



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Andrew Baumann and Stephen Riggs, Global Strategy Group
DATE: November 5, 2020
RE: **New Colorado Exit Poll: Latino/Latinas, Unaffiliateds, and College-Educated Whites Led Broad Repudiation of Trump, Gardner, and Proposition 115. GOP Exits 2020 With Brand in Tatters**

The 2020 election was an unmitigated disaster for Donald Trump, Cory Gardner and the Republican Party in Colorado.

Thanks in large part to the combination of the party's embrace of Trumpism and effective Democratic messaging, the GOP not only suffered a rout in the Denver Metro area, but their once reliable base of El Paso and Douglas Counties continued to move against them. Unaffiliateds, Latino/Latina voters, and college-educated white voters rejected the GOP en masse, leaving a solid majority of Colorado voter saying that they will have a hard time voting for the party in future elections.

But this election was not solely about a rejection of the GOP. Joe Biden and John Hickenlooper proved to be enduringly popular candidates. National Republicans lit tens of millions of dollars on fire trying to define Hickenlooper as corrupt and unethical and failed miserably, and Cory Gardner was no more successful in his dishonest efforts to appeal to Coloradans by greenwashing his record of backing corporate polluters in Washington, D.C.

The following memo, based on a survey of 900 Colorado voters, including an oversample of 100 additional Latino/Latina voters, lays out the how and the why of the Democrats' massive 2020 victory in the Centennial State.

Latino/Latina voters, unaffiliateds, and college-educated whites drove Biden and Hickenlooper victories

As the table below shows, the four major presidential and senate candidates all consolidated their bases about equally well (with Biden doing slightly better on this count than the other three), but the Democrats won this election with unaffiliated voters, with Biden winning this increasingly Democratic-leaning bloc by 25 points and Hickenlooper by 18.

And while Biden and other Democrats may have under-performed with Latino/Latina voters in Florida and Texas, that was not the case in Colorado, as Latino/Latinas helped drive the Democratic victories, with both Biden and Hickenlooper taking more than two-thirds of this critical group. Both Democrats also won about 60% of white college-educated voters (with Biden doing slightly better) while holding their deficit with non-college whites to manageable margins of about 10 points.

Unsurprisingly, there was a gender gap among white voters, but it was much smaller than the education gap, with both Democrats about breaking even with white men while winning white women by 12 to 16 points (with Biden, again, doing slightly better).

Biden and Hickenlooper hugely over-performed partisanship among earlier voters

Over half of Colorado voters cast their ballot before October 26th and those voters tilted heavily Democratic by party registration. But even beyond that tilt, Biden and Hickenlooper over-performed party registration by about 20-25 points among those early voters. As the election drew closer, the electorate became more Republican and the vote closer matched partisanship. Both Trump and Gardner over-performed partisanship among the voters who voted in the last two days (22% of the electorate), but not nearly by the amount that Biden and Hickenlooper did among earlier voters.

Presidential And Senate Results By Demo¹								
	% of Electorate	Biden	Trump	Net	Hick	Gardner	Net	Net Party Reg
<i>All</i>	100	56	42	+14	54	44	+10	+2
<i>Democrats</i>	31	88	12	+76	86	13	+73	+100
<i>Unaffiliateds/Other</i>	40	61	36	+25	58	40	+18	0
<i>Republicans</i>	29	15	84	-69	14	84	-70	-100
<i>Voted Oct 18 or earlier</i>	19	73	27	+46	70	29	+41	+25
<i>Voted Oct 19-25</i>	31	63	34	+29	62	37	+25	+4
<i>Voted Oct 26-Nov 1</i>	29	46	52	-6	45	52	-7	-9
<i>Voted Nov 2-Nov 3</i>	22	44	53	-9	42	55	-13	-5
<i>18-44</i>	43	60	37	+23	57	40	+17	+13
<i>45-64</i>	34	49	49	0	48	50	-2	-10
<i>65+</i>	23	58	41	+17	57	42	+15	+1
<i>Latino/Latina</i>	11	74	23	+51	75	22	+53	+46
<i>White college-educated</i>	41	61	37	+24	59	40	+19	+7
<i>White non-college</i>	42	44	54	-10	43	55	-12	-22
<i>White men</i>	39	47	51	-4	47	52	-5	-14
<i>White women</i>	44	57	41	+16	55	43	+12	+5

Overall, Biden out-performed Hickenlooper the most among younger voters, unaffiliateds, late deciders and non-Latino/Latina voters of color. The only major group where Hickenlooper slightly out-performed Biden was Latino/Latina voters, but both Democrats won this key group by more than 50 points.

¹ Survey results weighted to projected final election results after all ballots are counted.

2020 saw the continued shift of white-collar metro areas away from Republicans, while Biden’s results in the blue-collar metros and rural Colorado were relatively close to Polis’ margins in 2018

The table below shows the Democratic margin at the top of the ticket for 2012, 2016, 2018, and 2020. As it shows, both the Democratic base counties of Denver and Boulder and the white-collar Denver suburbs of Jefferson, Arapahoe, and Broomfield have moved steadily left since 2012, but that movement accelerated in 2020. These white-collar suburbs are no longer swing areas as they actually went about as strongly for Biden as El Paso and Douglas Counties did for Romney in 2012. Speaking of Douglas and El Paso, these two counties actually shifted even more strongly from Polis to Biden than the Denver Metro counties and are now much more swing than their counterparts further north. Douglas County has now shifted almost 20 points toward the Democrats since 2012.

Despite their very different geographic and demographic profiles, we group Adams and Pueblo Counties together because these are the two blue-collar population centers that shifted most strongly away from Democrats between 2012 and 2016. In 2018, we saw both shift back toward Democrats, but they diverged a bit in 2020 as Adams continued moving back to the left (bringing it back to about where it was in 2012) but Pueblo shifted back a bit toward Republicans. Pueblo is the one major population center in Colorado that remains most problematic for Democrats relative to their historical performance, as it voted 10-points worse for Biden than it did for Obama in 2012.

Meanwhile, Biden was able to expand slightly on Polis’ margins in the northwestern portion of the state thanks largely to huge margins in Eagle, Summit and Routt Counties. But he actually lost ground in the San Luis Valley (on top of Clinton’s huge losses there in 2016) while basically matching Polis’s margin (though still exceeding Clinton’s) in the far Southwest of the state and in the Eastern Plains.

Region	2020	2018	2016	2012	Change			
	PRES ²				GOV	PRES	PRES	12->16
STATEWIDE	13.4%	10.6%	4.9%	5.4%	-0.5%	5.7%	2.8%	8.1%
Denver/Boulder	64.8%	56.4%	52.5%	46.6%	5.9%	3.9%	8.4%	18.2%
JeffCo/Arapahoe/Broomfield	22.3%	15.6%	10.6%	7.2%	3.4%	5.0%	6.8%	15.1%
Adams	17.4%	14.0%	8.5%	16.8%	-8.3%	5.5%	3.4%	0.5%
Pueblo	4.1%	6.2%	-0.5%	14.0%	-14.5%	6.7%	-2.2%	-9.9%
Douglas	-6.3%	-15.6%	-18.1%	-25.8%	7.7%	2.5%	9.3%	19.5%
El Paso	-8.9%	-16.6%	-22.3%	-20.4%	-1.9%	5.7%	7.7%	11.4%
Northwest	15.4%	12.6%	4.4%	5.6%	-1.2%	8.2%	2.8%	9.8%
Southwest	-4.3%	-4.3%	-11.6%	-8.9%	-2.7%	7.3%	0.0%	4.6%
San Luis Valley	-2.5%	1.6%	-1.8%	12.8%	-14.6%	3.4%	-4.2%	-15.3%
East	-29.2%	-29.5%	-33.4%	-22.6%	-10.8%	3.9%	0.2%	-6.6%

² Actual results as of 7 PM MT on 11/2/20

Gardner sealed his fate by going all in on Trump (and his special interest doors). Democratic attacks stuck to him like glue

As noted above, Gardner actually won the 12% of voters who decided in the last week of the election by a nearly two-to-one margin – but that was only enough to cut his margin of defeat from the 15 points that Biden won by, down to 11.

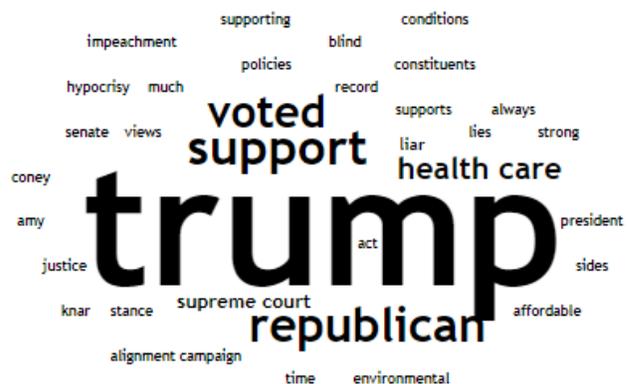
The truth is, this race was largely decided over a year ago, when Gardner made the decision to tie himself at the hip to Donald Trump. Over half of voters said that they made up their mind up more than three months ago, and another 30% said that they decided between three months and a week ago, and those groups both broke for Hickenlooper by about a 15-point margin.

Vote By Time of Decision									
	% of Electorate	Biden	Trump	Net	Hick	Gardner	Net	Net Party Reg	
Decided on Senate in last week	12	42	53	-11	34	64	-30	-19	
Decided on Senate in last month	13	57	41	+16	56	42	+14	-2	
Decided on Senate 1-3 months ago	17	58	41	+17	57	42	+15	+3	
Decided on Senate more than 3 months ago	55	58	41	+17	57	41	+16	+8	

Why? As presidential results showed, Trump was simply toxic in Colorado, especially with unaffiliated and Latino/Latina voters. As the table below shows, he ended the campaign 14 points underwater overall and an astounding 27 points underwater with unaffiliateds. Meanwhile, Joe Biden ended the campaign quite popular in Colorado, including with unaffiliateds and Latino/Latinas.

	Favorability			Net Fav	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Net	Unaffiliated	Latino/Latina
Joe Biden	56	43	+13	+22	+43
John Hickenlooper	54	43	+11	+17	+50
Cory Gardner	45	50	-5	-10	-27
Donald Trump	42	56	-14	-27	-42

When we asked Hickenlooper voters what the one or two things about Gardner that made them want to vote against him, the response was crystal clear, as this word cloud of the responses shows. Gardner’s ties to Trump dominated with health care coming through as a secondary theme:



While Gardner did not end up as far underwater as Trump, the combination of his repeated refusal to question the president along with a successful effort by Hickenlooper and his allies to tie him to Trump in the Denver media market left 61% of voters agreeing that Gardner “puts his loyalty to Trump ahead of Colorado,” including nearly half of voters saying that describes Gardner very well. This included two-thirds of voters in the Denver Metro area – where Trump is especially loathed, 63% of unaffiliateds, and even 34% of Republicans. Meanwhile, secondary messaging that highlighted Gardner’s fealty to his special interest donors was also quite effective, even in the more conservative Colorado Springs media market. Here, 54% of voters ended the campaign agreeing that Gardner “does what his special interest donors tell him to do.”

<i>Gardner Traits</i>	<i>Describes Gardner...</i>		<i>Total Well</i>					
	<i>Very Well</i>	<i>Total Well</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>Unf</i>	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Lat.</i>	<i>Denver Metro</i>	<i>Springs Market</i>
<i>Puts his loyalty to Trump ahead of Colorado</i>	48	61	84	63	34	72	67	53
<i>Does what his special interest donors tell him to do</i>	40	59	80	60	34	75	63	54

Both the GOP’s efforts to paint Hickenlooper as corrupt and Gardner’s efforts to greenwash his record failed spectacularly

Gardner and outside Republican groups spent tens of millions of dollars in a constant barrage trying to label Hickenlooper as corrupt and unethical. Yet, at the end of the campaign, his personal favorability was 11 points above water, and a remarkable +17 with unaffiliated voters. Moreover, at the end of the campaign, Colorado voters said that they would trust Hickenlooper over Gardner on “standing up to corruption” by a 47% to 41% margin (with unaffiliateds preferring Hickenlooper by a 9-point margin).

Meanwhile, Gardner spent millions trying to greenwash his record by touting the Great American Outdoors Act and other supposed conservation credentials, but voters saw through that charade. Fully 60% of voters agreed that Gardner “pretends to care about the environment in Colorado but votes with corporate polluters in Washington.” And, as the table below shows, at the end of the campaign, voters trusted Hickenlooper over Gardner on “protecting the environment and combatting climate change” and “protecting Colorado’s public lands” by 20- and 15-point margins, respectively.

Voters preferred Hickenlooper on the issues that matter, and Democrats crushed Gardner on health care

Hickenlooper didn’t just dominate Gardner on the environment; he was preferred by voters on every issue tested by double-digit margins. That starts with a massive 20-point lead on health care, an issue that Democrats hammered home to great effect over the course of the campaign (and showed up in the word cloud above showing open-ended responses to what Hickenlooper voters voted against Gardner). It extends to a 13-point margin on responding to the pandemic and an 8-point lead on handling the economic recovery, which is an issue that Republicans traditionally have an advantage on.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Trust More</i>		
	<i>Hick</i>	<i>Gardner</i>	<i>Net</i>
<i>Protecting the environment and combating climate change</i>	55	35	+20
<i>Ensuring access to quality, affordable health care</i>	56	36	+20
<i>Protecting CO's public lands</i>	54	39	+15
<i>Handling abortion and reproductive health issues</i>	51	39	+11
<i>Responding to the COVID pandemic</i>	51	38	+13
<i>Fixing our broken immigration system</i>	49	42	+7
<i>Handling the economic recovery after the pandemic</i>	50	42	+8

Trump has damaged the GOP brand in Colorado in a way that could last for years, while Polis and Bennet have strong standing heading into the 2022 cycle

Trump’s damage to the GOP brand in Colorado is likely to last well beyond Gardner’s shellacking in 2020. We asked voters if they agreed or disagreed with the statement “after four years of Republicans doing whatever Donald Trump wanted, I will have a hard time voting for them in the future.” A full 55% of Colorado voters agreed, including 56% of unaffiliated voters, 74% of Latino/Latina voters, and 59% of voters under age 45.

Moreover, 45% of voters agreed with the statement strongly. That’s a 45% statewide ceiling that Republicans will likely have a hard time breaking for the near future. Meanwhile, while Republicans in the state legislature exit the campaign with favorability underwater, Democratic legislators have a strong brand. And as we start looking ahead to 2022, both Governor Jared Polis and Senator Michael Bennet sport very strong personal ratings, though Senator Bennet is somewhat less familiar to voters than the Governor.

	<i>Favorability</i>			<i>Net Fav</i>	
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>Unaffiliated</i>	<i>Latino/Latina</i>
<i>Michael Bennet</i>	47	25	+22	+24	+27
<i>Jared Polis</i>	51	36	+15	+19	+28
<i>Democrats in the Colorado Legislature</i>	52	39	+13	+17	+49
<i>Republicans in the Colorado Legislature</i>	42	47	-5	-8	-34

Latino/Latinas, white women, college-educated whites, and unaffiliateds helped drive Prop 115 to a resounding defeat

Colorado voters defeated Proposition 115, the 22-week abortion ban, by a decisive margin. The repudiation of this right-wing attempt to restrict the rights of Colorado women was broad, with only registered Republicans favoring the measure and unaffiliateds opposing it by a nearly two-to-one margin. That said, opposition was driven by Latino/Latina voters, white women, and college-educated white voters.

<i>Proposition 115</i>								
<i>Group</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Net</i>		<i>Group</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Net</i>
<i>All</i>	39	57	-18		<i>Latino/Latina</i>	33	60	-27
<i>Democrats</i>	22	75	-53		<i>White college-educated</i>	31	65	-34
<i>Unaffiliateds/Other</i>	35	59	-24		<i>White non-college</i>	46	51	-5
<i>Republicans</i>	63	33	+30					
					<i>White men</i>	43	53	-10
<i>18-44</i>	35	60	-25		<i>White women</i>	35	62	-27
<i>45-64</i>	42	53	-11					
<i>65+</i>	42	56	-14					

ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a telephone survey from October 31st to November 4th, 2020 of 900 Coloradans who voted in the 2020 including an oversample of 100 interviews among Latino/Latina voters for a total of 199 Latino/Latina interviews. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/-3.5%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the expected electorate are properly represented of the final electorate.