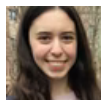


Democrats' BIF Opportunity: Selling the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal to American Voters



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The bipartisan infrastructure deal (BIF) was a historic achievement that few thought possible. But since its passage in November, the law has done little to move voter opinion in Democrats' favor.

To find out why and what to do, Third Way and Impact Research conducted a survey of 2000 likely 2022 voters to investigate voter opinion on the BIF and its messaging. The results point to one fixable imperative and several simple but important messaging tips for Democrats when it comes to talking about the law. This memo lays out ways to maximize the electoral impact of the BIF for members in swing districts, and for the Biden administration as it looks to trumpet its accomplishments in 2024.

The Fixable Imperative: Voters Have No Idea BIF Passed and is Law.

Quite simply, voters do not know the bill was passed. While voters express high levels of support for the deal once they hear about it, **only 24% of voters think the bill is law.** Meanwhile, a plurality (37%) says they “don’t know” the status of the bill, 30% say “it is still being worked on in Congress but isn’t law yet,” and 9% believe it is not being worked on in Congress and will not be passed.

Given that a large share believes the deal is still being worked on in Congress, it is clear that voters are confusing the BIF with BBB, which, of course, has not passed. In selling this legislation, the first order of business is to remind, inform, and convince voters that it is now law.

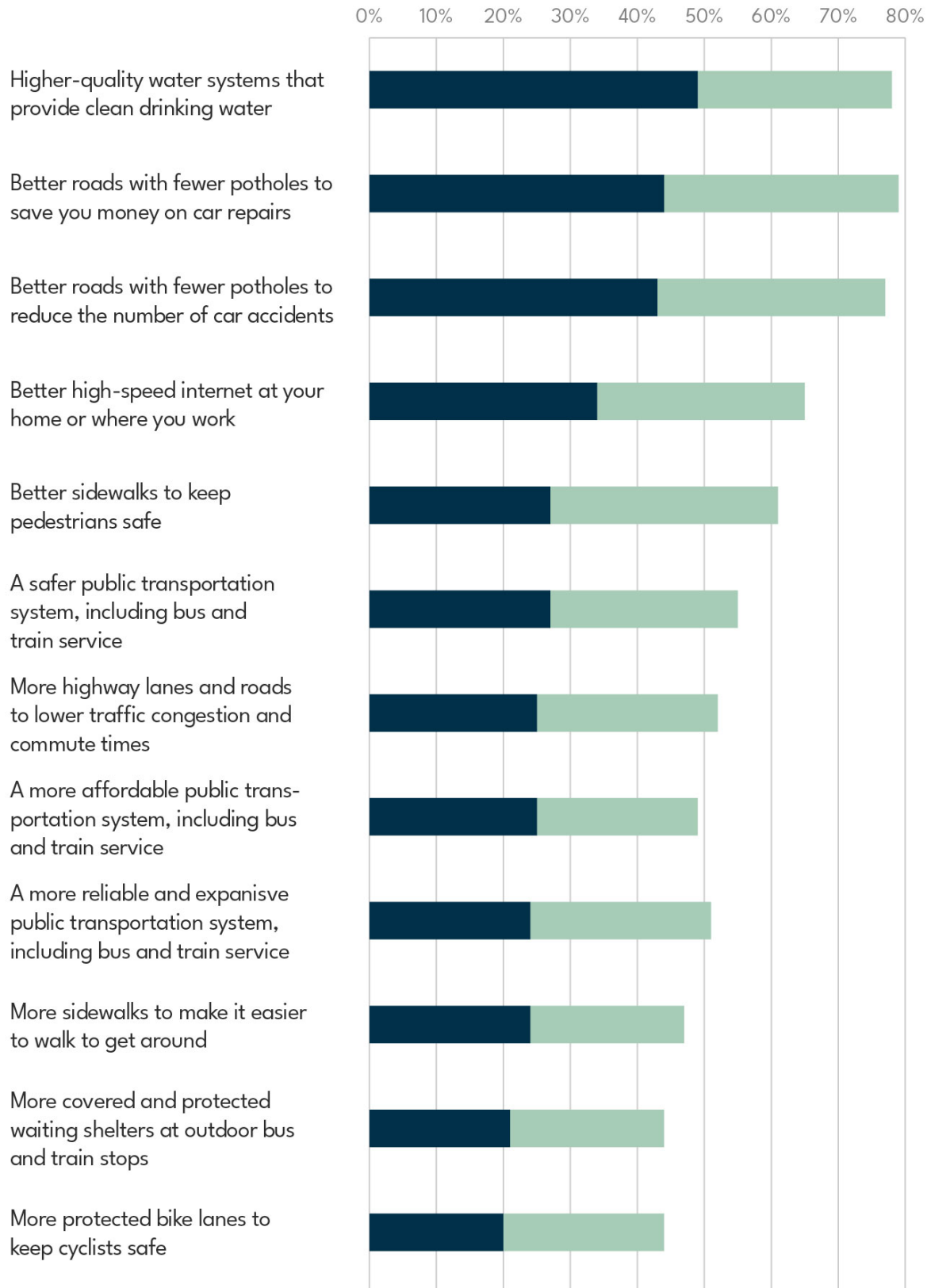
The Messaging Imperative – Voters Need to Know What They Get from the Deal.

When voters hear about the BIF’s basic provisions, they are overwhelmingly supportive. After hearing a description of the package, support for it reaches 80% with all voters and exceeds 70% across urban, suburban, smaller metros, and rural areas.

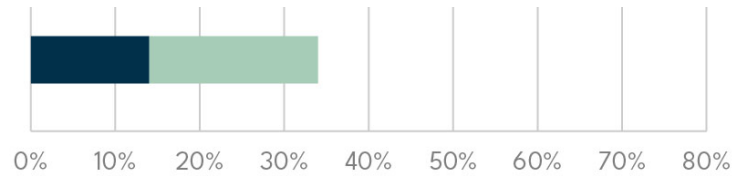
The most basic, everyday provisions of the package are its biggest selling points. Better roads with fewer potholes and better water systems for cleaner tap water led as the most-popular provisions, with 79% calling better roads with fewer potholes an “extremely important” or “very important” priority, and 78% calling higher-quality water systems “extremely important” or “very important.” These were top priorities across big cities, big city suburbs, smaller metros, and rural areas. Better high-speed internet sits atop the middle tier of priorities, with 65% calling it an “extremely important” or “very important” priority.

Infrastructure Priorities

■ Extremely important ■ Very important



More bike lanes to make it easier to use a bike to get around

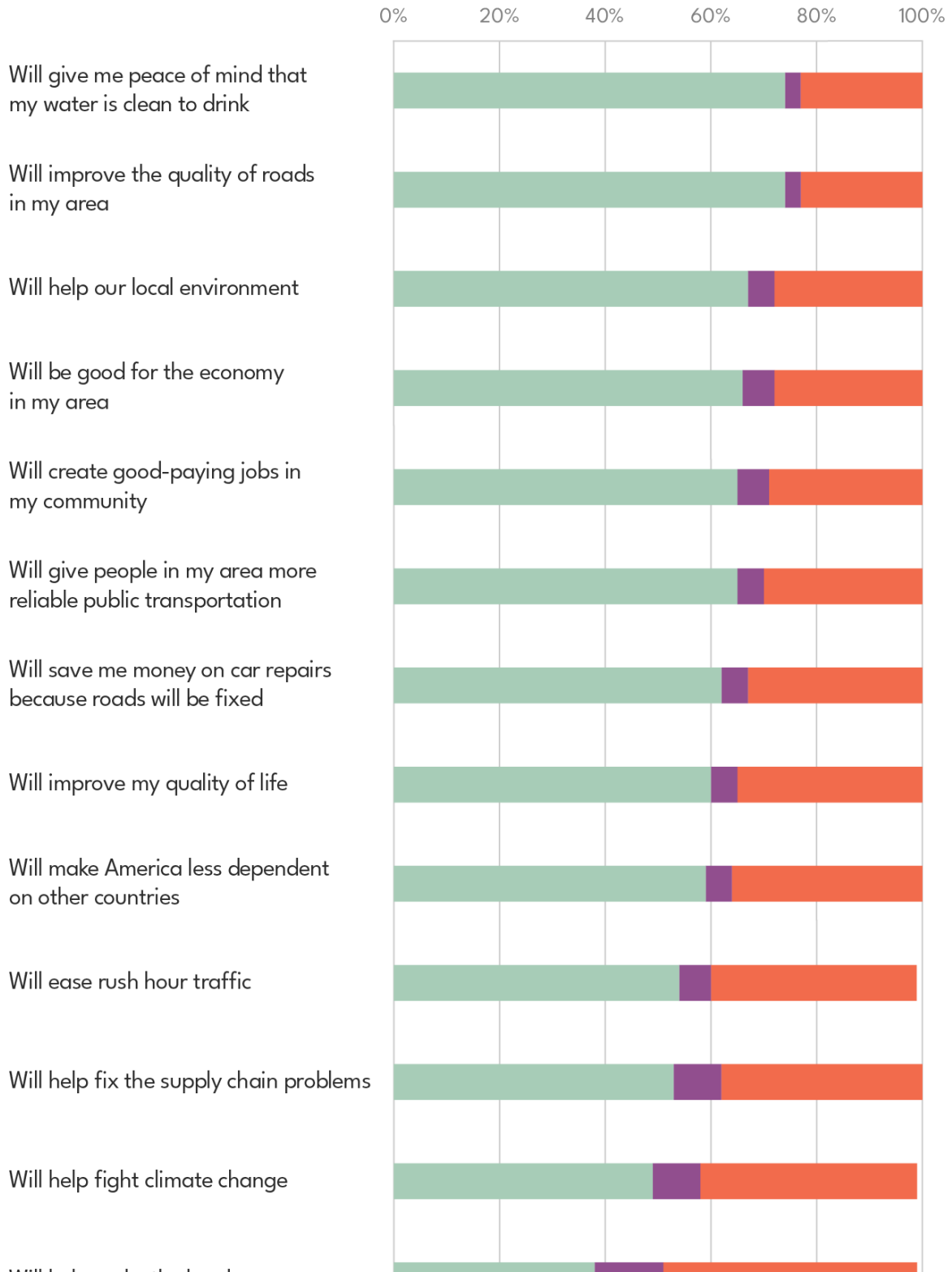


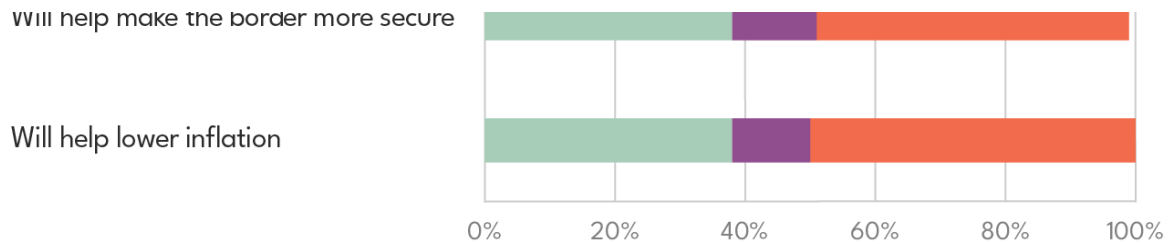
Source: Third Way and Impact Research conducted an online poll of 2000 likely 2022 general election voters from June 2-June 9, 2022.

These everyday items are not only most popular with voters, they are also most believable. Once voters learn about the BIF, 74% think it will give them peace of mind that their water is safe to drink and 74% think it will improve the quality of roads in their area. Two-thirds think it will help their local environment, will be good for the economy in their area, and will create good-paying jobs in their community. Notably, far smaller shares believe it will help address climate change (49%) and lower inflation (38%).

Three-Quarters Believe BIF Will Improve Their Water Quality & Roads

■ Describes Well
 ■ Don't know
 ■ Does Not Describe Well





Source: Third Way and Impact Research conducted an online poll of 2000 likely 2022 general election voters from June 2–June 9, 2022.

Finally, a message highlighting that the BIF will create jobs that don’t require a college degree stood out as the top message. And when reading a description of the law, voters highlighted “Buy American” as an important element. “Buy American” especially resonated in rural areas and smaller metros.

Better roads, cleaner water, and faster internet made with American products and built by American workers is what this deal is about and what sells.

The BIF deals with voters’ everyday concerns in straightforward, tangible ways. Messaging that highlights the basic facts of the deal drives home just what they stand to gain from it.

The Messaging Trap – Don’t Make this About Other People’s Problems.

The BIF represents a tremendous opportunity for Democrats to appeal to voters across groups and partisan divides, but its benefits must be presented as universal. Democrats should avoid falling into a messaging trap by remembering that **most Americans have drivable roads, drinkable water, and working internet**. They want them to be **better, safer, or faster**.

Just as the most resonant pieces of the ACA were those that mattered to people regardless of their income and insurance status—including pre-existing conditions, coverage that cannot be taken away, and an end to coverage limits—the most resonant pieces of the BIF are ones that do not seem to benefit one group of people over another.

There is a key distinction between providing *access* to clean water and internet and providing improvements to existing services. Democrats tend to focus on providing access to basic services, and this law does great work in those areas. But just as most Americans had health insurance when we debated the ACA, most Americans have access to drinkable water and decent internet and perceive conversations about access to be directed to someone else. By talking about better quality water systems that will improve water safety, improvements to internet connectivity, and better and safer roads, we can show that this package is directed at a broad swath of people.

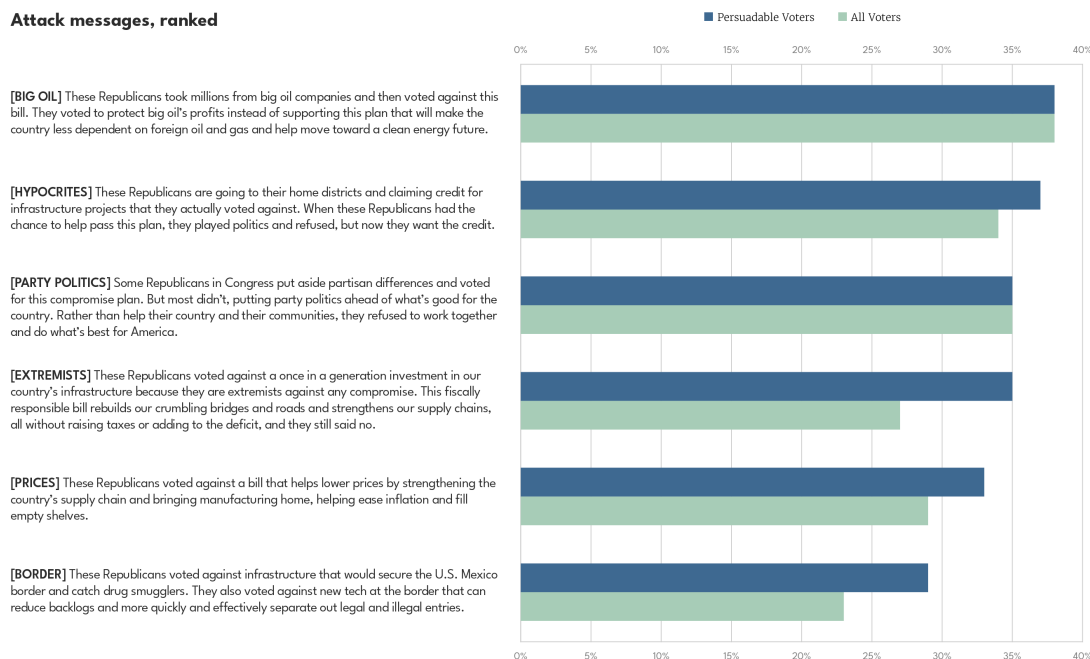
There Are Opportunities to Attack Republicans who Voted No.

The ACA set up prime opportunities to attack Republicans for trying to strip care from millions of Americans. The BIF is not set up in quite the same way, but still provides opportunities to go on the attack. Attacking Republicans for their hypocrisy and for their ties to Big Oil create some pain.

Among persuadable voters, a message attacking Republicans for siding with Big Oil stood out, with 38% saying they were “much less likely” to support a Republican based on the message. Negative messaging calling out Republican hypocrisy for trying to claim credit for projects they voted against, and putting party politics ahead of what is good for the country, followed as the next-best negative messages.



Attack messages, ranked



Source: Third Way and Impact Research conducted an online poll of 2000 likely 2022 general election voters from June 2-June 9, 2022.

Some Additional Don'ts.

While many provisions stood out as highly persuasive to voters, a few common Democratic messaging tactics fell to the bottom as particularly unpersuasive.

Voters believe that the BIF would benefit their communities in specific and tangible ways, but do not believe claims that the deal would address every problem the country faces. Voters do not believe the deal will fight inflation, nor do a majority believe it will address climate change.

Voters also did not gravitate towards a message on how the package will improve racial equity. While the racial equality message performed better with Black and Latino voters compared to all voters and persuadable voters, it still fell far behind universal messages on jobs, clean water, and roads and bridges.

Democrats should remain focused on what the law is most specifically about and not pound square pegs into round holes.

Conclusion

Democrats have a long way to go in convincing voters of what they stand to gain from the bipartisan infrastructure deal. But the task is not overly complicated; the deal's popular provisions speak for themselves. By making clear that this law has been passed, and communicating that the most popular components of the law are headed to their communities, Democrats can leverage their success passing the BIF into electoral gains.

Methodology

Third Way and Impact Research conducted an online poll of 2000 likely 2022 general election voters from June 2 - June 9, 2022. Interviews were conducted across four types of regions: big cities, big-city suburbs, smaller metros, and rural areas. The margin of error is +/-2.2 percentage points and the margin of error for each universe is +/- 4.4 percentage points.

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