**Appendix for “Bridging the Blue Divide”**

In this appendix, we describe in more detail our (1) figures showing Democratic gains among affluent and suburban voters; (2) coding of party platforms; (3) analysis of Twitter; (4) comparison of the Democratic economic agendas of 1993-94, 2009-10, and 2021-22; and (5) interviews with national policymakers and progressive group leaders.

**Democrats’ New Electoral Base**

Figures 1 and 2 show Democrats’ gains in suburban districts and among more affluent voters (while retaining the support of the poorest voters). For the former, as noted in the text, we use data from Bloomberg’s City Lab (Montgomery 2020). The “Congressional Density Index” (CDI) divides congressional districts by density based on households per square mile within U.S. Census tracts. Each congressional district’s density is the population-weighted average of the density of its tracts, with adjustments for tracts split across districts. Based on fuzzy clustering carried out by a machine-learning algorithm, the CDI then assigns districts to one of the six categories listed in the text: pure rural (70 districts), rural-suburban (114), sparse suburban (86), dense suburban (83), urban-suburban (48), and pure urban (34).

Figure 2 shows support for the Democratic candidate versus support for the Republican candidate in the 2008-20 presidential elections, based on Cooperative Election Study (CES) data (Kuriwaki 2022). An attentive reader may note that net support is above 50 percent for many income groups in many of the races, despite the closeness of all four elections. While the Democratic presidential candidate has not won huge margins in these elections, the following reasons likely explain why support is so high in the figure: (1) the Democratic candidate did win three-quarters of the elections (and the popular vote in all four), (2) third-party candidates are dropped, (3) the CES (carried out by YouGov) may well be surveying more Democrats than Republicans, a common problem today, and (4) while survey weights provided by the CES are helpfully adjusting each income group’s mean support in the correct direction, they may not be providing enough adjustment, since we apply the survey weights constructed for the entire sample to each income group separately. (CES does not provide survey weights for each distinct income group.) For our purposes, however, the important comparison is not between Democrats and Republicans but between higher-income and lower-income voters. The U-shaped curve is not an artifact of the CES data, as it also appears in other surveys, such as the American National Election Studies, though the CES is distinctively well-designed for looking at the highest-income voters, which is why we use it.

**Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) Coding of Party Platforms**

The CAP coding system encompasses 20 major topics and 220 subtopics. We aggregated these topics into three issue areas: “economic” (for example, health, labor, and macroeconomics), “cultural/identity” (e.g., civil rights and immigration), and “defense/international.” As noted, CAP’s coding of party platforms builds on the work of Wolbrecht (2016). The major parties’ platforms are divided into sentences and self-contained sentence fragments (together, referred to as “quasi-sentences”), and each substantive quasi-sentence is given a single topic and subtopic code. The share of the platform given to a particular area, then, is simply the number of quasi-sentences on that (sub)topic divided by all substantive quasi-sentences in the platform.

After reviewing the platforms and their coding, we decided to include CAP’s “law, crime, and family issues” topic code within the cultural/identity category, because it was primarily a cultural issue during the period we examine (1980-2020), and to treat its “government operations” major topic as a separate “other” category, as it subsumes a wide range of both economic and non-economic issues. We also placed “Native American Affairs” in this residual category (subtopic 2102). The table below shows the placement of topics (with CAP topic code or subtopic code in parentheses) within our three areas.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Economic** | **Cultural/Identity** | **Defense/International** | **Other** |
| Macroeconomics (1); Health (3); Agriculture (4); Labor and Employment (5); Education (6); Environment (7); Energy (8); Transportation (10); Social Welfare (13); Community Development and Housing Issues (14); Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce (15); Space, Science, Technology, and Communications (17); Foreign Trade (18); Public Lands and Water Management (21), except “Native American Affairs” (2102) | Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties (2); Immigration (9); Law, Crime, and Family Issues (12) | Defense (16); International Affairs and Foreign Aid (19) | Government Operations (20); “Native American Affairs” (2102) |

There are two salient limits to the CAP data. First, it captures the weight placed on different topics (or, more accurately, the share of the platform devoted to them) rather than the specific positions that parties take. Second, the CAP data—or, indeed, any platform analysis based just on the occurrence of certain topics—cannot easily identify “mixed” issues. For example, pledging to improve the conditions of low-wage work in the child care and home care sectors does not merely signal an economic stance; it potentially sends a powerful signal that the party values workers of color (who comprise the majority of such workers). Nonetheless, the CAP data are well-suited for identifying what share of platform priorities are basically economic.

We also considered the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP), but its categories and coding are not well-designed for comparing the main issue emphases of the Republican and Democratic Parties over recent election cycles. We did look at the two most relevant categories: support for the welfare state (“welfare”) and whether the party stresses the importance of the state as a regulator of a market economy (“eco”). With regard to both, according to the CMP data, Democrats have moved left (Lehmann et al. 2022).

To give a sense of the substantive underpinnings of the patterns we found, we also pull out two topic areas: civil rights and health care. The figures below show a clear upswing in attention to civil rights in 2016 and 2020, which is almost certainly a response to the candidacy and presidency of Donald Trump in 2016 and the nationwide protests surrounding the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Notably, attention to health care has risen even more sharply and, in 2020, health care comprised almost exactly as large a share of the platform as civil rights.

**Twitter Data and Analysis**

We consider Twitter an excellent medium for assessing which messages are given priority by party elites. Because of the word constraints of Twitter, this text is focused on providing very clear and pithy messages—unlike many other forms of communication that might be analyzed, such as speeches in the Congressional Record. Further, tweets can be linked to individual politicians. This allows us to single out the messages of the congressional leadership and the president and compare them across parties and, within the Democratic Party, between the leadership and members of Congress with different constituencies. (Whenever a politician had a personal or campaign as well as well as an official account, we collected tweets from both.)

We also believe Twitter is a medium that is particularly likely to pick up tailored appeals to culturally liberal Democrats if party elites are making those arguments. First, Tweets are low-cost—nothing more than a smart phone and a few minutes are required—and they do not require much if any coordination. Thus they allow the president or members of Congress to signal their support for groups or hit hot buttons without gaining collective agreement on what to say, much less confronting any of the messy business of governance. Second, the audience on Twitter is unrepresentative in ways that only magnify the incentive to use tweets for this purpose: more educated, affluent, younger, more intense, and more likely to back the Democratic Party (Wojcik and Huges 2019). Both party activists and highly engaged Democratic voters closely follow Twitter. Finally, Twitter is a low-cost way of shaping the news cycle, which, in a polarized era, generally means amplifying highly partisan messages. In short, Twitter is a hard test for our argument that party elites emphasize economic rather than social liberalism.

***Data Collection***

We first constructed a list of all Democrats and independents who caucus with Democrats in Congress between January 2015 and December 2022, or the 114th to 117th Congresses, from Congress’ website, including which of these Congresses they served in.[[1]](#endnote-1) We added the two Democratic presidents in this timeframe to the list. Ultimately, we have a list of 353 Democrats for this period.

We next collected Democrats’ Twitter handles. We took the official Twitter handles of members serving in the 117th Congress from a U.C. San Diego library compilation.[[2]](#endnote-2) We found the official Twitter accounts of members who did not serve in that Congress but did at any other time since 2015 through individual queries for each member of Congress on Twitter’s website. We found the personal and/or campaign accounts for all of these Democrats, including those in the 117th Congress, in the same way. While there are numerous digital resources that list all official congressional Twitter accounts, to our knowledge, ours is the first compilation of Democrats’ official and personal accounts. We also include both the official, e.g., @POTUS, and personal, e.g., @joebiden, accounts for the president.

We used the academictwitteR package in R with unlimited API access to scrape and build a dataset of their tweets (since February 2023, Twitter has ceased providing free API access to academic researchers). Critically, we only collected tweets when members were in Congress or president. For example, we only scraped tweets for Representative Tulsi Gabbard between January 3, 2015, and January 2, 2021, when she left Congress, and for President Joe Biden from January 20, 2021, and January 2, 2023, when he was president. This resulted in 2,948,009 tweets from all Democrats, 62,826 of which were from the party’s leadership.

For our comparison with Democratic leadership, we collected the tweets of Republican congressional leadership and President Trump in this same time frame. Since Trump was suspended from Twitter for his role in fomenting the January 6 insurrection, we could not scrape his tweets from his personal @realdonaldtrump account in this way (but we could scrape the tweets from his official archived @POTUS45 account). Instead, we were able to download his personal tweets from a specific archive for that account.[[3]](#endnote-3) In total, we have 60,654 tweets from the Republican leadership (30,741 without Trump).

The table below shows the top-10 terms for the Republican leadership including and excluding Trump (we show the results for the Republican leadership including Trump in the body of the paper). While the specific top terms vary somewhat when Trump is included, Republicans’ broader topics are largely the same. Including Trump, only three of the Republican leadership’s top 10 trigrams are directly economic (Paycheck Protection Program, tax cuts jobs, and American Health Care Act). Excluding Trump, only four are (tax cuts jobs, Paycheck Protection Program, American Health Care Act, McConnell’s Cares Act). The majority of terms in both columns of the table are primarily cultural, such as those on the media or on issues like extolling members of the military or law enforcement or criticizing the Green New Deal (the last is a “mixed” issue, as the frequent GOP tweets citing the phrase mostly use it as a shorthand for alleged progressive extremism rather convey anything substantive about climate policy).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Republican leadership including Trump | Republican leadership excluding Trump |
| fake news media | tax cuts jobs |
| complete total endorsement | Paycheck Protection Program |
| Make America Great | men women uniform |
| Paycheck Protection Program | Chinese Communist Party |
| tax cuts jobs | American health care |
| New York Times | McConnell’s Cares Act |
| men women uniform | taxing spending spree |
| Chinese Communist Party | Green New Deal |
| sleepy Joe Biden | crisis southern border |
| American health care | law enforcement officers |

Finally, we coded each Democrats’ status as part of leadership; membership in several congressional caucuses, with a focus on the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC); if they represented one of the 50 wealthiest or poorest (by median household income) Democratically controlled congressional districts; if the Bloomberg Congressional Density Index classified their district as “dense suburban” or “sparse suburban,” which we refer to simply as “suburban”; and if Democrats flipped their district in the 2018 midterms.[[4]](#endnote-4) While some these categories are mutually exclusive, e.g., the wealthiest and poorest districts, others are not. The table below provides descriptive statistics on the overlap between these latter groups of Democrats, with the total number of Democrats that belong to each group.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Progressive Caucus/122 | Wealthy districts/50 | Poor districts/50 | Suburban districts/148 | Flipped districts/42 |
| Progressive Caucus /122 |  | 19 | 25 | 47 | 10 |
| Wealthy districts /50 | 19 |  | 0 | 28 | 13 |
| Poor districts /50 | 25 | 0 |  | 21 | 3 |
| Suburban districts /148 | 47 | 28 | 21 |  | 27 |
| Flipped districts /42 | 10 | 13 | 3 | 27 |  |

***Tweet Analysis***

Tweets collected and senders coded, we moved on to our analysis of tweets’ contents. Our primary tool here was calculating the most frequent trigrams—three-word n-grams—for each group of Democrats of interest and the Republican leadership. Common English stopwords were removed prior to the calculation of these terms. Once we had the top trigrams for each group, we manually removed terms that were politically non-substantive, e.g., “congressional art competition” and “Americans across country.” Last, we coded the top 100 politically-substantive terms for each group of Democrats into issue areas so we could develop a sense of the aggregate makeup of their top terms. Our categories try to capture nuance that is missed by a simple material/cultural binary, since all policy has material implications and issues that some regard as cultural, such as abortion, are very much material for those most directly affected. We thus placed issues that are racialized and gendered into two categories: “material, race and gender” and “rights, race and gender.” “Material, race and gender” captures tweet terms that talk about racial and gender inequality in explicitly economic terms, as in “racial wealth gap” or “equal pay equal work,” while “rights, race and gender” contains terms that foreground rights, such as “Roe v Wade,” even if the effects of those rights are material. The other category that deserves further explanation is “conservative heroes,” which includes the large number of Democratic tweet terms extolling the police and the military.

Our full list of categories are “health care,” “economic,” “rights, race and gender,” “conservative heroes,” “gun violence,” “voting rights,” “material, race and gender,” “climate change,” “other,” “Supreme Court,” and “Covid-19 pandemic.” The table below provides example terms included in each category. The full list of n-grams in each category is at the end of this appendix.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category | Examples |
| Health care | “affordable care act,” “people pre-existing conditions,” “affordable health care” |
| Economic | “build back better,” “paid family leave,” “inflation reduction act,” “green new deal,” “social security medicare,” “raise minimum wage,” “middle class families,” “food on table” |
| Rights, race and gender | “roe v wade,” “violence against women,” “first black woman,” “criminal justice reform,” “george floyd policing,” “martin luther king,” |
| Conservative heroes | “us military defends,” “law enforcement officers,” “men women uniform,” “keep us safe” |
| Gun violence | “end gun violence,” “universal background checks” |
| Voting rights | “voting rights act,” “john r lewis” |
| Material, race and gender | “racial wealth gap,” “black maternal health,” “reproductive health care,” “equal pay equal” |
| Climate change | “fight climate crisis,” “fossil fuel industry” |
| Other | substantive terms that didn’t fit into any of the above categories |
| Supreme Court | “ketanji brown jackson” |
| Covid-19 pandemic | “national testing strategy,” “public health crisis,” “practice social distancing” |

***Adjusting n-gram length***

To ensure that our choice of trigrams did not bias our results, we also ran the same analyses for two-word and four-word n-grams. Although the terms change, our findings are robust to changing the number of words we include in our terms. To illustrate this, the following two tables show the top ten politically-substantive bigrams for Democratic leadership versus Republican leadership and all Democrats. The next two tables do the same with quadrigrams.

Bigrams, Democratic vs. Republican leadership

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Democratic Leadership | Republican Leadership |
|  | health care | fake news |
|  | gun violence | tax reform |
|  | Supreme Court | law enforcement |
|  | working families | small businesses |
|  | middle class | Supreme Court |
|  | climate change | tax cuts |
|  | Build Back/ Back Better | southern border |
|  | voting rights | tax code |
|  | pre-existing conditions | Cares Act |
|  | Affordable Care/ Care Act | witch hunt |

Bigrams, Democratic leadership vs. all Democrats

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Democratic Leadership | All Democrats |
|  | health care | health care |
|  | gun violence | gun violence |
|  | Supreme Court | climate change |
|  | working families | small businesses |
|  | middle class | working families |
|  | climate change | Supreme Court |
|  | Build Back/ Back Better | public health |
|  | voting rights | voting rights |
|  | pre-existing conditions | mental health |
|  | Affordable Care/ Care Act | Social Security |

Quadrigrams, Democratic vs. Republican leadership

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Democratic Leadership | Republican Leadership |
|  | Build Back Better agenda | Tax Cuts Jobs Act |
|  | adequate national testing strategy | American Health Care Act |
| 3. | Kavanaugh’s nomination Supreme Court | approval rating Republican Party |
| 4. | Medicare Medicaid Social Security | briefing Coronavirus Task Force |
| 5. | protections Americans pre-existing conditions | reckless taxing spending spree |
| 6. | Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson | Failing New York Times |
| 7. | state local tax deduction | United States Supreme Court |
| 8. | Supreme Court United States | National Defense Authorization Act |
| 9. | quality affordable health care | radical left nothing Democrats |
| 10. | close racial wealth gap | Great American Outdoors Act |

Quadrigrams, Democratic leadership vs. all Democrats

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Democratic Leadership | All Democrats |
| 1. | Build Back Better agenda | Martin Luther King Jr |
| 2. | adequate national testing strategy | Build Back Better Act |
| 3. | Kavanaugh’s nomination Supreme Court | Women’s Health Protection Act |
| 4. | Medicare Medicaid Social Security | Voting Rights Advancement Act |
| 5. | protections Americans pre-existing conditions | equal pay equal work |
| 6. | Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson | John Lewis Voting Rights [Act] |
| 7. | state local tax deduction | Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act |
| 8. | Supreme Court United States | quality affordable health care |
| 9. | quality affordable health care | lower health care costs |
| 10. | close racial wealth gap | Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson |

**Comparing the Democratic Economic Agendas of 1993-94, 2009-10, and 2021-22**

To substantiate our claim that Democrats backed a more expansive set of economic proposals in 2021-22 than they had in the two prior intervals when they controlled the White House, Senate, and House, we examined official estimates of the budgetary impact of the major proposals advanced by the president and/or congressional leadership in six areas: (1) “stimulus,” recovery, and/or relief legislation; (2) health and social policy; (3) infrastructure investment; (4) climate policy, and (5) student loan changes. There were proposals in each of these five areas during each of these periods. (Because the climate and infrastructure proposals of 2021-22 were both contained within the American Jobs Plan, we do not separate out their costs.) With regard to (1)-(4), we focused on legislative proposals; with regard to (5), we also looked at presidential initiatives, because both Obama and Biden pursued student loan changes through executive action. (Clinton’s changes were contained in the Student Loan Reform Act of 1993.) Finally, we looked at (6) major revenue changes proposed by the president and his congressional allies.

The following tables list details and sources for each period. Whenever possible, we use initial White House estimates. As in the case of Build Back Better, proposals could have been scaled back prior to receiving a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) “score,” and we wanted to hew as closely as possible to Democratic leaders’ original goals. We present estimates for a ten-year period, adjusting for alternative “windows” through linear extrapolation. The baseline for budgetary changes is projected future spending and revenues over this interval. However, in one case—Obama’s tax proposals—we use estimates based on “current law” (effectively, this assumes expiring tax cuts will be extended). None of these choices is likely to have substantial impact on the aggregate totals for each period, much less the large differences between them.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Proposal** | **Impact** | *Clinton: 1993-94* | **Impact** | *Obama: 2009-10* | **Impact** | *Biden: 2021-22* |
| "Stimulus"/relief | $0.16 | Proposal defeated | $0.90 | Stimulus as proposed | $1.85 | Stimulus as proposed |
| Health and social policy | $0.47 | 9-yr on-budget cost of health plan | $0.38 | 10-yr on-budget outlays of ACA | $1.80 | incl 0.8T in tax cuts w. social purposes |
| Infrastructure | $0.09 | 4 yrs; Clinton's April budget | $0.05 | 2010 proposal for road/rail investments | $2.00 | incl some care economy measures |
| Climate | -$0.14 | BTU tax; 5-yr x 2 | $0.82 | 10-yr outlays |  | incl in above |
| Tax changes | -$0.44 | 5-yr x 2; includes EITC | -$0.49 | ACA on-budget revenue increases | -$1.33 | corporate tax changes (15 yrs) |
|  |  |  | -$0.85 | 10-yr cap-and-trade revenues | -$1.50 | top rate changes and enforcement |
|  |  |  | -$0.60 | Obama campaign plan relative to "current law" baseline |  |  |
| Student loan changes | $0.17 | 5-yr x 2; lower rates and fees under 1993 law | $0.02 | Enhanced income contingent loans; one-time cost to feds | $0.50 | widescale relief plus other changes; total reduced debt |
| *GDP* | *6.729* | *Q1 1993* | *14.431* | *Q1 2009* | *$22.31* | *Q1 2021* |
| ***As share of GDP*** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| "Stimulus"/relief | 2.42% | Proposal defeated | 6.24% | Stimulus as proposed | 8.29% | Stimulus as proposed |
| Health and social policy | 6.98% | 9-yr on-budget cost of health plan | 2.63% | 10-yr on-budget outlays of ACA | 8.07% | incl 0.8T in tax cuts w. social purposes |
| Infrastructure | 1.33% | 4 yrs; Clinton's April budget | 0.35% | 2010 proposal for road/rail investments | 9% | incl some care economy measures |
| Climate | -2.08% | BTU tax; 5-yr x 2 | 5.69% | 10-yr outlays |  | incl in above |
| Tax changes | -6.58% | 5-yr x 2; includes EITC | -3.41% | ACA on-budget revenue increases | -5.98% | corporate tax changes (over 15 years) |
|  |  |  | -5.86% | 10-yr cap-and-trade revenues | -7% | top rate changes and enforcement |
|  |  |  | -4.16% | Obama campaign plan relative to "current law" baseline |  |  |
| Student loan changes (executive branch) | 2.56% | 5-yr x 2; lower rates and fees under 1993 law | 0.15% | Enhanced income contingent loans; one-time cost to feds | 2.24% | widescale relief plus other changes; total reduced debt |
| **Total spending** | **13.29%** |  | **15.05%** |  | **27.56%** |  |
| **Total tax changes** | **-8.66%** |  | **-13.43%** |  | **-12.70%** |  |

Signature Spending and Tax Proposals under Democratic Trifectas, 1993-94, 2009-10, and 2021-22 (in trillions of current dollars)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sources |  |
| Biden: 2021-22 |  |
| General | https://www.crfb.org/blogs/biden-administration-has-approved-48-trillion-new-borrowing |
| Biden social & health | https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/28/fact-sheet-the-american-families-plan/ |
| Biden infrastructure & climate | https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/31/fact-sheet-the-american-jobs-plan/ |
| Student loan changes | https://budgetmodel.wharton.upenn.edu/issues/2022/8/26/biden-student-loan-forgiveness |
| Obama: 2009-10 |  |
| Obama tax plan | https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/publications/updated-analysis-2008-presidential-candidates-tax-plans-executive-summary-revised |
| Obama stimulus | https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/29/us/politics/29obama.html |
| Final health bill | https://www.cbo.gov/publication/21351 |
| Final climate bill | https://www.cbo.gov/publication/41189 |
| 2010 Obama infrastructure | https://www.politico.com/story/2010/09/obama-unveils-50b-road-rail-plan-041807 |
| Student loan changes | https://slate.com/business/2015/02/obama-pay-as-you-earn-how-the-president-spent-24-billion-helping-borrowers-pay-their-loans.html |
| Clinton: 1993-94 |  |
| Clinton stimulus | https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal93-1105049 |
| Clinton health plan | https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/103rd-congress-1993-1994/reports/doc07.pdf |
| Clinton tax package | https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/103rd-congress-1993-1994/reports/doc03.pdf |
| Clinton BTU tax | https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/business/1993/06/11/miscalculations-lobby-effort-doomed-btu-tax-plan/d756dac3-b2d0-46a4-8693-79f6f8f881d2/ |
| Clinton infrastructure | https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2187&context=jssw |
| Student loan changes | https://clintonwhitehouse3.archives.gov/WH/old.SOTU00/education\_bg.html |
| GDP |  |
|  | https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GDP |

In the manuscript, we reference the eligibility and benefit structure of the major economic initiatives pursued in 2021-22, noting that most were designed to deliver disproportionate benefits to lower-income Americans and phase out at higher income levels. Here we further substantiate these points, focusing on the major elements of the American Families Plan. We also provide similar information for President Biden’s cancellation of student loan debt.

* Child care: costs capped at 7% of household income for households with incomes up to 250% of state median household income (roughly $215,000 in states with highest median household income and $112,000 in states with the lowest median household income)
* Child Tax Credit: full credit ($3,000-3,600 dep. on age of children) available to households with annual incomes up to $112,500 for single-earning households and $150,000 for dual-earning households; partial credit (up to $2,000) through households making less than $400,000
* Student loan cancellation: $20,000 relief for Pell grant recipients; $10,000 for individuals making up to $125,000 or dual-earning households making up to $250,000
* Paid leave: Maximum benefit around $800/week; 90% of income covered for individuals making less than $14,500/year (<$290/week); 73% covered for those making less than $31,000 (<$620/week); and 53% for those making less than $59,600 (<$1,192/week).
* Pre-k: No benefit structure specified but funding to states was based on share of families with kids under 6 whose income was up to 200% of the federal poverty line

Sources: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/28/build-back-better-framework/

https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/benefits/pages/house-passes-build-back-better-act-with-paid-leave-and-aca-subsidy-provisions.aspx

https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00733)

**Interviews with Policymakers and Progressive Group Leaders**

We conducted 33 interviews with policymakers and progressive group leaders to better understand the formulation of BBB and the motives and activities of those closely associated with the most ambitious policy goals of the party in 2021-22. We began by identifying the major substantive areas covered by BBB, such as child care, paid leave, infrastructure, and climate policy. Then, based on an analysis of the legislative process as well as interviews with a few key experts active in the progressive nonprofit and foundation worlds, we identified the groups that appeared most active on these issues. We also identified the key advocates in Congress and the leaders of the most relevant congressional committees for each area, as well as a set of key figures in the White House and executive agencies who had responsibility for policy in these areas. In all, we identified roughly three dozen groups and a roughly equal number of agencies/offices/officials on the executive/presidential side.

Our interviews, which are ongoing, were semi-structured and designed to take one hour. Occasionally they were shorter; more often, longer. The interviews began with questions about the goals of the group and/or the career history of the policymaker. They then focused on the “upstream” story of where the key policy ideas that fed into BBB originated, including (if relevant) their own efforts to set the agenda. Next the interviews focused on the process by which these ideas became—or, in the majority of cases, did not become—law. We also asked general questions about the respondents’ perceptions of the Democratic Party, which voters and groups it was most responsive to, and how that had changed, if at all, in recent years. To encourage candor, we did not record interviews, which were primarily conducted on Zoom. However, interviewers took detailed notes. Because most respondents requested anonymity, we cannot list them here, but the one quote we use in the text came from a respondent who agreed to be cited. We should note too that we sought and received an exemption from Yale’s Human Subjects Committee (Berkeley grants an automatic exemption for elite interviews), and all respondents were provided with background on the study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

**Full list of terms in each Twitter ngram code**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Terms** |
| Health care | "affordable care act," "medicaid social security," "medicare medicaid social," "social security medicar,e" "health care right," "people pre-existing conditions," "pre-existing condition protections," "protections pre-existing conditions," "protections americans pre-existing," "americans pre-existing conditions," "affordable health care," "health care millions," "health care system," "away health care," "americans health care," "health care bill," "prescription drug prices," "health care costs," "access health care," "health care plan," "quality affordable health," "prescription drug costs," "health care coverage," "losing health care," "health care call," "risk losing health," "health protection act," "community health centers," "health care workers," "quality health care," "mental health care," "access quality affordable," "lower prescription drug," "make health care," "cost prescription drugs," "mental health services," "health care providers," "lower health care," "special enrollment period," "care human right," "health care human," "lower drug costs," "mental health resources," "health care professionals," "health care providers," "health care away," "take away health," "health care workers," "health care need" |
| Economic | "child tax credit," "student loan debt," "build back better," "american rescue plan," "back better agenda," "bipartisan infrastructure law," "bipartisan infrastructure deal," "american jobs plan," "medicaid social security," "medicare medicaid social," "back better act," "inflation reduction act," "social security medicare," "bold covid relief," "pass build back," "bipartisan infrastructure bill," "green new deal," "infrastructure investment jobs," "investment jobs act," "paycheck protection program," "paid family leave," "affordable child care," "family medical leave," "safety net program," "cancel student debt," "key safety net," "net program need," "snap key safety," "stand snap key," "count stand snap," "paid family medical," "paid sick leave," "chips science act," "medicare social security," "middle class families," "level playing field," "america's working families," "good-paying union jobs," "pay fair share," "make ends meet," "state local tax," "local tax deduction," "create millions good-paying," "create good-paying jobs," "millions good-paying jobs," "federal minimum wage," "deduction average deduction," "tax deduction average," "took state local," "put food table," "15 minimum wage," "help small businesses," "get back work," "public school funding," "school funding students," "funding students can," "families small businesses," "small business owners," "minimum wage 15," "raise minimum wage," "raising minimum wage," "economic impact payments," "small businesses need," "million new jobs," "economic impact payment," "support small businesses," "economy bottom middle," "corporations pay fair" |
| Rights race and gender | "roe v wade," "women's health protection," "violence women act," "equal rights amendment," "woman's right choose," "dream promise act," "criminal justice system," "end federal prohibition," "criminal justice reform," "federal prohibition marijuana," "justice policing act," "george floyd justice," "floyd justice policing," "first black woman," "martin luther king," "luther king jr," "dr martin luther," "first african American," "civil rights movement," "black history month |
| Conservative heroes | "brave men women," "keep us safe," "keep communities safe," "made ultimate sacrifice," "law enforcement officers," "put lives line," "men women uniform," "served active duty," "military defend right," "defend right say," "gold star families," "united states military," "active duty united," "duty united states," "armed services committee," "states military defend," "local law enforcement" |
| Gun violence | "universal background checks," "gun violence prevention," "gun violence epidemic," "end gun violence," "gun safety legislation," "background checks bill," "common sense gun," "prevent gun violence," "bipartisan background checks," "background checks act," "assault weapons ban," "victims gun violence," "gun safety laws" |
| Voting rights | "voting rights act," "lewis voting rights," "make plan vote," "voting rights advancement," "rights advancement act," "r lewis voting," "access ballot box," "john lewis voting," "john r lewis," "last day register," "find polling place," "days election day," "day register vote," "rights advancement act" |
| Material race and gender | "racial wealth gap," "close racial wealth," "reproductive health care," "help close racial," "black maternal health," "equal pay equal," "pay equal work," "paycheck fairness act," "clean drinking water" |
| Climate change | "fight climate change," "fight climate crisis," "combat climate change," "fossil fuel industry," "great american outdoors," "american outdoors act," "climate change real" |
| Supreme Court | "nomination supreme court," "kavanaugh's nomination supreme," "ketanji brown jackson," "brett kavanaugh's nomination," "judge ketanji brown," "supreme court justice," "supreme court nominee," "court united states," "supreme court united" |
| Covid-19 pandemic | "national testing strategy," "adequate national testing," "still adequate national," "public health crisis," "public health emergency," "public health experts," "new covid-19 cases," "delayed test results," "practice social distancing," "test results state," "results state reported," "help save lives," "health economic crisis," "please stay safe" |
| Other | "state local governments," "world war ii," "free open internet," "high school students," "since girls kidnapped," "educator know important," "former educator know," "students can count," "important public school," rights human rights," "defense production act," "restaurant revitalization fund," "cut red tape," "end filibuster pass" |

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**Notes**

1. <https://www.congress.gov/> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://ucsd.libguides.com/congress_twitter/home> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.thetrumparchive.com/> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Data on congressional district income comes from Proximity One, <http://proximityone.com/cd_mhi.htm>, which reports data from the US Census ACS survey. Our ranking of district density employs the same data we use in Figure 1, charting the density of the districts Democrats lost and won in the 2010 and 2018 midterm election: <https://github.com/theatlantic/citylab-data/tree/master/citylab-congress>. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)