MEMORANDUM
TO: NRCC LEADERSHIP
FROM: NEIL NEWHOUSE – PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES
DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2020
SUBJECT: TARGETED DISTRICT IMPEACHMENT ACQUITTAL POLL RESULTS

On behalf of the National Republican Congressional Committee, Public Opinion Strategies conducted a poll of 800 registered voters in 95 Congressional districts, 54 of which are held by Democrats and considered NRCC targets, and 41 of which are held by Republicans and considered Democratic targets.

The survey was conducted on February 11-13, as a “post-impeachment acquittal poll,” following up on our October 1-3, 2019 poll conducted as a “pre-impeachment poll.” Both polls have a margin of error of +/- 3.46%.

The following are key findings from the poll:

▪ A majority of voters think Democrats haven’t accomplished all that much while in control of Congress and that impeachment hurt their ability to get more important things done for the country.
  Only 38% of voters believe Democrats have accomplished much since taking over the House, with 59% saying they accomplished not very much or nothing at all. But, more importantly, fully 62% agreed that Democrats’ focus on impeachment has hurt Congress’ ability to get more important things done for the country, with 60% of Independents agreeing.

▪ “It’s all about politics,” and Democrats were just trying “to weaken the President.”
  There is clearly a price to pay for the Democrats’ unsuccessful effort to remove the President from office. Their partisan impeachment effort is seen by voters to be what it is – 73% agree that “it was all about politics” and that Democrats should have been more concerned about addressing the pressing issues of the day, while 65% agree with the sentiment that the Democrats knew they would never be able to get the two-thirds vote to remove the President but they just went ahead anyway in an effort to weaken him.”

  Further, 56% of voters agree that “Congressional Democrats should never have impeached President Trump and tried to remove him from office. It was a waste of time and money.”

  Voters in the D-held/Trump won districts agree with this by 54%-46%, again spelling trouble for those Democrat incumbents.
President Trump emerged from impeachment in a politically stronger position.
Just as the President’s approval rating has edged up in current national polling, his support from voters in these targeted districts has also improved – from 46% approval pre-impeachment to 50% on our current polling. His approval is now above 50% among voters in both the GOP “defense” seats and in the 30 seats held by Democrats but won by President Trump in the ‘16 election.

Not only has recent polling showed near-record levels of economic optimism (Fox News, Gallup, Quinnipiac, The Economist/YouGov) in the country but, on our current poll, fully 74% of voters agree that the nation’s economy “is working for them and their families.” This positive sentiment cuts across party lines.

A Presidential match-up between President Trump and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders clearly puts more seats into play for the GOP.
Not only is Sanders’ image among these voters upside-down at 42% favorable/53% unfavorable, but he loses to President Trump by 48%-43% among this target CD voter sample.

Speaker Pelosi’s image makes her an even more attractive target to GOP campaigns.
While the Speaker was never really a beloved figure among GOP voters, her push for impeachment and subsequent ripping up the President’s State of the Union speech have made her anathema to Republican voters. Her image among GOP voters polled is a historically bad 5% favorable/94% unfavorable.

An “anti-impeachment/anti-removal from office” GOP congressional candidate has a significant edge over a “pro-impeachment/pro-removal” Democrat.
By a wide 51%-43% margin, voters say they would be more willing to vote for a GOP Congressional candidate who opposed impeachment rather than a Democrat who supported it and believed the President should be removed from office.

Democrats in districts won by Trump in the ‘16 election are going to have to contend with electorates that clearly oppose their positions on impeachment – voters in those key districts say they would support an anti-impeachment GOP’er over a pro-impeachment DEM by a 50%-44% margin.
BOTTOM LINE
As we anticipated in October, impeachment had the potential to backlash against the Democrats, and it’s apparent that’s what has happened. The clearest evidence of that is the President’s improved standing with voters. Add to that a more positive political environment, growing optimism regarding the economy and the country, and Bernie Sanders’ socialist brand of partisanship leading the Democrat’s nomination contest, and we find ourselves painting a picture of a much more favorable electoral climate for the GOP than just a few months ago.

While the nine months between now and election day represents several political lifetimes, our polling leaves no question that Democrats’ efforts to impeach the President and remove him from office has strengthened him for the fall election and better positioned the GOP to make a strong run at taking back the House.