



AMERICAN EDGE PROJECT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: American Edge Project (AEP)
RE: Likely Voters Support U.S. Leadership on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Want Their 2026 Candidates Focused on Economic Relief – Candidates Pushing for New Tech and AI Regulations Are Out-of-Step with the Electorate's Immediate Concerns
DATE: January 2026

New Poll: More than 9-in-10 Likely Midterm Voters Prioritize Economic Issues, and Regulating Tech and AI Is Not a Top Priority

As the 2026 Midterm election year begins, new polling from AEP finds that nationwide **likely voters are focused on key economic issues like lowering the cost of living, strengthening jobs and wages, and making health care more affordable**. They are also worried about China pulling ahead in the global tech and AI race and believe this would threaten the U.S.'s national security and economic growth. Likely voters do not count regulating tech and AI as their top election priorities, and candidates campaigning on tech and AI regulation are out-of-step with the electorate's immediate concerns and endanger their ability to win elections.

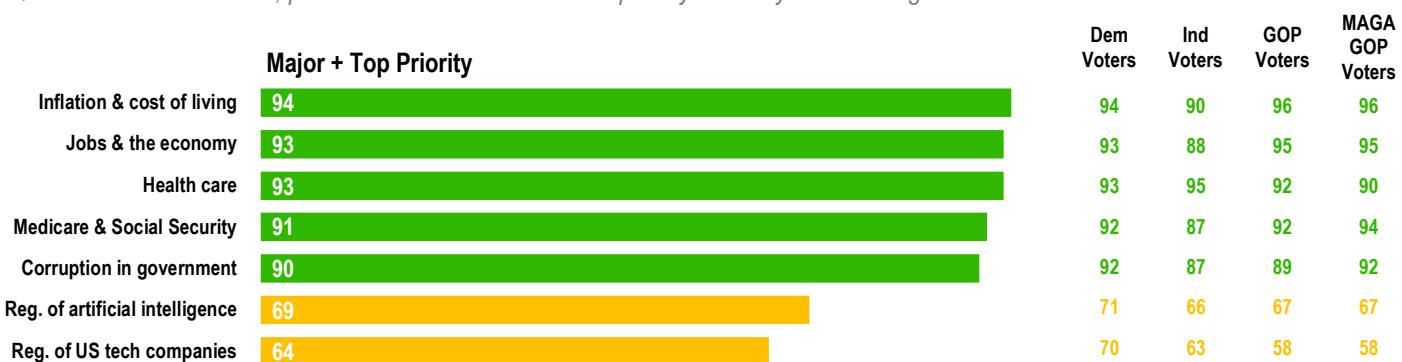
"Voters are sending a clear message: they want elected leaders who will address their economic and national security worries, not misguided fights to over-regulate American innovation," said Doug Kelly, CEO of American Edge Project. **"Americans know we are in a must-win race with China for global tech leadership, and politicians who fail to recognize that will pay at the ballot box."**

This survey, conducted in partnership with Mercury Analytics, was fielded among 1,500 nationwide likely voters from November 10 to November 17, 2025. It is a continuation of previous research also focused on voter priorities – the most recent of which included a survey fielded between December 2 and December 9, 2024 among 1,508 nationwide registered voters.

Key findings of this research include:

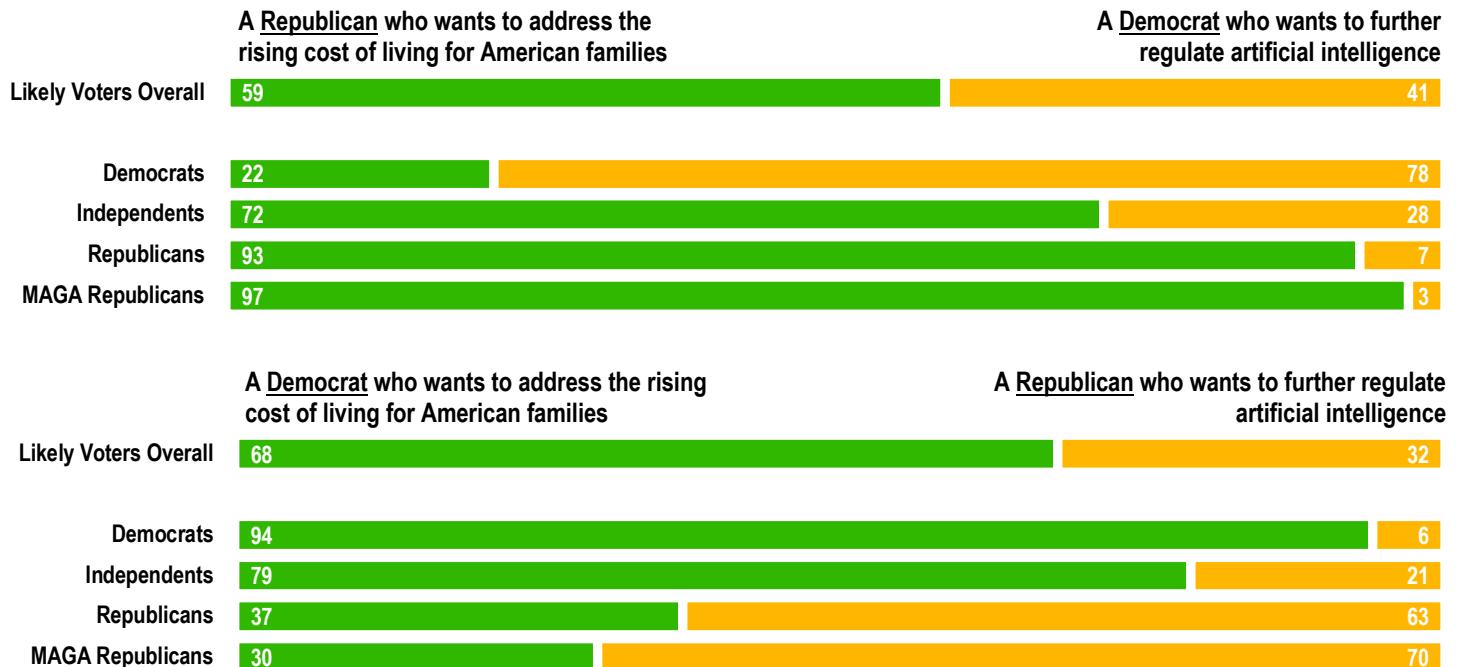
- Candidates campaigning on tech and AI regulation are out-of-step with the immediate concerns of likely voters across the political spectrum.** Across party lines, regulation of U.S. tech companies and AI is a lower-tier priority. Instead, likely voters overwhelmingly want elected officials to concentrate on what matters most – lowering the cost of living, strengthening jobs and wages, making health care more affordable, and cracking down on corruption in government.

Question: For each issue, please indicate how much of a priority it is for you that the government address that issue.



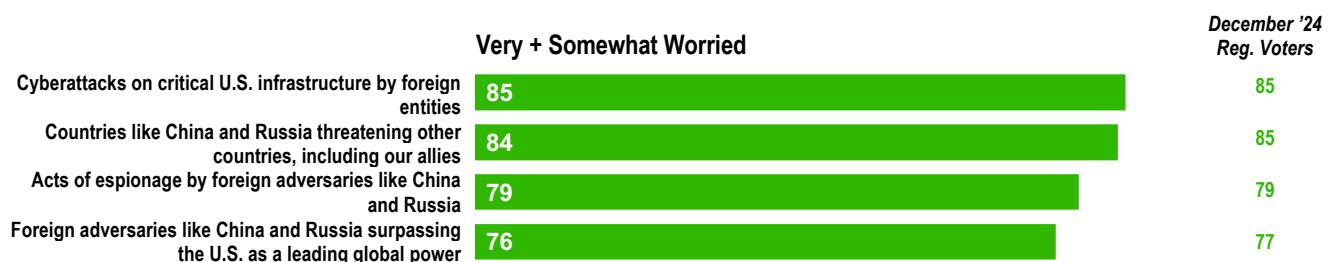
- **Across party lines, there is an electoral advantage to prioritizing the rising cost of living over far-reaching AI regulation.** Likely voters are willing to reward political candidates who focus on affordability over those who are pushing for additional AI regulation. Notably, about a quarter of all likely voters say they would even cross party lines to back a candidate focused on addressing the cost of living over a same-party candidate who is focused on further regulating AI. *In fact, 37% of Republicans and 30% of MAGA Republicans say they would vote for a Democrat focused on affordability.*

Question: If there was a Congressional election tomorrow, which candidate would you be more likely to support?



- **Likely voters continue to worry about the security risks of foreign competitors outpacing U.S. technology.** Nationwide, the vast majority of likely voters worry about technological threats posed by foreign adversaries, especially China and Russia, conducting espionage and cyberattacks targeting critical U.S. infrastructure.

Question: Thinking about the future of America, how worried are you, if at all, about each of the following?



- **Likely voters – especially MAGA Republicans – are worried about China becoming dominant in the AI race and call for AI to be designed in the U.S. and embedded with American values.** Across party lines, and especially among MAGA Republicans, majorities of likely voters say AI should be designed in the U.S. and with American values “of freedom and openness” in mind, not China’s values “of censorship and control.” The vast majority of likely voters also agree that if China pulls ahead of the U.S. in AI, it would threaten the U.S.’s national security and economy.

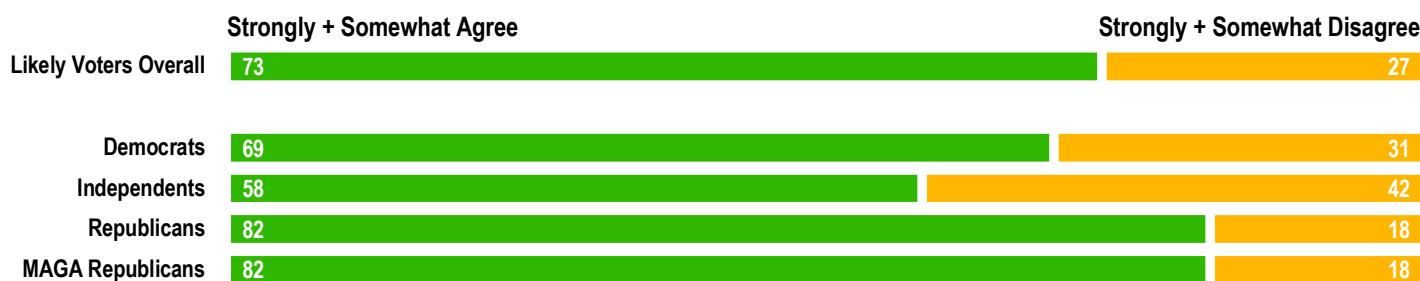
Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

AI needs to be designed in the U.S., so that it is designed with American values in mind, as opposed to China’s.



Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Allowing other countries like China to get ahead of the U.S. in AI threatens our national security, trillions in economic growth, and could enable China to embed authoritarian values of censorship and control into the global digital infrastructure, rather than American values of freedom and openness.



The bottom line: In the 2026 Midterm elections, where control will likely be determined by a handful of elections, likely voters plan to support political candidates who prioritize the economic issues that impact them the most – the cost of living, job stability, and health care – over regulating tech and AI. Voters are also worried about the unintended consequences of misguided policies to further regulate AI innovation in the U.S., including threats to the U.S.’s economic growth, national security, and our competitive edge over China. ***There is significant political risk for candidates who prioritize tech and AI regulations over voters’ economic priorities.***

Additional Methodology Notes

Mercury Analytics, on behalf of American Edge Project, conducted two surveys, one between November 10 and November 17, 2025, and another between December 2 and December 9, 2024.

November 2025 Survey: A sample of 1,500 nationwide likely voters were interviewed online. The margin of error at the 95% confidence interval level is +/- 2.5%. The margin of error on subsamples is greater.

December 2024 Survey: A sample of 1,508 nationwide registered voters were interviewed online. The margin of error at the 95% confidence interval level is +/- 2.5%.

About American Edge Project

The American Edge Project is a 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/>