

# THE ROCKY Mountaineer

May 2020, Issue 3



## WHAT'S INSIDE:

- **DEMOCRATS LEAD ON THE BIG ISSUES AND POLIS RECEIVES HIGH MARKS ON CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE, WHILE REPUBLICANS STUMBLE**
- **TRUMP'S APPROVAL RATING DROPS AS BIDEN ESTABLISHES A CLEAR LEAD AND VOTERS SEE GARDNER AS TIED AT THE HIP TO THE PRESIDENT**
- **VOTERS WANT TABOR REFORM TO ALLOW THE STATE TO ADDRESS THE CORONAVIRUS-CAUSED BUDGET GAP**

# Welcome Back to The Mountaineer

Welcome to The Mountaineer, a resource for progressives and a guide for advocates across the state of Colorado, published by Global Strategy Group and ProgressNow Colorado. Research presented in this publication is the result of a survey conducted between May 7 and May 11, 2020 among 800 registered voters in Colorado.

This third publication will focus on the evolving political landscape, how voters view the parties and players through the lens of the coronavirus, and how voters want the government to address the state budget gap caused by the virus.

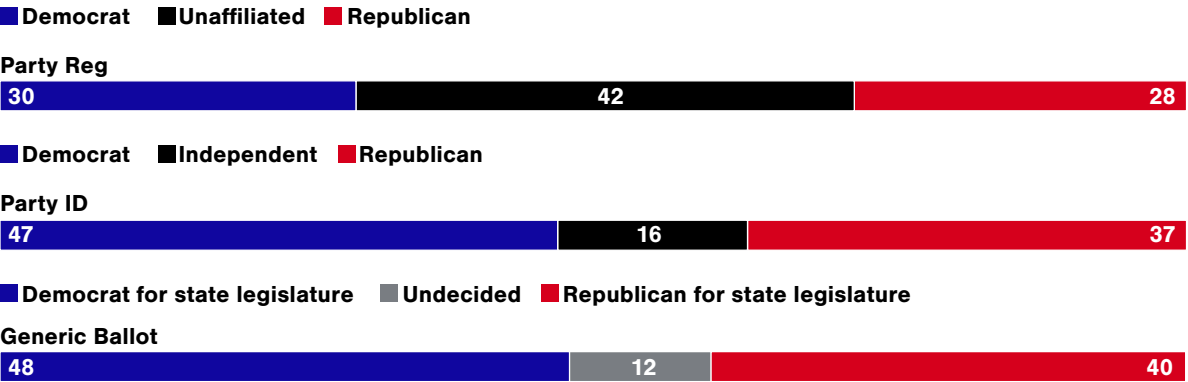
## In this issue

# Democrats Enjoy a Partisan Advantage as Unaffiliateds Strongly Prefer Dem Leaders

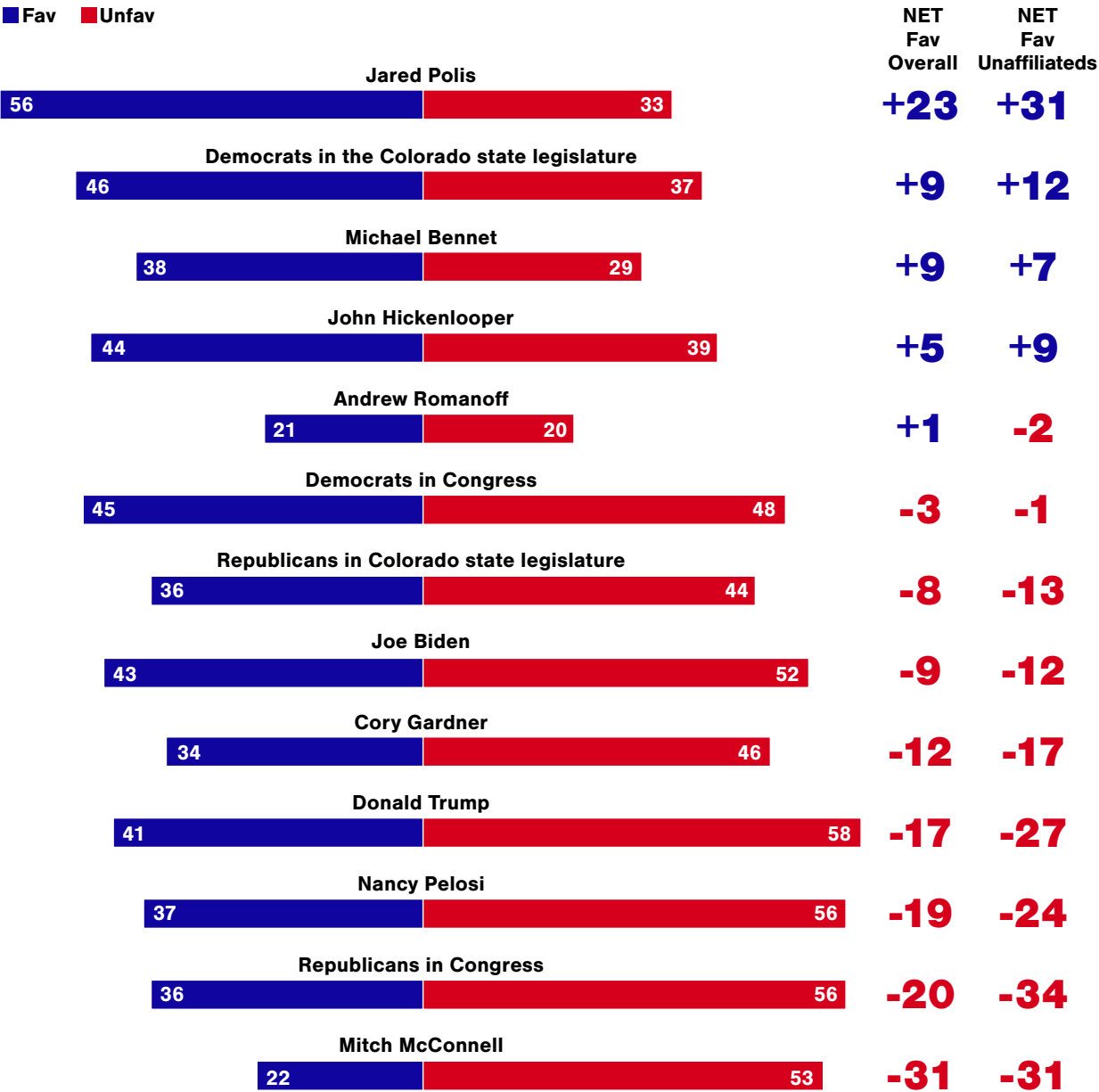
Despite a narrow 2-point lead on party registration, Democrats lead Republicans on party self-identification by 10 points and on the generic vote for state legislature by 8.

Meanwhile, where voters liked Democratic Governor Polis in February (46% favorable/40% unfavorable), his favorability has markedly improved since, rising from +6 to +23. President Trump’s favorability has dipped further underwater since February, as 52% now view the President very unfavorably. Unaffiliateds largely give Democrats solid ratings and are increasingly disgusted with GOP leaders on all levels, including Trump, Gardner, and Republicans in the legislature and Congress.

If the general election for state legislature were held today, for whom would you vote?



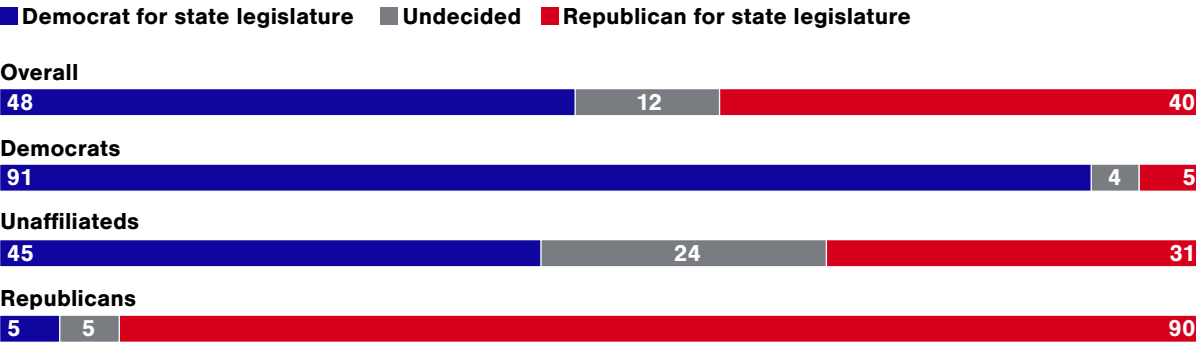
Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each person or group.



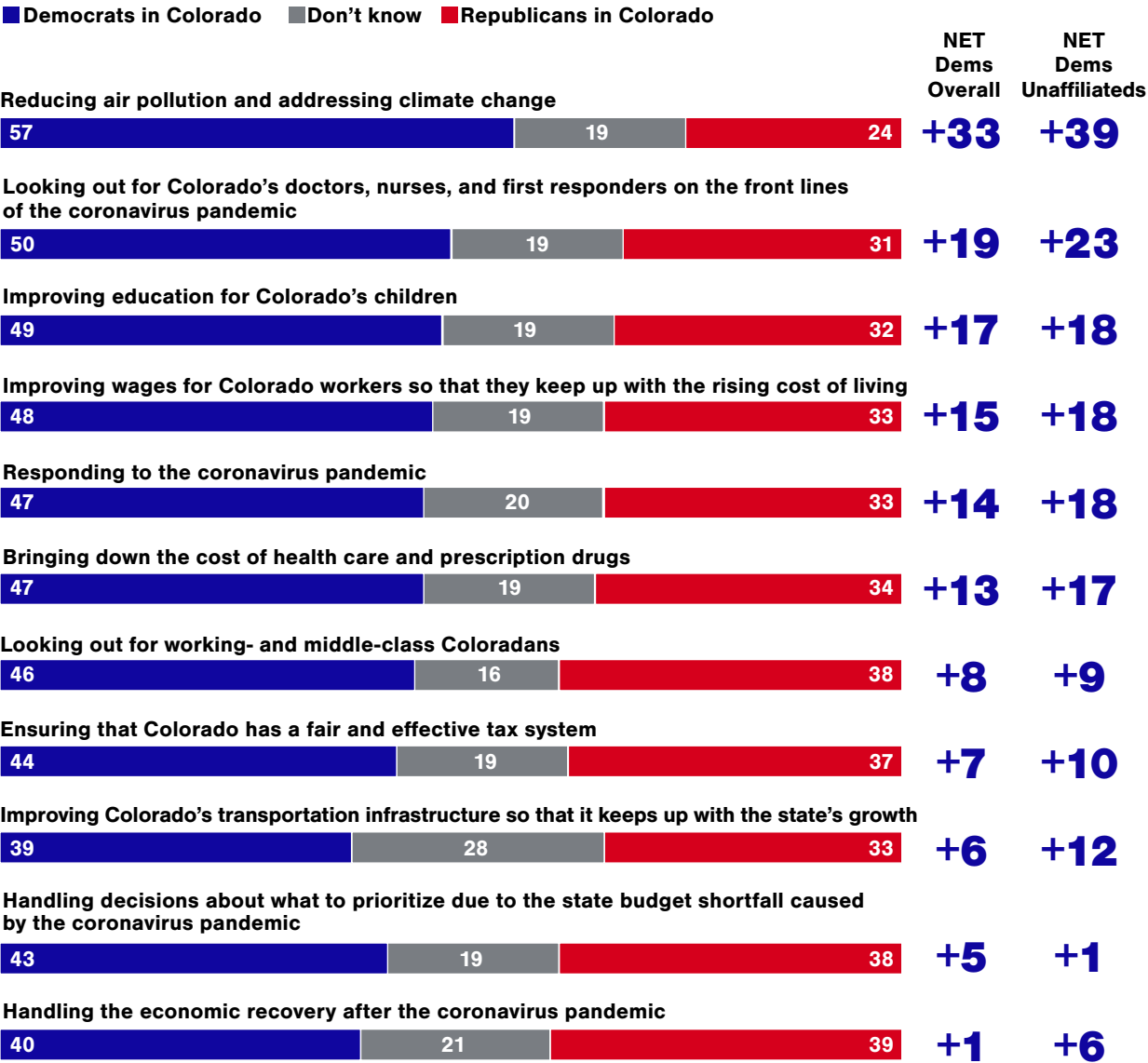
# Democrats Outpace Republicans on the Issues that Matter Most

Democrats and Republicans consolidate around their party’s generic candidate for state legislature, but **unaffiliated voters choose a Democratic candidate by a 14-point margin.** Further, voters overall, and especially unaffiliateds, trust Democrats in Colorado more than Republicans on the big issues – like addressing climate change, looking out for frontline workers, raising wages for Colorado workers, responding to the coronavirus pandemic, and bringing down health care costs. Voters now trust that Democrats will do better on taxes – the only issue on which Republicans led in February.

If the general election for state legislature were held today, for whom would you vote?



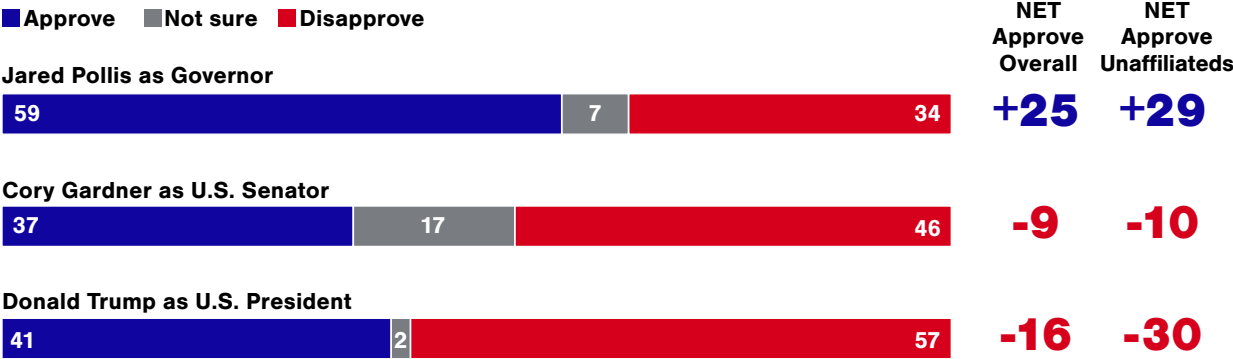
Who do you trust more to handle each of the following?



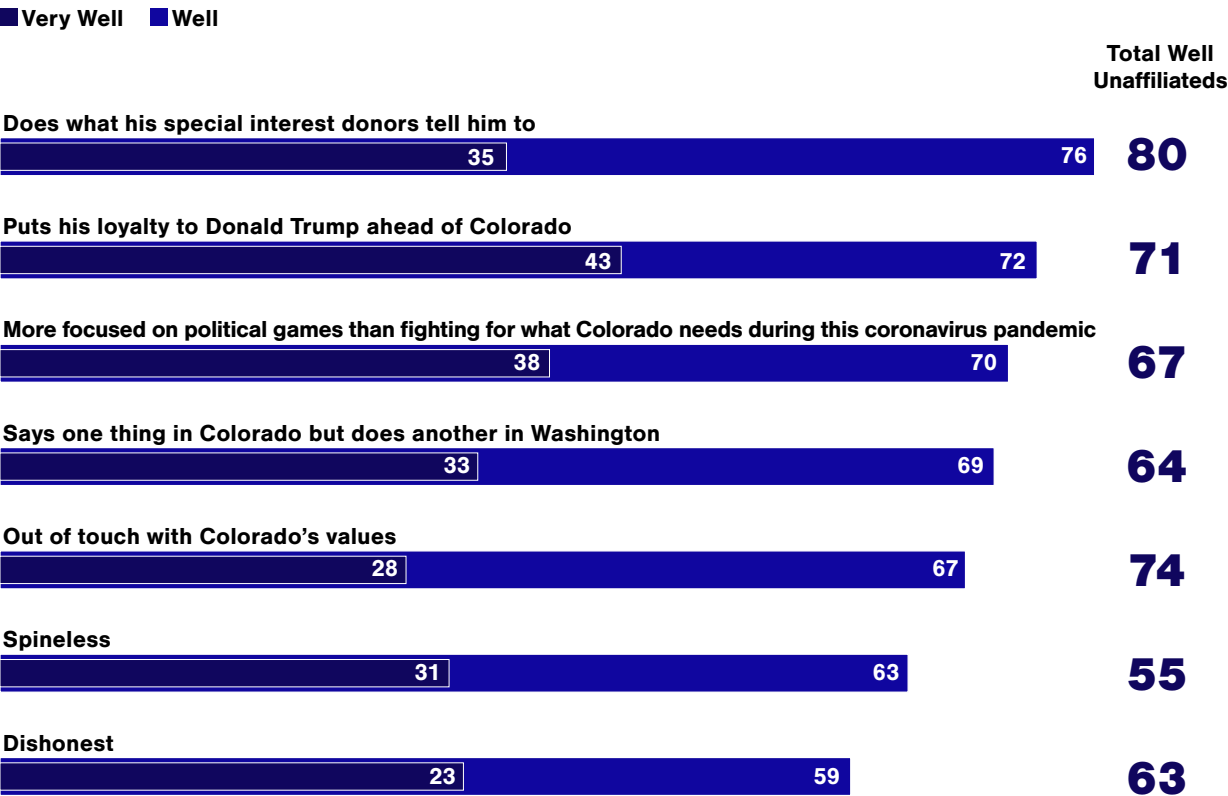
# Trump and Gardner's Job Approval Ratings are Far Underwater

Trump's job approval has dropped even further, from 44% in February to 41% now. Meanwhile, Gardner remains mired even lower at 37% and well underwater. Even more problematic for Gardner: huge majorities of Colorado voters believe that he puts his fealty to Donald Trump and his special interest donors ahead of Colorado. Voters also believe, overwhelmingly, that when it comes to the coronavirus, Gardner is more focused on political games than fighting for the state.

Do you approve or disapprove of the job each is doing?



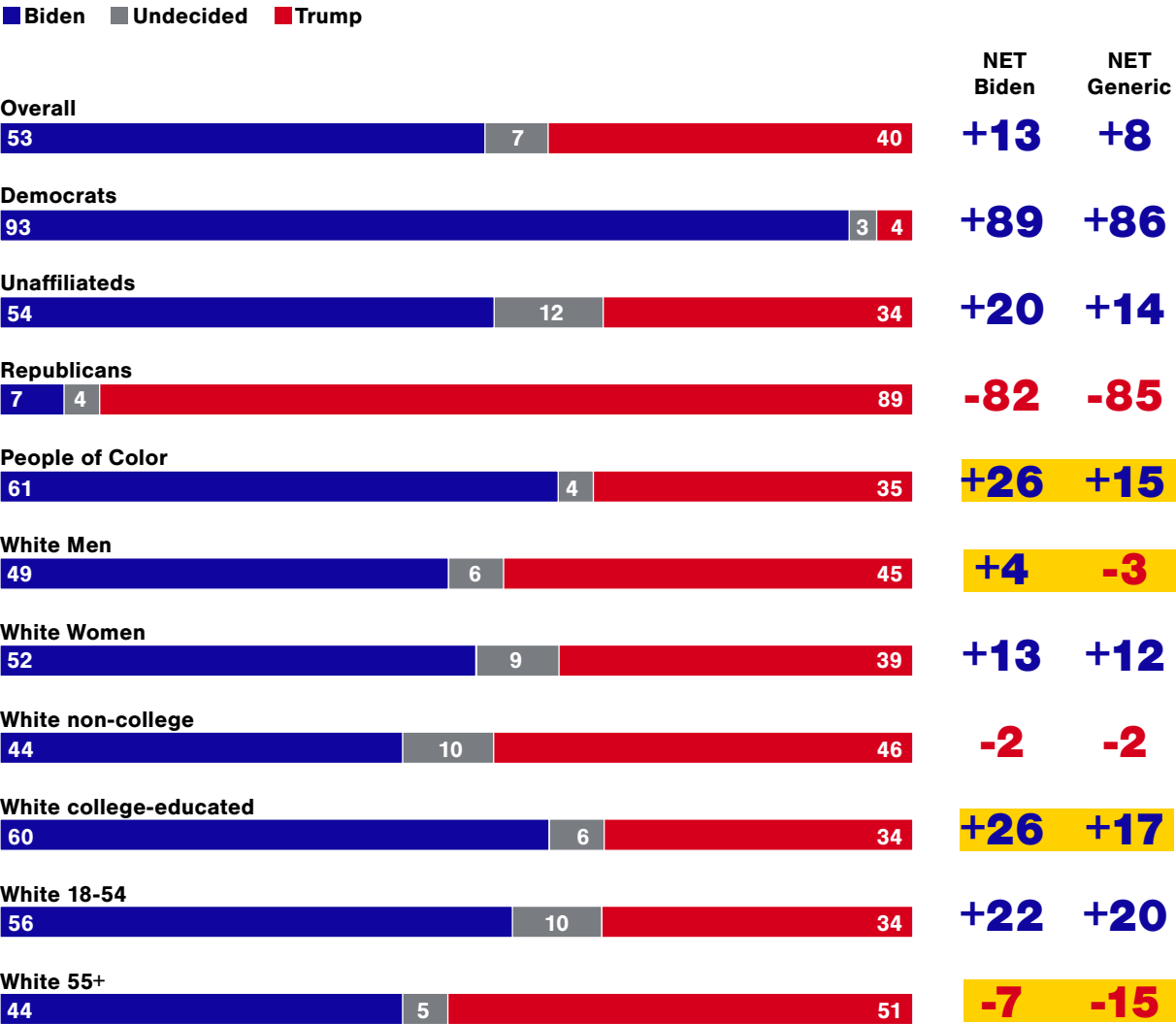
Please indicate how well each one describes Cory Gardner.



# Biden Benefits from Trump Backlash

**Joe Biden leads Donald Trump in the race for President by 13 points.** Democrats have consolidated around him more strongly than Republicans around Trump, and **unaffiliateds choose Biden by a 20-point margin.** Biden is taking advantage of the partisan terrain of the state to post large leads with white women and younger white voters while also over-performing the generic ballot significantly with voters of color, older whites, white men, and college-educated white voters.

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

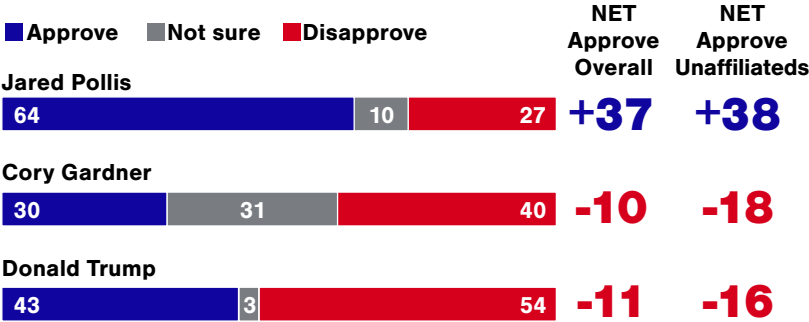


# Voters Approve of Polis on Coronavirus, Disapprove of Trump and Gardner

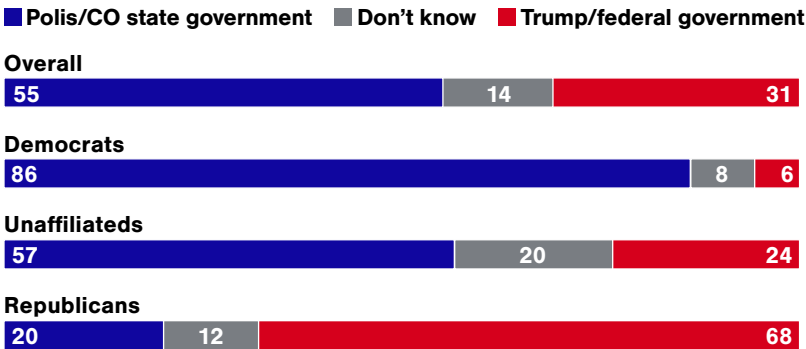
**Polis receives positive marks for his handling of the crisis overall and for his “safer at home” order - including support from two-thirds of Republicans on the latter.**

Just 22% of voters believe that Polis overreacted to the crisis (while a solid majority believe he got it about right), showing just how out-of-step his Republican and right-wing critics are. Meanwhile, a solid majority believe that Trump did not take the crisis seriously enough. As a result, voters overwhelmingly trust Polis over Trump to handle the crisis – with the Governor enjoying a huge margin among unaffiliateds on this question.

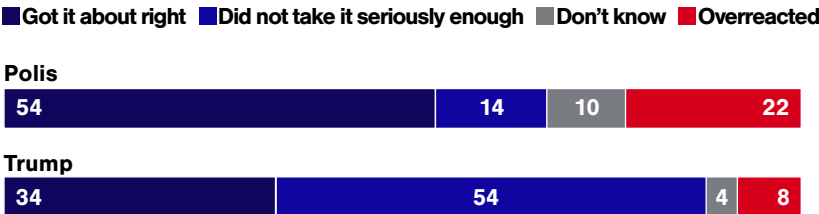
Do you approve or disapprove of the job each is doing of handling the coronavirus pandemic?



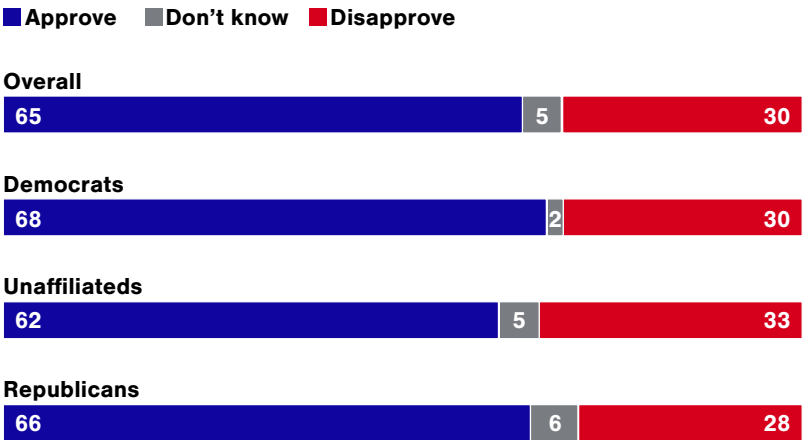
Who do you trust more to handle the response to the coronavirus pandemic?



Thinking about how Governor Polis and his administration/Donald Trump and his administration have handled the coronavirus pandemic, do you think that they...



As you may know, Governor Polis implemented a new “safer at home” policy that allowed some Colorado businesses to re-open in a limited capacity starting on April 27 if they enforce strict social distancing measures. Just based on what you know, do you approve or disapprove of this policy?





# Voters Have Serious Concerns About GOP's Actions During Crisis

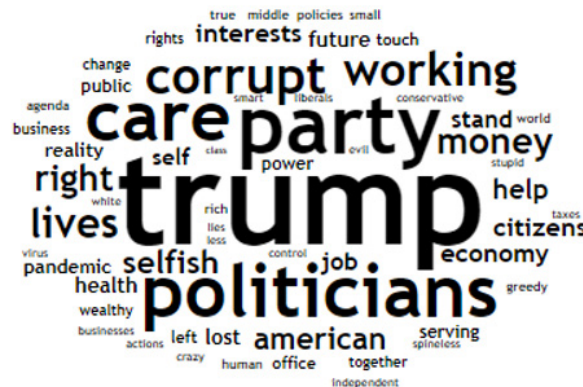
**When exposed to messages about a range of actions and positions Colorado Republicans have taken during the pandemic, more than 60% of voters have serious concerns about each.** Swing voters are particularly troubled by Gardner and the GOP's refusal to stand up to Trump and McConnell on federal assistance to the state, Gardner and Trump's political games around ventilators, and Ken Buck's decision to vote against every coronavirus relief bill that has been passed by Congress so far – but all of these messages are powerful critiques of Colorado Republicans. Taken together, these messages leave voters describing Colorado Republicans as corrupt politicians who put their fealty to Trump and big business ahead of the health and welfare of regular and working Coloradans.

**How would you describe Colorado Republicans in your own words, in just a sentence or two?**

## “Weak rubber stamps for Trump’s agenda”

**“Republicans are no longer working for the people, but for Trump and big businesses that have them in their pockets.”**

**“Colorado Republicans are nothing more than corrupt corporate-paid lackeys of Donald Trump.”**



**“Corrupt and spineless  
followers of Trump”**

**“Colorado Republicans demonstrate at every turn that loyalty to Trump and party is way more important to them than the safety and welfare of Colorado residents.”**

**“Money-grabbing, greedy, corrupt politicians who don’t care about regular Coloradans”**

**Please indicate whether each statement raises very serious concerns, somewhat serious concerns, or only minor concerns about Colorado Republicans.**

**Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell are opposing federal assistance to states like Colorado. Instead, they say that we should let Colorado “go bankrupt,” which would devastate our economy. While Republicans in other states have stood up to Trump and McConnell, Colorado Republicans, including Cory Gardner, have refused to do the same.**

After the Trump administration seized 500 ventilators from Colorado, Cory Gardner and other Colorado Republicans lavished praise on Trump for returning just 100 of them. The Denver Post called this, “the worst imaginable form of corruption” and said that Trump and Gardner were “playing a disgusting political game with our lives.”

Colorado Republicans supported the right-wing fringe activists who staged an armed rally at the Capitol, protesting the Governor's social distancing guidelines while brandishing assault rifles like AK-47s.

**Colorado Republicans opposed the Governor's initial stay-at-home order in March even though the CDC and state public health experts said such measures were necessary to slow the spread of the virus, protect our nurses and public health workers, and save lives.**

**Congressman Ken Buck, who is also the chairman of the Colorado Republican Party, is the only member of Congress to vote against every proposal that Congress has passed to provide assistance for hard-working people, small businesses, hospitals, and nurses during this crisis.**

The Republican leader in the Colorado legislature compared the Governor's stay-at-home order to Nazism, calling it a "Gestapo-like mentality" – even though Governor Polis is Jewish, lost family members in the Holocaust, and said he's taking these actions to save lives.

\* Swing Voters are defined as those voters who do not consistently back the Democrat or the Republican on Party ID, the generic legislative ballot, and the presidential ballot. They make up 35% of the registered voter electorate and they tilt to the center-right because Democrats are more locked in for their candidates.



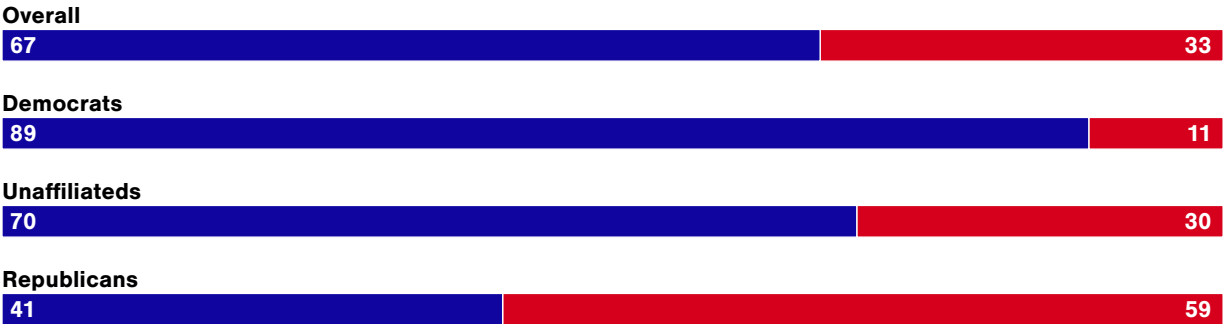
# Voters Support Changing TABOR to Tax Corporations and the Wealthy

Colorado is feeling the negative effects of the coronavirus. One of those effects is a massive state budget shortfall. Voters urge against cutting funding for health care, schools, and infrastructure to solve the problem. Instead, they support changing TABOR to fix the state's the broken tax system and make corporations (especially corporate polluters) and the wealthy pay their fair share. Perhaps most important, when an argument to change TABOR to fix our broken tax system is pitted against an argument from TABOR proponents, Colorado voters side with those who want to change the system by a two-to-one margin – with unaffiliateds favoring TABOR reform by an astounding 40-point margin.

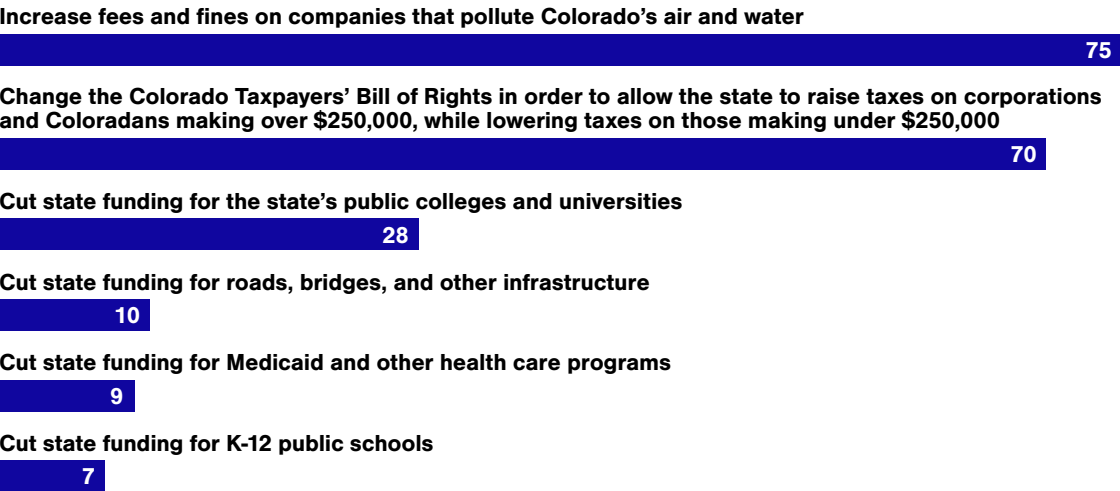
## Which statement do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?

Big corporations and the wealthy have gotten bailouts and tax loopholes for years. We should close the budget gap by fixing Colorado's broken tax system, eliminating loopholes, and making sure corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share – not by making massive cuts to our local schools, roads, and health care.

Colorado's businesses employ hundreds of thousands of people across the state and many of them are at risk of shutting their doors because of the crisis. We should close the budget gap by eliminating wasteful spending, not abolishing the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights and raising taxes on Colorado businesses already on the brink.



As you may know, because of the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the state of Colorado is facing a \$3-4 billion budget shortfall out of a \$30 billion budget – about 20% of the state's General Fund budget. Below is a list of actions the state could take to close this shortfall. Even if you would prefer not to do any of these, which two of these options would you be most supportive of to help close that budget gap?



## About The Mountaineer

**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 May 7 - May 11, 2020. The survey was conducted online via a combination of text-to-web methodology, with voters chosen at random from the voter file, and with respondents who were 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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