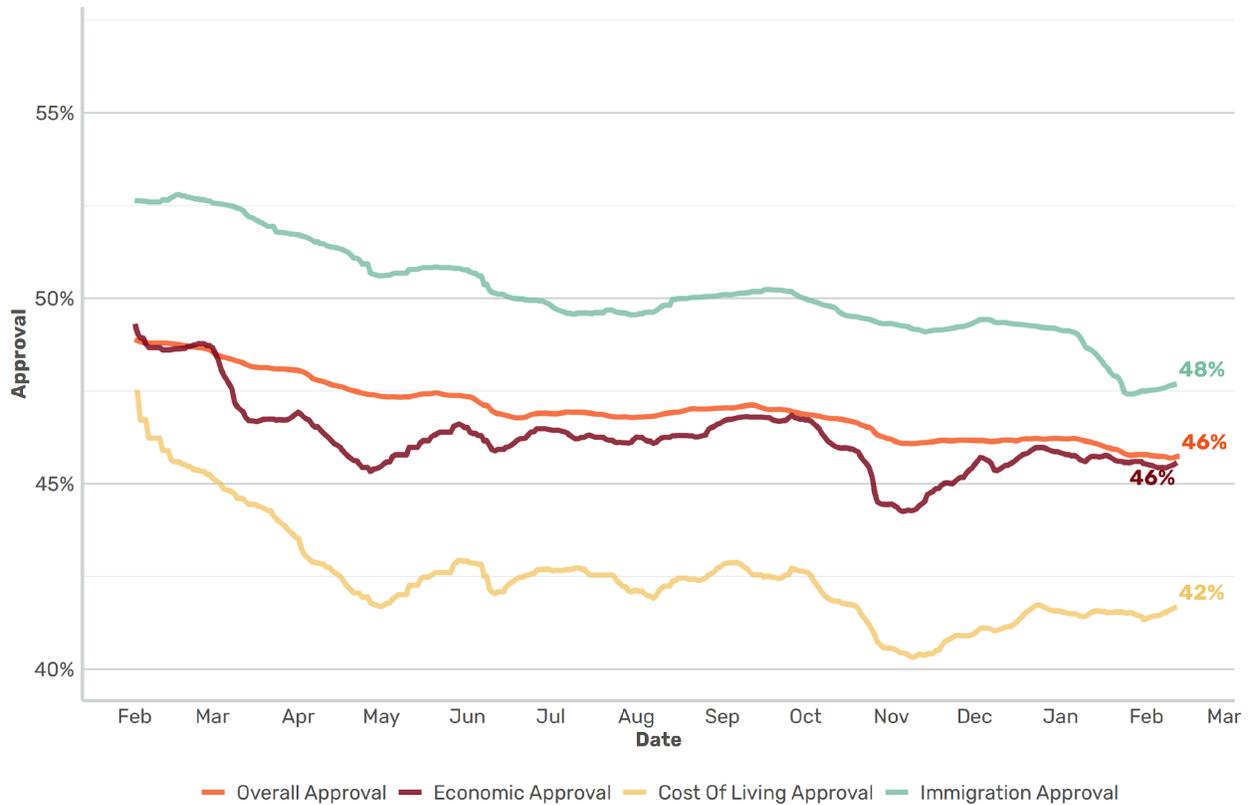
- **Trump's job approval has been stuck at a low point for weeks, stabilizing but not recovering in the wake of Alex Pretti's murder, one of the rare political news events that cut through to low-attention voters.** Trump's overall approval sits underwater at 46% two-way, stabilizing in recent days after a decline throughout Jan and early Feb. Approval on Trump's handling of immigration has declined since the start of the year, but still remains higher than his overall job approval.
- **Affordability continues to be Trump's greatest vulnerability.** Nearly two-thirds of voters, including 72% of swing voters, say life is less affordable than it was a year ago. Close to half of Trump voters agree. And Trump's cost of living approval is far lower than his overall approval.
- **While Trump's numbers on immigration are no longer in active decline, the reverberating effects of ICE's murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti continue to be an acute vulnerability for Trump.** Trump's attention is seen as over-focused on the border, an issue that has lowered in voter importance over the last year. By 3-to-1, voters believe that Trump and Republicans' priority should be lowering the cost of everyday needs. However, half of voters, including 58% of Trump voters, believe Trump and Republicans' actual priority is securing our border.
- **Trump's massive cuts to health care, Trump ordering ICE to indiscriminately raid communities, and Trump's tariffs are recent actions most concerning to voters.** In a maxdiff experiment testing more than 50 different recent actions by the Trump Administration, voters were much more likely to say they found widely felt, direct, tangible impacts the most concerning vs. other issues (e.g. Trump being named in the Epstein files).
- **In recent message testing, the most effective messages against Trump focus on his broken economic promises and unpopular budget cuts, including a couple top performing messages that point to recent ICE murders as evidence of Trump's mismatched priorities.** By contrast, the worst performing message highlighted Trump's mental and physical decline.
 - **Medicaid cuts to give tax cuts for billionaires (97th percentile):** *"Trump promised to lower costs, but now life is more expensive than ever. Trump made healthcare less affordable by cutting \$1 trillion in Medicaid to give tax cuts for billionaires, and tariffs are making everyday needs like groceries more expensive. Trump was elected to make life more affordable, and he's done exactly the opposite."*
 - **Health care cuts + tariffs (93rd percentile):** *"Trump's presidency is making life more stressful and difficult. Trump has made it harder to afford a decent life by making \$1 trillion in healthcare cuts and introducing tariffs that make everyday goods more expensive. He creates constant divisiveness and drama, threatening Greenland and labeling peaceful protestors domestic terrorists. Even with some good ideas, his presidency is just too much and is making life worse."*
 - **Health care cuts to triple ICE's budget (92nd percentile):** *"Trump cut \$1 trillion from Medicaid and \$500 billion from food assistance - and used that money to more than triple ICE's budget. Trump is taking away healthcare and food assistance to fund hiring poorly trained ICE agents who are terrorizing and killing US citizens. Trump set his priorities in his budget, and we're all paying the price."*

- **Taking away your health care to fund immigration raids (91st percentile):**
"Trump cut \$800 billion from healthcare by slashing Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act while tripling ICE's budget for mass deportations. Trump is taking away your healthcare coverage to fund immigration raids that tear communities apart - all while working families struggle to make ends meet."

Trump Approval + Issue Tracking Updates

After declining during January and early February, Trump's approval has stabilized, but still remains below water at 46% (and significantly lower on the cost of living, his worst issue, at 42%):

Approval: Overall, Economy, Cost of Living, Immigration



Message testing: The most effective attacks on Trump contrast health care cuts with ICE, tariffs, and other direct impacts

In recent message testing fielded February 8-9 of 3,373 national likely voters, messages highlighting Trump’s \$1 trillion in health care cuts were highly persuasive, including when paired with contrasts to the Trump Administration’s ICE raids and ICE budget increase, Trump’s tariffs, and other mismatched priorities. In contrast, we saw much less of an effect from arguments about Trump’s misconduct, corruption, or erratic behavior:

Message Title	Message Content	Trump Disapproval Percentile
Medicaid cuts to give tax cuts for billionaires	Trump promised to lower costs, but now life is more expensive than ever. Trump made healthcare less affordable by cutting \$1 trillion in Medicaid to give tax cuts for billionaires , and tariffs are making everyday needs like groceries more expensive. Trump was elected to make life more affordable, and he’s done exactly the opposite.	97%
Health care cuts + tariffs	Trump’s presidency is making life more stressful and difficult. Trump has made it harder to afford a decent life by making \$1 trillion in healthcare cuts and introducing tariffs that make everyday goods more expensive. He creates constant divisiveness and drama, threatening Greenland and labeling peaceful protestors domestic terrorists. Even with some good ideas, his presidency is just too much and is making life worse.	93%
Health care cuts to triple ICE’s budget	Trump cut \$1 trillion from Medicaid and \$500 billion from food assistance - and used that money to more than triple ICE’s budget. Trump is taking away healthcare and food assistance to fund hiring poorly trained ICE agents who are terrorizing and killing US citizens. Trump set his priorities in his budget, and we’re all paying the price.	92%
Taking away your health care to fund immigration raids	Trump cut \$800 billion from healthcare by slashing Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act while tripling ICE’s budget for mass deportations. Trump is taking away your healthcare coverage to fund immigration raids that tear communities apart - all while working families struggle to make ends meet.	91%
ICE raids without process	Trump ordered ICE to raid communities without legal process and is abducting people who are not criminals. Trump is tearing families apart, terrorizing American communities, empowering secret unaccountable ICE agents, and killing Americans like Renee Good and Alex Pretti, while refusing to hold agents accountable for their actions.	82%
Focused on Greenland + Venezuela instead of lowering costs	While American families at home are struggling, Trump is focused on other countries. He’s obsessed with acquiring Greenland and declared himself President of Venezuela - all instead of doing what he promised and working to lower costs for you. Trump has lost focus on American families and is instead wasting taxpayer dollars trying to take over other countries.	75%
Chaos, division & drama	Trump has failed as President. Life in America is more expensive, stressful, and dangerous than it has been in recent memory. He has some good ideas, but he’s not been able to execute well because he is constantly distracted by chaos, division, and drama. Trump had a chance to turn America around, but at this point it’s clear that his presidency is a failure.	72%
Most corrupt President in history	Trump is the most corrupt President in American history. Trump is using the presidency to make himself and his billionaire friends richer, while working families struggle. He gives government contracts to his own companies, sells access to foreign governments, and cuts taxes for the wealthy, all while cutting healthcare and other benefits that make your life more affordable.	63%

Protecting the Epstein class	Trump is protecting the wealthy and powerful. He has prevented the full release of the Epstein files, and has admitted that he opposes their release because it would hurt his friends. Trump promised to fight America's elites, but now he is protecting the 'Epstein Class' - rich and powerful people who committed horrible crimes without ever facing consequences.	54%
Succeeded in vision but his vision didn't work	Trump has implemented his vision for America, but that vision is not making anyone's life better. Trump said that by deporting millions of illegal immigrants, America would experience a new Golden Age. He's succeeded in deporting millions. But life in America is less affordable and more stressful than ever. We tried his vision, and it didn't work.	52%
Undermining Fed independence	Trump is undermining the independence of the Federal Reserve to serve his own political interests. Trump is attacking the current Fed Chair, and admitted his new pick for the job is going to do his bidding. Trump is filling the Fed with people more loyal to him than to the stability of the American economy - and it's going to drive inflation even higher.	45%
Threat to democracy	Trump is a threat to American democracy. Trump ordered the FBI to seize ballots from Georgia as part of his ongoing denial of the 2020 election, he has threatened to send ICE agents to polling places to intimidate voters, and he wants to unconstitutionally nationalize elections. He is undermining free and fair elections, to avoid accountability for passing unpopular policies that have made America's problems worse.	42%
Unstable and unchecked	Trump is unhinged, unstable and unchecked. Trump's behavior is getting more erratic and the chaos he is creating is hurting America and undermining our place in the world. Trump routinely ignores court orders and violates the Constitution, and his quest for unchecked power is making America and the world more dangerous.	37%
Environment/pollution	Trump is letting corporations pollute your air and water without consequences. Trump's EPA took 87% fewer enforcement actions against polluters than any previous administration - including his own first term. He gutted the agency's staff, shut down environmental justice offices, and stopped calculating the health costs of pollution. Trump is prioritizing corporate profits over your family's health and safety.	34%
Mental decline	Trump is in mental and physical decline. Trump turns 80 this year and is clearly showing signs of dementia. He falls asleep at Cabinet meetings and he is often seen with unexplained bruises on his body. Just like Joe Biden, Trump is no longer fit for office. But unlike Biden, Republicans refuse to acknowledge this and insist he is fine.	18%

MaxDiff: What voters say concerns them the most about the Trump Administration

In a recent MaxDiff experiment of 50 recent actions from the Trump Administration to see what issues were of highest concern to voters of 11,644 responses via online surveys nationally between February 11-12. Respondents are presented with several randomized matchups of 2 statements and are asked to select one based on the following question - the percentage below indicates the amount of voters who selected that answer, *not* the amount who support or oppose an action.

Of the following actions taken by President Trump in the past few months, which has been more concerning to you?	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did not vote 2024
Trump cut \$1 trillion in Medicare and Medicaid funding and \$500 billion in SNAP assistance while more than tripling ICE's budget	74%	80%	75%	69%	78%
Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act which cuts more than \$800 billion from Medicaid and food assistance to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and big corporations	69%	76%	70%	62%	73%
Trump passed a law that cuts \$800 billion in health care by cutting funding for Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act	67%	71%	67%	62%	69%
Trump ordered ICE to indiscriminately raid communities, leading to ICE killing 2 Americans - Renee Good and Alex Pretti, and isn't holding agents accountable for their actions	66%	80%	67%	53%	71%
Trump allowed Affordable Care Act subsidies to expire, causing health insurance premiums	65%	67%	64%	63%	64%

to skyrocket for millions of Americans					
Trump ordered the Offices of Medicare and Medicaid to cut \$880B in funding for these services	64%	64%	64%	64%	64%
Trump is cutting funding that would raise costs on health care premiums for more than 22 million Americans	64%	62%	64%	65%	65%
Trump ordered ICE to raid communities without a legal process, and is abducting people who are not criminals.	64%	76%	65%	51%	68%
Trump is making life in America more stressful and the violence and division that accompany his Presidency are tearing the country apart	63%	78%	64%	49%	66%
Trump announced he will not use available funds to pay food assistance benefits in November to over 40 million Americans during the government shutdown	62%	63%	63%	61%	65%
Trump and his administration called Alex Pretti a domestic terrorist who wanted to kill ICE agents, a claim directly contradicted by video showing ICE agents attacking Pretti and killing him while he was pinned to the ground	61%	69%	61%	54%	61%
Trump ordered ICE to indiscriminately raid communities, leading to unlawful abductions	61%	70%	62%	53%	65%
Trump stood by ICE agents who killed Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse who cared for veterans, while he was pinned to the ground during a peaceful protest in Minneapolis	60%	71%	61%	50%	63%
Trump put tariffs in place that have driven up prices on everyday goods like groceries	59%	58%	59%	60%	62%
Trump threatened to use the Insurrection Act, which would allow active duty military deployment in U.S. cities, against Minnesota protesters protesting the shooting of Renee Good	57%	63%	57%	51%	58%
Trump's Justice Department extensively redacted materials from the Epstein files, including blacking out Trump's face in photos and removing more than 1,000 mentions of Trump's name in unverified sexual assault allegations.	57%	63%	57%	50%	58%
Trump is focusing on Greenland and Venezuela when we have problems in America that need to be solved.	56%	49%	57%	64%	57%
Trump has behaved erratically, including by threatening to acquire Greenland by force, which has threatened so much instability that mortgage interest rates have spiked	56%	58%	56%	54%	56%
Trump announced that the Justice Department will not investigate the ICE agent who fatally shot Minneapolis resident Renee Good	56%	60%	56%	51%	58%
The Trump administration is blocking state investigators from examining the scene where federal agents killed Alex Pretti, preventing an independent investigation into the shooting	56%	59%	55%	53%	54%
Trump eliminated vaccine requirements for school children and ended federal funding for childhood immunization programs	55%	55%	55%	56%	53%
Trump dismissed Americans' concerns about the high cost of living by saying that parents should buy fewer toys and school supplies for their kids	50%	47%	50%	54%	51%
Trump has shown signs of cognitive decline, acting increasingly erratic and confusing Greenland with Iceland several times in a speech to world leaders	50%	54%	51%	46%	50%
Trump admitted he toppled the government of Venezuela and committed billions of US taxpayer dollars so oil companies could profit more	50%	49%	50%	51%	50%
Trump wants to purchase Greenland which would cost \$700 billion in taxpayer dollars	50%	45%	49%	54%	49%
Trump put in place cabinet secretaries who are so out of touch that they say it's possible to get a good meal for \$3 and that some retirees own 12 homes.	49%	46%	49%	53%	47%
Trump deployed 2,000-3,000 armed federal immigration agents to Minneapolis	49%	56%	50%	43%	47%
Trump has offered to give every single resident of Greenland \$100,000 of US taxpayer money in exchange for their land	47%	37%	47%	58%	47%
Trump called the concerns about the rising cost of living a hoax invented by Democrats	47%	42%	46%	51%	46%
Trump threatened Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell with criminal indictment as retaliation for refusing Trump's demands to cut interest rates	44%	41%	44%	47%	41%
Trump declared himself the acting President of Venezuela	42%	37%	42%	48%	40%
Trump eliminated President Biden's SAVE plan for millions of borrowers, making student loan forgiveness taxable and blocking loan forgiveness for workers at nonprofits involved in immigration or trans rights	42%	43%	42%	41%	42%
Trump keeps arguing that he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize, while he has bombed and invaded other countries unilaterally	41%	38%	40%	43%	40%
Trump is mentioned hundreds of times in the newly released tranche of files related to the investigation into Jeffrey Epstein	41%	39%	40%	42%	41%
Trump's FBI raided Fulton County, Georgia's election office and seized 2020 ballots to pursue his fraud claims about the 2020 election	40%	39%	40%	42%	39%
Trump conducted military airstrikes on boats suspected of carrying drugs that some have called war crimes	40%	38%	39%	41%	39%
Trump eliminated the impact of pollution of human health from air quality calculations at the EPA	37%	33%	36%	40%	34%

Trump posted private texts from other world leaders on social media to attack them	36%	28%	35%	45%	34%
Trump's Justice Department arrested journalist Don Lemon for covering a protest at a Minnesota church	35%	35%	35%	35%	34%
Trump hosted several billionaires at the White House for a screening of "Melania", a documentary about the First Lady, on the night Alex Pretti was killed and crisis was unfolding in Minneapolis	33%	30%	33%	36%	33%
Trump withdrew from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change	30%	28%	30%	32%	27%
Trump paused all immigrant visa processing from 75 countries	29%	26%	29%	33%	28%
Trump renamed the center to the "Trump-Kennedy Center"	28%	21%	27%	36%	26%
Trump changed dietary guidelines for Americans to focus on red meat and foods high in saturated fat	27%	19%	26%	35%	25%
Trump announced the Trump-Kennedy Center will shut down for 2 years after many cancellations from performers following its name change	24%	16%	23%	32%	23%

Polling: Trump's attention is seen as over-focused on the border, which is no longer an entirely positive home base for him

In recent polling fielded from February 2-3 of 15,090 Americans, by 3-to-1, voters believe that Trump and Republicans' priority should be lowering the cost of everyday needs. However, half of voters, including 58% of Trump voters, believe Trump and Republicans' actual priority is securing our border:

Which should be the bigger priority for President Trump and Republicans?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024
Securing our border and deporting those who are here illegally	23%	3%	17%	42%
Lowering the cost of everyday needs like groceries	71%	93%	73%	50%
Not sure	7%	4%	10%	9%

Which do you believe actually is the bigger priority for President Trump and Republicans right now?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024
Securing our border and deporting those who are here illegally	52%	47%	49%	58%
Lowering the cost of everyday needs like groceries	33%	35%	36%	32%
Not sure	14%	18%	16%	10%

And half of voters – including 57% of swing voters and 1 in 5 Trump voters – believe things in America are worse than they were a year ago. Nearly 2 in 3 voters, including 72% of swing voters and notably almost half of Trump voters, believe that life is less affordable than it was a year ago. Just 16% of voters - and 26% of Trump voters - agree things are more affordable, a position Trump and Republicans regularly take:

Thinking about the country as a whole, compared to a year ago do you think things in America are generally...

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing	Trump 2024
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2020 x 2024

Better than they were a year ago	28%	5%	20%	52%
Worse than they were a year ago	52%	85%	57%	21%
About the same as they were a year ago	15%	8%	17%	21%
Not sure	4%	2%	7%	6%

Thinking about the cost of living, compared to a year ago do you think that life is generally...

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024
More affordable than it was a year ago	16%	6%	11%	26%
Less affordable than it was a year ago	64%	81%	72%	48%
No more or less affordable than it was a year ago	15%	9%	12%	21%
Not sure	5%	3%	4%	6%