THE ROCKY Mountaineer

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Welcome Back to The Mountaineer

Welcome to *The Mountaineer*, a resource for progressives and a guide for advocates across Colorado, published by GSG and ProgressNow Colorado. Research presented in this publication is the result of a survey conducted between October 6 and October 11, 2022, among 800 registered voters in Colorado. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level for Colorado voters is +/- 3.5%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.

We also applied a second weight scheme to review results among a sample that is representative of the likely 2022 electorate. All results in this report are among registered voters unless otherwise noted.

This twelfth publication will focus on the political landscape and the major issues voters are focused on a month before the midterm elections, including voters' views on the parties and who they prefer at the top of the ticket.

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DEMOCRATS IN CO ARE WELL-POSITIONED TO SWEEP THE TOP STATEWIDE RACES

Democrats have strong advantages on multiple metrics, including party self-identification, the generic ballot for state legislature, elected official and candidate favorability ratings, and in each of the four statewide races – in which Polis, Bennet, Weiser, and Griswold all enjoy solid leads.

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THE GOP BRAND IS IN TATTERS AND MADE WORSE BY GANAHL DOUBLING DOWN ON "FURRIES"

Voters believe Republicans are out of touch and have the wrong priorities, especially when it comes to the issues of abortion, helping corporations over families, and pleasing Trump. Heidi Ganahl has only made matters worse with her recent decision to focus on "furries" in schools – a decision that has been met with mockery and eyerolls from Colorado voters who call her comments "ridiculous."
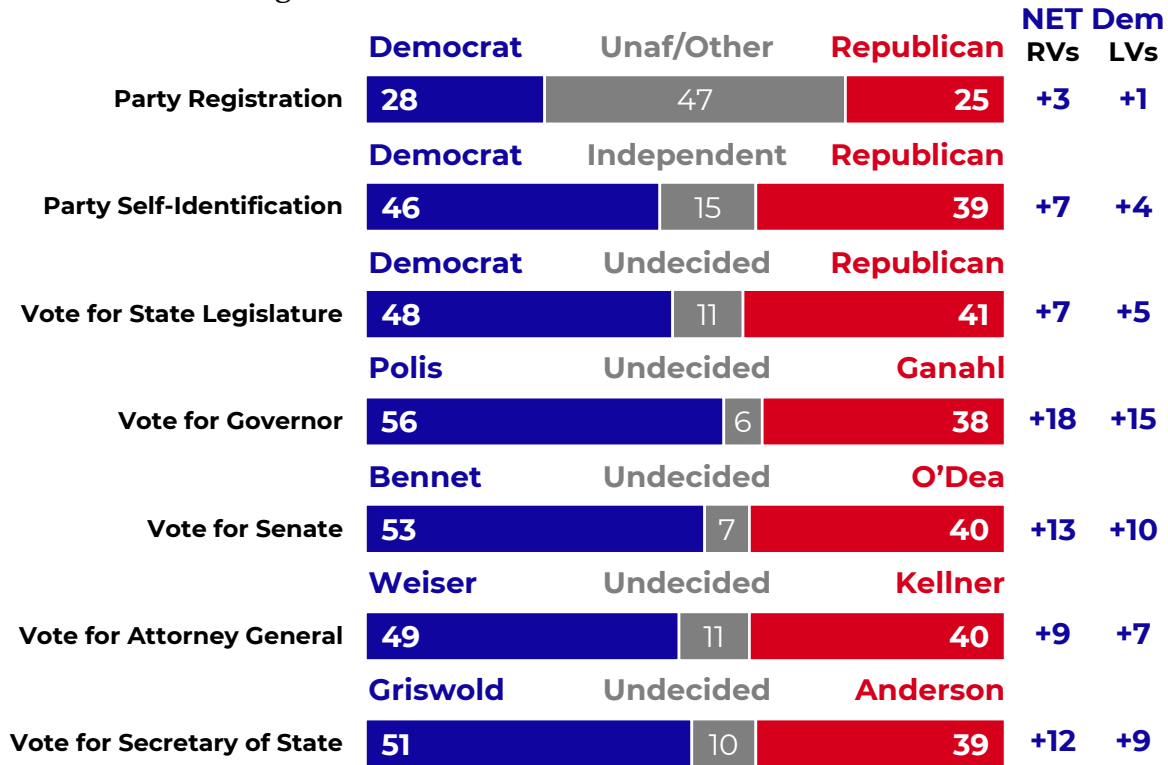
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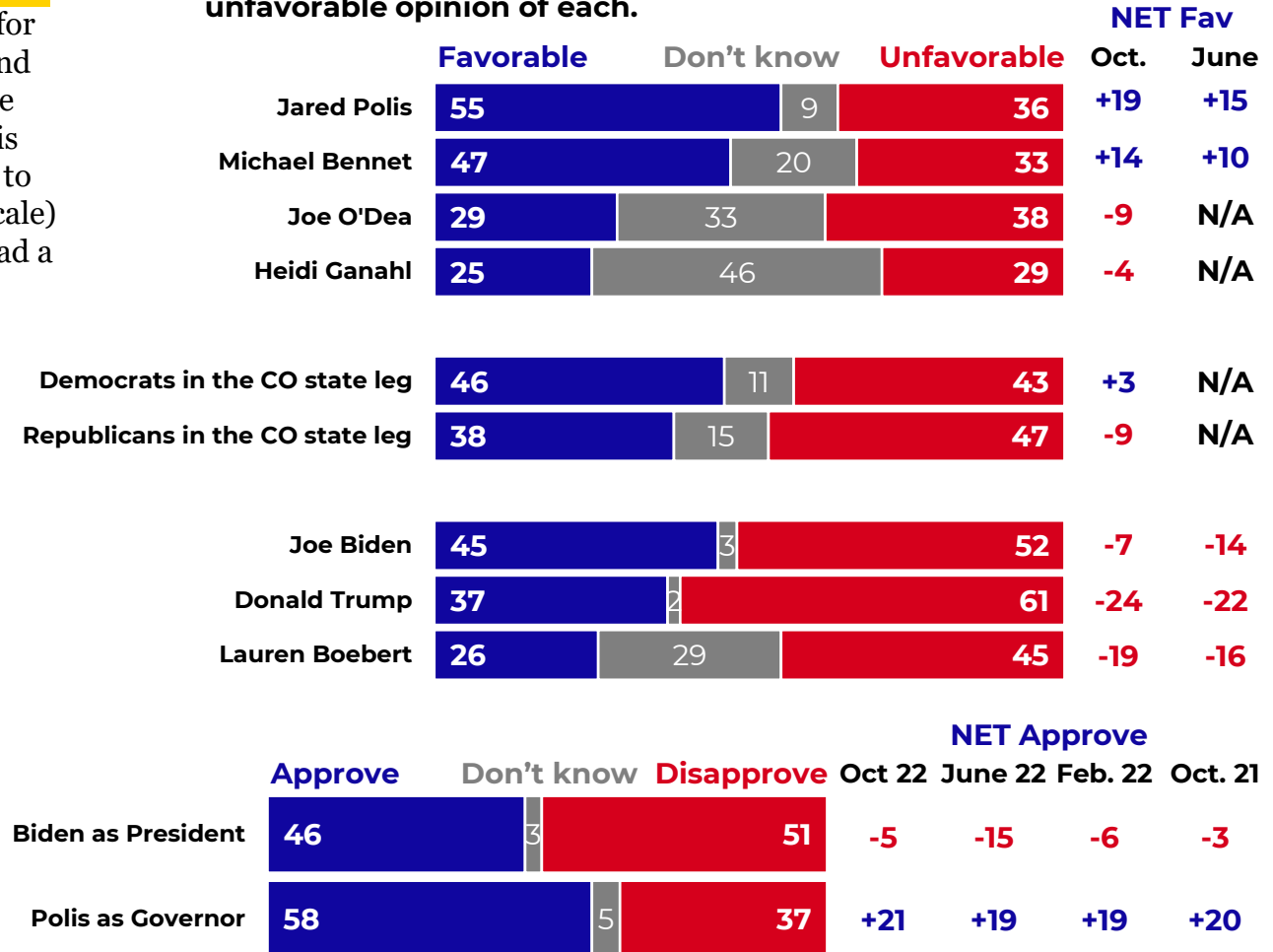### ABORTION REMAINS A MOTIVATING ISSUE

Coloradans oppose overturning *Roe v. Wade* and believe women should have access to abortion care in CO. Two-thirds think that if the GOP takes power in Colorado, then they will try to ban abortion. Perhaps most important, when a Democratic message on abortion is matched against a GOP message on the economy, it shifts the vote towards Democrats by 9 points.

The partisan environment bodes well for Colorado Democrats in the weeks leading up to Election Day

Democrats lead Republicans on all partisan metrics, including every vote at the top of the ticket. The political environment in the state looks as positive for Democrats as it has in months. Democrats have 7-point advantages on Party ID and the generic ballot, and personal ratings for Biden, Polis, and Bennet are all up since June, while Trump finds himself at a new low in our polling. Biden's job approval is also up, while Polis' remains steady and strong – about where it's been going back to September of 2020. Finally, Democrats (average motivation of 8.95 on our 0-10 scale) and Republicans (8.96) are also now dead even on motivation after Republicans had a modest advantage in June.

Partisan Metrics

	Democrat	Unaf/Other	Republican	NET Dem RVs	LVs
Party Registration	28	47	25	+3	+1

	Democrat	Independent	Republican		
Party Self-Identification	46	15	39	+7	+4

	Democrat	Undecided	Republican		
Vote for State Legislature	48	11	41	+7	+5

	Polis	Undecided	Ganahl		
Vote for Governor	56	6	38	+18	+15

	Bennet	Undecided	O'Dea		
Vote for Senate	53	7	40	+13	+10

	Weiser	Undecided	Kellner		
Vote for Attorney General	49	11	40	+9	+7

	Griswold	Undecided	Anderson		
Vote for Secretary of State	51	10	39	+12	+9

Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each.

	Favorable	Don't know	Unfavorable	NET Fav Oct.	June
Jared Polis	55	9	36	+19	+15
Michael Bennet	47	20	33	+14	+10
Joe O'Dea	29	33	38	-9	N/A
Heidi Ganahl	25	46	29	-4	N/A
Democrats in the CO state leg	46	11	43	+3	N/A
Republicans in the CO state leg	38	15	47	-9	N/A
Joe Biden	45	3	52	-7	-14
Donald Trump	37	2	61	-24	-22
Lauren Boebert	26	29	45	-19	-16

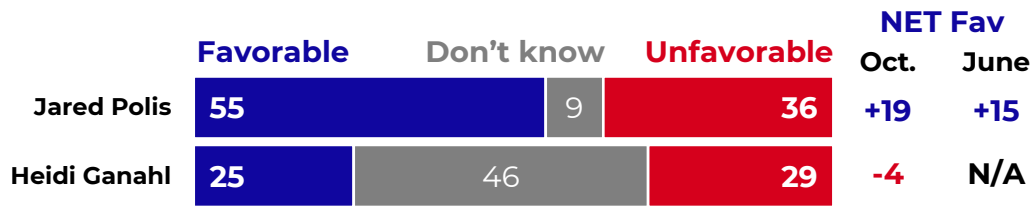|	Approve	Don't know	Disapprove	NET Approve Oct 22	June 22	Feb. 22	Oct. 21
Biden as President	46	3	51	-5	-15	-6	-3
Polis as Governor	58	5	37	+21	+19	+19	+20

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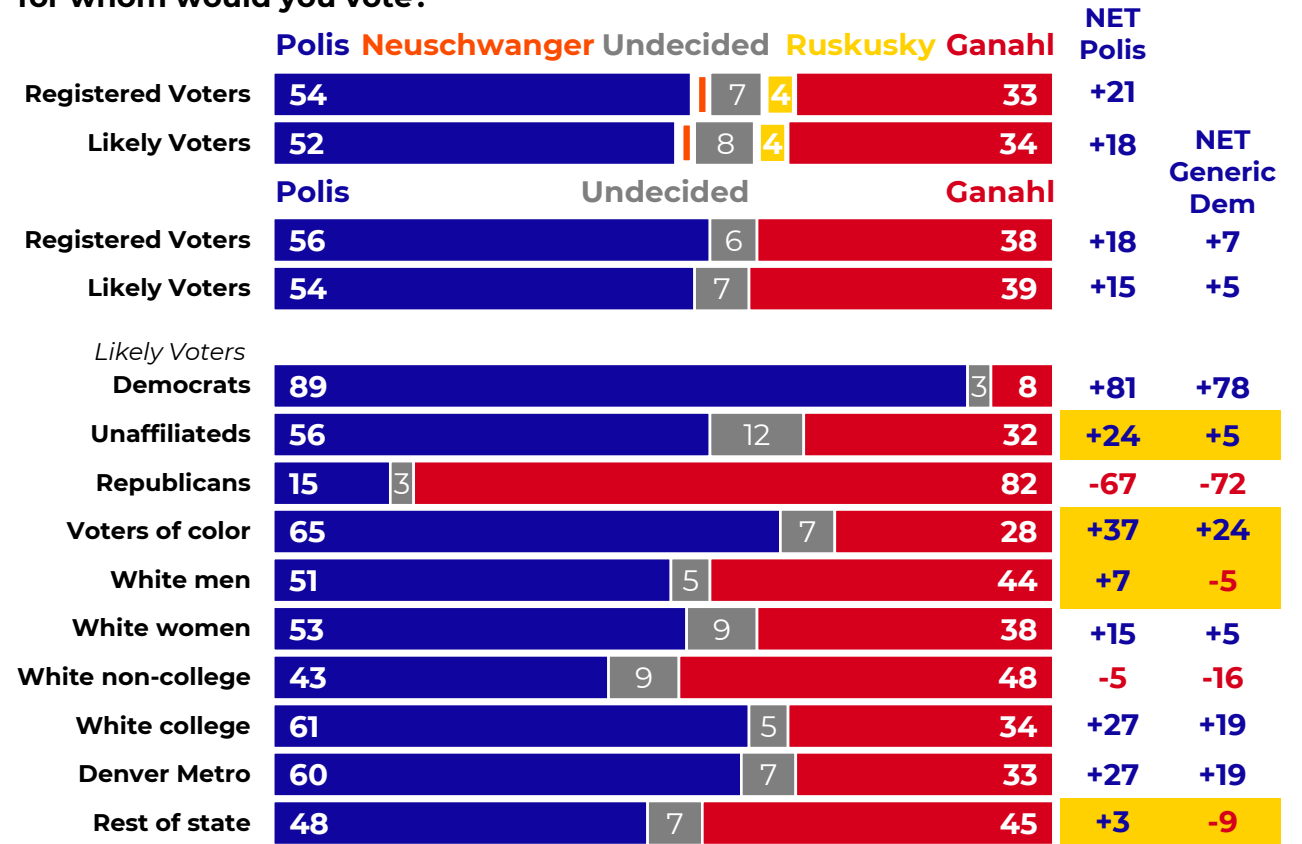# Polis continues to dominate at the top of the ticket

Polis has proven to be a formidable incumbent, as his marks, including personal favorability, job approval, and performance in the race for his re-election, are notably strong. He is well-known, consistently well-liked, and enjoys the highest job approval he has since this time last year.

In the race for governor, he enjoys an 18-point lead with likely November voters. Importantly, he over-performs a generic Democrat for state legislature with all groups, but especially with unaffiliateds, voters of color, white men, and outside of the Denver Metro area (defined as Denver, Boulder, Adams, Arapahoe, Jefferson, and Broomfield Counties).

Meanwhile Ganahl is only known by 54% of Colorado voters.

If the general election for Governor of Colorado were held today, for whom would you vote?

	Polis	Neuschwanger	Undecided	Ruskusky	Ganahl	NET Polis
Registered Voters	54		7	4	33	+21
Likely Voters	52		8	4	34	+18

	Polis	Undecided	Ganahl	NET Polis	NET Generic Dem
Registered Voters	56	6	38	+18	+7
Likely Voters	54	7	39	+15	+5

Likely Voters

	Polis	Undecided	Ganahl	NET Polis	NET Generic Dem
Democrats	89	3	8	+81	+78
Unaffiliateds	56	12	32	+24	+5
Republicans	15	3	82	-67	-72
Voters of color	65	7	28	+37	+24
White men	51	5	44	+7	-5
White women	53	9	38	+15	+5
White non-college	43	9	48	-5	-16
White college	61	5	34	+27	+19
Denver Metro	60	7	33	+27	+19
Rest of state	48	7	45	+3	-9

	Favorable	Don't know	Unfavorable	NET Fav Oct.	June
Jared Polis	55	9	36	+19	+15
Heidi Ganahl	25	46	29	-4	N/A

	Approve	Don't know	Disapprove	NET Approve Oct. 22	June 22	Feb. 22	Oct. 21
Polis as Governor	58	5	37	+21	+19	+19	+20

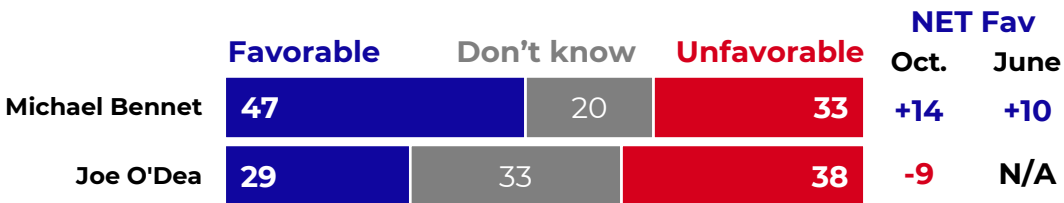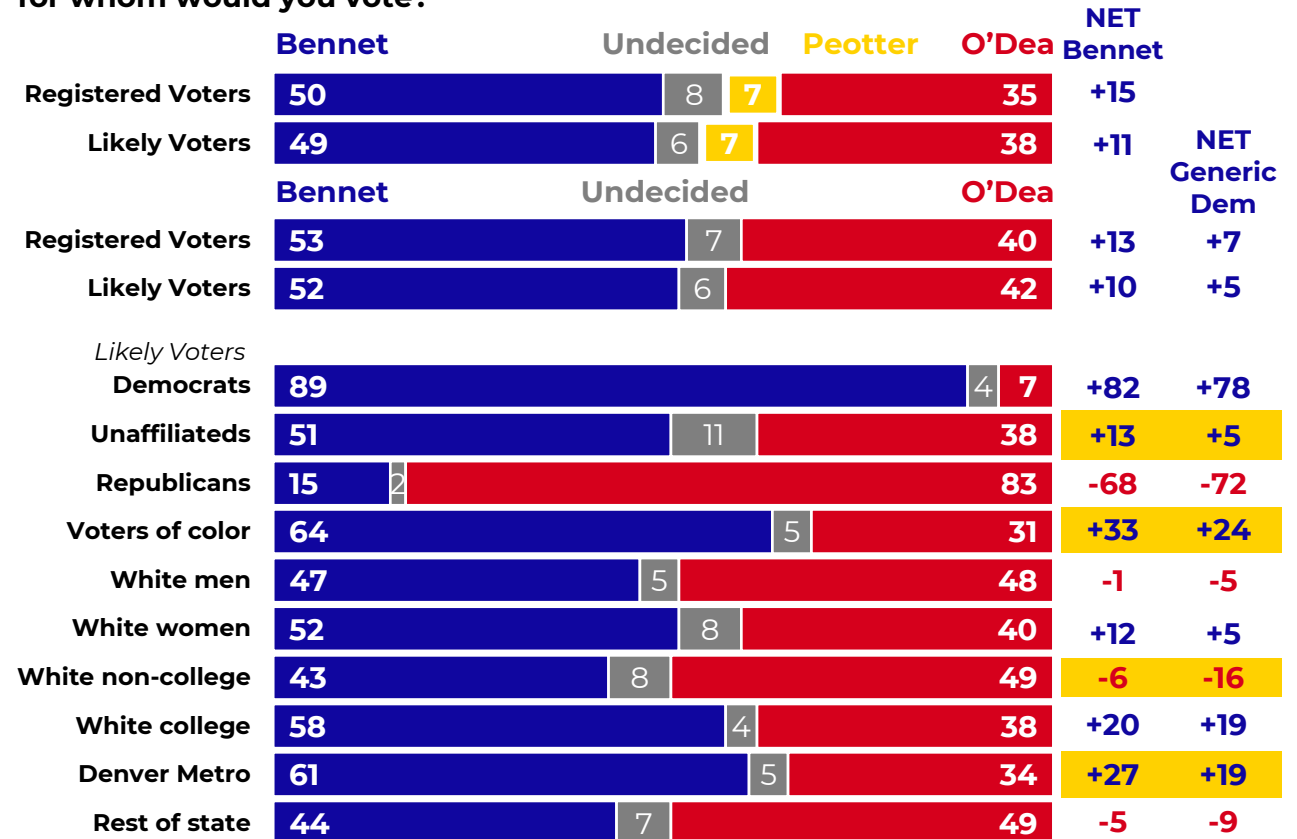# Bennet leads by double-digits and overperforms with key groups

Bennet also commands strong ratings and vote share in his race for re-election. Four in five voters can rate him, and they like him even more now than they did over the summer as his name ID has increased (79% familiar, up from 72% in June).

He enjoys a double-digit lead in the race for Senate with likely November voters. Like Polis, he over-performs a generic Democrat for state legislature with all groups, but especially with unaffiliateds, voters of color, and white non-college voters.

Meanwhile Republican challenger O'Dea is underwater with the two-thirds of voters who can rate him.

If the general election for U.S. Senate were held today, for whom would you vote?

	Bennet	Undecided	Peotter	O'Dea	NET Bennet	
Registered Voters	50	8	7	35	+15	
Likely Voters	49	6	7	38	+11	NET Generic Dem
	Bennet	**Undecided**		**O'Dea**		
Registered Voters	53	7		40	+13	+7
Likely Voters	52	6		42	+10	+5

Likely Voters

	Bennet	Undecided	O'Dea	NET Bennet	NET Generic Dem
Democrats	89	4	7	+82	+78
Unaffiliateds	51	11	38	+13	+5
Republicans	15	2	83	-68	-72
Voters of color	64	5	31	+33	+24
White men	47	5	48	-1	-5
White women	52	8	40	+12	+5
White non-college	43	8	49	-6	-16
White college	58	4	38	+20	+19
Denver Metro	61	5	34	+27	+19
Rest of state	44	7	49	-5	-9

	Favorable	Don't know	Unfavorable	NET Fav Oct.	June
Michael Bennet	47	20	33	+14	+10
Joe O'Dea	29	33	38	-9	N/A

Weiser and Griswold also enjoy solid leads

Other statewide Democrats enjoy healthy leads in their races against crowded fields and when matched against their main Republican opponents. Like Polis and Bennet, Attorney General Phil Weiser and Secretary of State Jena Griswold not only lead their GOP challengers (John Kellner and Pam Anderson) by healthy margins, but also over-perform a generic Democrat. In both races, these candidates consolidate registered Democrats better than Republicans consolidate their base and over-perform significantly with Republicans and white non-college voters. Griswold also significantly over-performs with unaffiliated voters. These Democrats also run up the score in the Denver Metro region while still keeping it close in the rest of the state.

These leads may be driven, in part, by voters' expectations that candidates for office should be willing to call out members of their own party who spread election conspiracies – something Anderson and Kellner have refused to do.

Do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Agree	Disagree	NET Agree
It's important for candidates for office in CO to call out members of their own party who continue to spread conspiracy theories about the 2020 election.	69	23	+46
The 2020 election was stolen from Trump through massive voter fraud.	25	64	-39

	Registered Voters							Likely Voters						
	Dem	Rep	Lib	AC	Unity	Und.	NET	Dem	Rep	Lib	AC	Unity	Und.	NET
AG: Multi-Way	44	35	8	-	-	13	+9	44	36	7	-	-	12	+8
AG: Two-Way	49	40	-	-	-	11	+9	48	41	-	-	-	11	+7
SOS: Multi-Way	46	34	5	4	1	10	+12	46	36	4	3	1	10	+10
SOS: Two-Way	51	39	-	-	-	10	+12	50	41	-	-	-	9	+9

	Generic Democrat			Attorney General			Secretary of State		
	Dem	Rep	NET	Weis	Keln	NET	Gris	And	NET
Likely Voters Overall	47	42	+5	48	41	+7	50	41	+9
Democrats	86	8	+78	87	9	+78	86	9	+77
Unaffiliateds	43	38	+5	43	37	+6	48	36	+12
Republicans	11	83	-72	14	80	-66	15	80	-65
Voters of color	57	33	+24	57	33	+24	60	31	+29
White men	42	47	-5	45	47	-2	46	46	0
White women	47	42	+5	47	39	+8	49	39	+10
White non-college	34	50	-16	37	48	-11	39	48	-9
White college	56	37	+19	55	37	+18	58	37	+21
Denver Metro	54	35	+19	55	35	+20	57	33	+24
Rest of state	40	49	-9	41	47	-6	43	48	-5

Republicans are viewed as extreme, out of touch, and having the wrong priorities

Voters overwhelmingly believe that the Republican Party is out of touch and has the wrong priorities. Before asking any other questions about the GOP in Colorado, we asked voters to describe the Party in one word. After "conservative," these responses were dominated by negative impressions – "extreme," "corrupt," "selfish," and "delusional."

When we dug into how voters perceive the Republican Party on a range of dimensions, a sizeable majority of Colorado voters say that the GOP is out of touch and has the wrong priorities – caring more about banning abortion, helping giant corporations, and pleasing Trump than improving the economy, helping working families, or doing what's best for Colorado.

Moreover, while a majority of voters believe that Governor Polis and Colorado Democrats are focused on the right issues, a majority believe that Colorado Republicans are not.

How would you describe the Republican Party in one word?

"Delusional. They are not very smart IE Lauren Boebert."

"Too aligned with Trump"

"Treasonous"

"Only a small remnant are actually Republicans anymore. The rest are actually Trumpists and have lost all claim to a moral center."

"Nazis"

"Dangerous!!!!"

How well do each of these describe the Republican Party?

	Well	Not well	NET Well
Out of touch with the needs of everyday Colorado families	57	36	+21
Care more about banning abortion than improving economy	56	37	+19
Care more about helping giant corporations than helping working families	56	38	+18
Care more about pleasing Donald Trump than doing what's best for Colorado	54	38	+16

Do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Agree	Disagree	NET Agree
Jared Polis and Colorado Democrats are mostly focused on the right things.	53	39	+14
Colorado Republicans are mostly focused on the right things.	43	52	-9

Dems continue to lead on most issues and have made significant gains on abortion and economic metrics

Democrats have also improved their position on most issues, with **the biggest gain since February coming, unsurprisingly, on the issue of abortion**. Beyond that, they have also made solid gains on various economic issues that are traditionally Republicans' strongest issues – at least in part because voters believe Polis and Colorado Democrats have taken real action to save families money. Democrats have also expanded their leads on looking out for the working and middle classes and bringing down the cost of health care and prescription drugs.

Who do you trust more to handle each of the following?

	Democrats in Colorado	Republicans in Colorado	NET Democrats Oct.	June	Feb.	Change (Oct. to Feb.)
Reducing air pollution and addressing climate change	59	27	+32	+25	+31	+1
Dealing with the issue of abortion	58	31	+27	+20	+16	+11
Bringing down the cost of HC and RX drugs	53	33	+20	+15	+12	+8
Looking out for working- and middle-class Coloradans	52	38	+14	+9	+5	+9
Improving public education	49	37	+12	+11	+10	+2
Dealing with the issue of guns	47	41	+6	+3	N/A	N/A
Ensuring that CO has a fair and effective tax system	46	40	+6	+1	-2	+8
Addressing the rising cost of living	43	41	+2	-5	-6	+8
Improving the economy and creating good jobs	42	45	-3	-7	-9	+6
Protecting public safety	42	45	-3	-5	-7	+4

Do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Agree	Disagree	NET Agree
Governor Polis and Colorado Democrats in the state legislature have taken real action to save Colorado families money.	54	38	+16
Jared Polis and Colorado Democrats are mostly focused on the right things.	53	39	+14
Colorado Republicans are mostly focused on the right things.	43	52	-9

Ganahl's "furries" comments draw ridicule

Heidi Ganahl's decision to focus on the issues of "furries" is being met by Colorado voters as the joke that it is. Just 17% agree that "there is a widespread movement in CO public schoo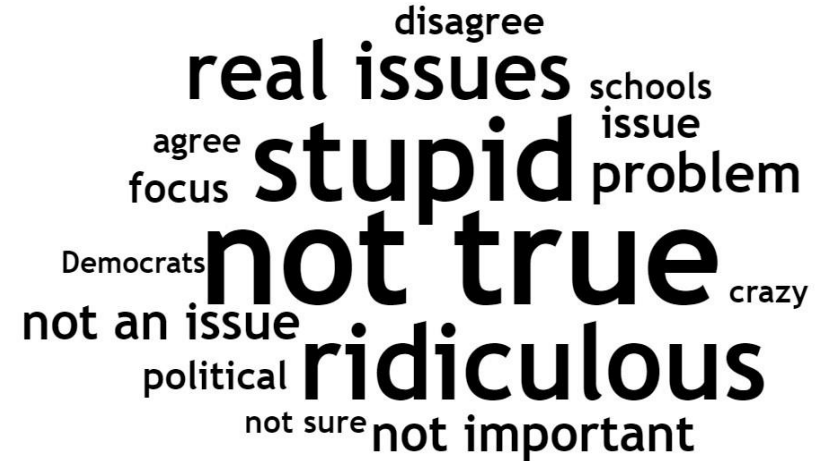ls of kids dressing up as 'furries' and identifying as cats." And, when told of Ganahl's comments, seven in 10 voters say that this is NOT an important issue in the race for governor.

In your own words, what do you think about Ganahl's claim that kids are identifying as cats all over Colorado?

"She smokes too much pot."

"I honestly don't care. I don't think that is an issue that a governor should be addressing."

"That is so ridiculous that it makes me question the content of her character and her intention on taking politics seriously."

"While I don't agree with gender pronouns and identifying as something other than a man or a woman, there are way more important things that politicians should be focused on".

As you may know, Heidi Ganahl has recently made the issue of so-called "furries" a focus of her campaign for governor, saying "kids are identifying as cats all over Colorado and schools are tolerating it.

Do you believe that this is an important issue in the race for governor?

Yes	Don't know	No
24	5	71

Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Agree

There is a widespread movement in Colorado public schools of kids dressing up as "furries" and identifying as cats.	17

"It's just plain stupid. If this happening, then it's just kids being kids."

"It sounds as stupid as some of the other conspiracy nonsense I hear, but even if it is true (big if) who cares?"

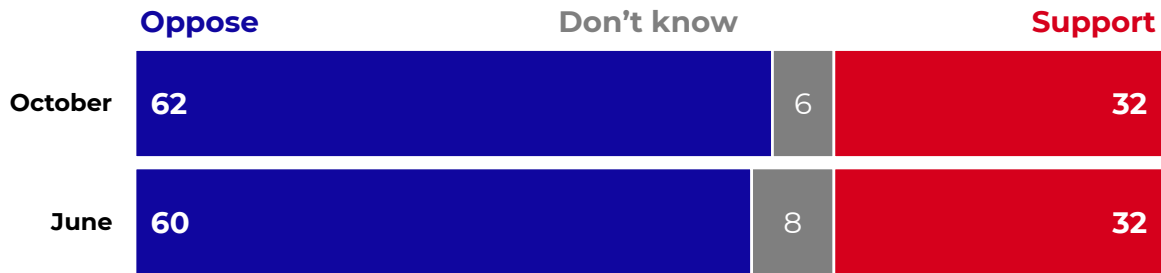*"She is CRAZY. She is brainwashed and ignorant of reality."*

"I think she's a dumbass of epic proportions"

"I feel her claim is unfounded and asininely stupid. It is pathetic that a candidate for governor is wasting people's money and time to pursue such a dumb cause."

Voters continue to overwhelmingly support abortion rights – and understand that the GOP wants to ban abortion

Colorado voters oppose SCOTUS' decision to overturn *Roe* by a margin similar to what we saw in June. Now, an even stronger 70% agree that all women in Colorado should have access to abortion care (up from 67% in February). **Meanwhile, nearly two thirds of voters believe that if the GOP takes power in Colorado, they will try to ban abortion here**; and big margins also believe that if they take power in DC, they'd try to ban abortion nationwide and that electing O'Dea would make it more likely that the Senate would vote to ban abortion.

Do you support or oppose the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade* and eliminating the federally protected right to have an abortion?

	Oppose	Don't know	Support
October	62	6	32
June	60	8	32

Do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Agree	Disagree	NET Agree Oct.	NET Agree Feb.
All women in Colorado should have access to abortion care.	70	23	+47	+38
If Republicans take power in Colorado, they will try to ban abortion.	64	25	+39	N/A
If Republicans take power in Washington, they will try to ban abortion nationwide, including here in Colorado.	59	33	+26	N/A
Electing Republican Joe O'Dea to the U.S. Senate would make it more likely that the Senate would vote to ban abortion nationwide.	59	22	+37	N/A

Abortion outweighs the economy as a voting issue

In a test of just how powerful abortion is as a voting issue relative to the economy, we reframed the generic legislative ballot as a choice between a Democrat who supports Biden's policies on taxes and inflation and will also fight to protect a woman's right to choose an abortion versus a Republican who will fight to lower taxes and combat inflation and will vote to ban abortion, even in the case of rape or incest. The result was a 9-point increase in the Democratic lead compared to the straight generic ballot. The data are clear that ==when abortion is matched against taxes and inflation as an issue, it shifts the votes significantly towards Democrats.== The political benefit for Democrats is biggest among center-right white voters, particularly white non-college voters and those outside of the Denver Metro region.

Reframed Generic Ballot:

If this were all you know about the candidates for state legislature, for which candidate would you vote

- **A Democrat who supports Joe Biden's policies on taxes and inflation and will fight to protect a woman's right to choose an abortion**

- **A Republican who will fight to lower taxes and combat inflation and will vote to ban abortion, even in the case of rape and incest**

	Generic Legislative Ballot	Reframed Generic Ballot	Change
Democratic candidate	47	54	+7
Republican candidate	42	40	-2
NET Democrat	+5	+14	+9
Likely Voters			
Democrats	+78	+80	+2
Unaffiliateds	+5	+14	+9
Republicans	-72	-55	+17
Voters of color	+24	+25	+1
White men	-5	+7	+12
White women	+5	+17	+12
White non-college	-16	-2	+14
White college	+19	+26	+7
Denver Metro	+19	+24	+5
Rest of state	-9	+2	+11

Lindsey Graham's national abortion ban is a big motivator for center-left women – and a de-motivator for Republicans

As noted earlier in this report, Democratic motivation to vote is now in line with Republican motivation, an improvement from initial attitudes we polled over the summer. However, the issue of abortion has the potential to shift the equation further in Democrats' favor. When we tell voters that Republicans in the U.S. Senate have recently introduced legislation to ban abortion nationwide, it **boosts motivation among pro-choice voters and Democratic and unaffiliated women while, perhaps just as important, significantly decreasing motivation among anti-choice voters and Republicans.**

As you may know, Republicans in the U.S. Senate recently introduced legislation to ban abortion nationwide.

Knowing this, once again, rate your level of motivation to vote in the November election for Governor, Senate, Congress, and other offices on a scale from zero to ten, where zero means you do not feel at all motivated to vote in the election, and ten means you feel extremely motivated to vote in the election.

	Initial	With GOP Abortion Ban	Change
	MEAN motivated		
Democrats	8.95	8.98	+0.03
Unaffiliateds	8.19	8.33	+0.14
Republicans	8.96	8.42	-0.54
Democratic men	8.90	8.73	-0.17
Democratic women	8.98	9.16	+0.18
Unaffiliated men	8.55	8.60	+0.05
Unaffiliated women	7.86	8.10	+0.24
Republican men	8.80	8.15	-0.65
Republican women	9.13	8.71	-0.42
Support *Dobbs*	9.17	8.72	-0.45
Oppose *Dobbs*	8.51	8.66	+0.15

About The Mountaineer

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Colorado has a long history as a leader in developing and implementing ground-breaking progressive policy, but as the state's leaders continue to build on this progressive tradition, they also face unique challenges that range from the state's TABOR amendment to its rapid growth.

The Mountaineer is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, and responsive tool to help inform the unique political and policy debates in Colorado. By conducting methodologically sound research and providing reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press, *The Mountaineer* will help progressive leaders and communicators shape the debate on the issues that matter most to Coloradans.

About the Study

Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey among a sample of 800 registered voters in Colorado, between October 6 and October 11, 2022 . The margin of error at the 95% confidence level for Colorado voters is +/- 3.5%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater. The survey was conducted over the phone and online, with online respondents recruited from multiple opt-in online panel vendors. Respondents were verified against a voter file, and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of Colorado's registered voter population across a variety of demographic variables including party registration, race, gender, age, education, region, and population density.

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