MEMORANDUM

TO:	Interested Parties
FROM:	American Edge Project
RE:	Voters Look to President Biden to Protect an Open and Accessible Internet
DATE:	March 12, 2021

New Poll: Americans Believe Open, Accessible Internet Key to a Healthy Democracy
88% of Voters Feel Free Expression on the Internet Separates U.S. from Authoritarian Regimes
Majority of Voters Support the Transparent Regulation of Harmful Content

Even after years of intense debate on how to manage content on digital platforms, a new poll finds Americans are reaffirming their support for an open and accessible internet that encourages free expression and dialogue, which they view as a cornerstone of American democracy.

What's more, a majority of voters also believe the internet in China and Russia is significantly more restrictive than the U.S. They believe the open internet is what separates America from authoritarian regimes, and that failure to champion a free and accessible system could lead to Chinese or Russian-style political repression domestically.

At the same time, while there is a high value placed on freedom of expression and the protection of an open and accessible internet, voters also support standards that regulate harmful and illegal content, and they are looking to the Biden administration to establish these rules of the road.

This poll was conducted by Ipsos, on behalf of the American Edge Project, and surveyed 1,019 registered voters between January 28 and February 3. Key findings include:

- **Even against the backdrop of heightened concern about misinformation on digital platforms, voters want to keep the internet open and accessible.** Despite years of contentious debate on how to manage misinformation on digital platforms, voters remain staunchly committed to protecting an open and accessible internet, which is viewed as a pillar of American values like free speech. A bipartisan majority prefers free expression on the internet even if users post things that challenge their beliefs. Over seven-in-10 (71%) believe "it's more important to keep the internet open and accessible to all, even if some people post content I disagree with." This includes 60% of Democrats, 79% of Republicans, and 81% of independents. Underpinning this belief is near-universal agreement that an open and accessible internet is important to freedom of expression (96%), government accountability (94%), and America's role in the world (93%). Similarly, over eight-in-10 (84%) believe an open and free internet is a necessary part of a healthy democracy.

- **Voters believe authoritarian versions of the internet run counter to American values, and believe the U.S. can – and should – lead an open and free internet.** Over seven-in-10 voters (72%) agree that "China uses internet surveillance to persecute political opponents, and something similar could happen in the U.S. if the internet is tightly controlled." This is likely due to the fact that the U.S. internet is more tolerant of free expression, even for controversial ideas, than the Chinese or Russian models (74% say this describes the U.S.; 36% China; 33% Russia). And tellingly, nearly nine-in-10 (88%) agree that "the ability to speak freely on the internet is one of the freedoms that separates the U.S. from authoritarian countries like China, Russia, and Iran." As a result, a plurality (37%) of voters believe the U.S. should lead the way in setting rules and standards for the internet, compared with 2% of voters who prefer Chinese leadership.

- **Although Americans want to keep the internet open and accessible, they are also open to rules and standards for harmful and illegal content.** A majority (59%) say it is more important to keep the internet open and accessible to all, even if some people abuse that freedom by posting harmful content; but 41% say it is more important to regulate content on the internet, even if that means making it less open accessible. And while 72% of voters call on President Biden to prioritize protecting an open and accessible internet, over half also want the administration to create a standard on how harmful content is regulated on the internet (54%). Moreover, 77% agree that new laws on internet content need to distinguish good actors from bad actors posting illegal content.

The bottom line: Even amid heightened concern about misinformation on digital platforms and heated debate over content regulation, voters want to defend the U.S. model of an open and accessible internet, which is seen as a cornerstone of American democracy and values. At the same time, they call on the Biden administration to establish content standards in a way that protects the freedom of expression online.

Additional methodology notes:

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between January 28 – February 3, 2021, on behalf of American Edge Project. For this survey, a sample of 1,019 adults age 18+ who are registered to vote in the U.S. from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2016 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Posthoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following (n=1,019, DEFF=1.47, adjusted Confidence Interval=+/-5.0 percentage points).

About American Edge Project

The American Edge Project is a newly formed coalition dedicated to the proposition that American innovators are an essential part of U.S. economic health, national security and individual freedoms.

For more information, visit https://americanedgeproject.org/

About Ipsos

Ipsos is the world's third largest market research company, present in 90 markets and employing more than 18,000 people.

Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP www.ipsos.com