



UTAH FOUNDATION
RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

SEPTEMBER 2024

The Issues
that **Unite**
and
BRIDGING GAPS
Divide
Utah Voters

UTAH PRIORITIES PROJECT
20 YEARS OF WHAT MATTERS MOST



BRIDGING GAPS

THE ISSUES THAT UNITE (AND DIVIDE) UTAH VOTERS

Special thanks to the following for providing project-based support:

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

FOUNDATION

LARRY H. & GAIL
MILLER
FAMILY FOUNDATION



BUILDING AMERICA®

Utah Foundation Board of Trustees

Annalisa Holcombe, *Chair**
Kelly Mendenhall, *Vice Chair**
Benjamin Brown, *Treasurer**
Carlton Christensen, *Secretary**
Chad Westover, *Past Chair**

Charles Anderson
Nathan Anderson
Ryan Andrus
Scott Barlow
Craig Broussard
Mayor Dirk Burton*
Jonathan Campbell*
Silvia Castro
Ginger Chinn
David Connelly
J. Philip Cook
Cameron Cowan
Bill Crim
Aaron Dekeyzer

Cameron Diehl
Denise Dragoo*
Alex Eaton
Mark Edgley
Richard Ellis
Stephanie Frohman
Bryson Garbett
David Gessel
Michael Gregory*
Andrew Gruber*
Andrew Haaland
Julie Hatchett*
Brandon Hendrickson
Ben Horsley
Melanie Jenkins
Michelle Judd
Catherine Kanter*
Derek Kearn
Drew Maggelet
Peter Mann

Susan McLeod
Dustin Matsumori*
Nate McDonald
Brad Mortensen
Angie Osguthorpe
Scott Parson*
Jennifer Lynn Robinson
Stan Rosenzweig*
David Rowley
Tim Sheehan
Harris Simmons
Dominic Spaethling
Nick Starn
Lisa Tuck
Henrie Walton
Mayor Mike Weichers
Thomas Young

* *Executive Board members*

Utah Foundation Staff

Shawn Teigen, *President, Author*
Christopher Collard, *Research Director, Author*
Ashley Marshall-Cantor, *Research Analyst*
John Salevurakis, *Research Analyst*
Ella Sjoblom, *Research Intern*
Josh Wright, *Research Intern*
Kyler Zarate, *Research Intern*

About the Utah Foundation

Since 1945, leaders, legislators, and community members have relied upon the **illuminating, independent, and nonpartisan public-policy research** produced by the Utah Foundation to support informed decision-making on topics that matter most. As a 501(c)3 with broad community support and a 60-member board, the Utah Foundation exists to empower **civic engagement as the foundation for enhanced quality of life for Utahns.**

INTRODUCTION

Election years highlight how voters have the power to forge their future. They consider various issues and choose candidates to help them achieve their goals.

This report seeks to highlight where voters broadly agree on the issues that matter most to them. The Utah Foundation highlights levels of agreement to show politicians the areas of opportunity for driving forward policy.

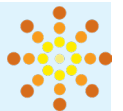
The Utah Foundation considers the fundamental disagreements between parties and ideologies on many issues. In addition, even on issues that Utahns agree are important, there is often disagreement regarding methods or intensity. The Utah Foundation reports on this disagreement while focusing on the areas of agreement for productive policy problem-solving.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In 2024, the Utah Foundation worked with Y2 Analytics to conduct two surveys. The first, in January, was an open-ended preliminary survey with two questions asking Utah voters what they considered the two most important state or local issues for the next Utah governor to address. The Utah Foundation used these responses to create a list of the 17 most common issues from over 50 issues.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT?

With this report and the other in the Utah Priorities Project, the Utah Foundation hopes to empower civic engagement as the foundation for enhanced quality of life in Utah through informing and engaging Utahns with illuminating, independent, nonpartisan public-policy research.



KEY FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT

- Utahns largely agree on the importance of K-12 education, wise water stewardship, curbing government overreach, and access to affordable housing.
- Utahns often disagree on the importance of *abortion and women's issues, transgender rights and access*, and appropriate stewardship of the Great Salt Lake.
- Utah has a layered partisan landscape. In 2020, 61% of voters voted Republican in national and statewide elections. However, 53% of voters are registered as Republicans, and only 36% of voters self-identify with the Republican party.
- Fewer voters register as “independent” while more self-identify as “independents.” Since 2014, the share of independent or unaffiliated registered voters has fallen from 42% to 29%. However, since 2012, the share of voters who self-identify as independent or unaffiliated has grown from 31% to 43%.
- Utah Democrats and unaffiliated voters tend to be more consistently liberal than their national counterparts. Republicans appear to have a similar ideology to their national counterparts.

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UTAH PRIORITIES PROJECT

Each gubernatorial election year since 2004, the Utah Foundation has sought to understand what matters most to voters through its Utah Priorities Project. The project uses surveys to inform elected officials, candidates for elected office, civic leaders, and others on voters' priorities. The project consists of a series of reports.

The 2024 priority list for Utahns overall can be found in the first report of the 2024 series. This report examines how priorities and issues differ across party and ideological lines, highlighting both similarities and dissimilarities between the groups. Subsequent reports further detail Utah voters' perspectives and delve into the top-ranked issues.

The 17 most common issues were included in the second survey of Utah voters in February and March. Since it is challenging to rank so many issues simultaneously, the survey asked respondents to choose the most and least important among groups of four issues. Each group's four issues were randomly selected from the full list of 17. Respondents made their selections a total of eight times. Using a statistical model, their responses were used to determine a rating and a relative ranking for each issue. For more details regarding the survey methodology, see Appendix A.

These 17 issues are somewhat broad because they can capture several different positions. For example, the category *abortion and women's issues* might encapsulate pro-life comments, pro-choice comments, women's rights comments, and gender equality comments. *Partisan politics* can capture the animosity party members have towards another party as well as the frustration that parties cannot work better together. Survey follow-up questions (explored in a series of topical briefs to be published separately) attempt to better understand each issue's specific concerns, attitudes, and sentiments.

Top priorities tended to be those for which people across political affiliations ranked them as more important. Similarly, the least important issues tended to be those for which few individuals of any political affiliation ranked them as important. A prom-



Top priorities are generally top priorities because people across party affiliations and ideologies ranked them as important.

Figure 1: Issue Categorized by Importance with Ranking Range by Party Affiliation.

	Issue of Concern	Short Name	Avg. Ranking	Possible Ranking Ranges			
				Utahns	Republicans	Unaffiliated	Democrats
Most Important	Housing Affordability	Housing	1	1-2	1-1	1-2	1-6
	Politicians listening to voters	Ignoring voters	2	1-2	2-7	1-2	1-5
High Importance	Earning enough to pay for non-housing needs	Inflation	3	3-5	2-5	3-6	10-13
	Government overreach	Overreach	4	3-5	2-8	3-6	6-11
	Partisan Politics	Partisanship	5	3-8	10-14	3-9	1-5
Important	Having enough water (other than the Great Salt Lake)	Water	6	5-8	7-10	5-9	5-11
	Kindergarten-12th grade education	K-12	7	5-8	5-10	3-10	6-11
	Air quality	Air quality	8	5-10	11-14	5-12	1-5
Medium Importance	State and local taxes	Taxes	9	8-14	3-8	5-14	14-16
	Immigration	Immigration	10	7-14	2-6	7-14	14-17
	Homelessness	Homelessness	11	9-14	11-14	8-14	6-11
	Roads and transportation	Roads	12	9-14	7-11	9-14	11-13
	Crime	Crime	13	9-14	4-10	9-14	14-17
	Abortion and women's issues	Women's issues	14	9-15	15-17	8-15	1-5
Low Importance	Crowded neighborhoods	Density	15	14-15	11-14	14-16	15-17
Least Importance	The Great Salt Lake	Great Salt Lake	16	16-17	15-17	15-17	6-12
	Transgender rights and access	Transgender rights	17	16-17	15-17	16-17	6-13

Note: The wider margins of error for Democrats reflect a smaller sample size. The wider margins of error for unaffiliated voters represent a wider variety of opinions.

inent counterexample is *abortion and women's issues*, which was ranked so highly for Democrats that even though it was of low importance for Republicans, it still made the list of "medium importance" issues. (See Figure 1.)

UTAH'S LAYERED PARTISAN LANDSCAPE

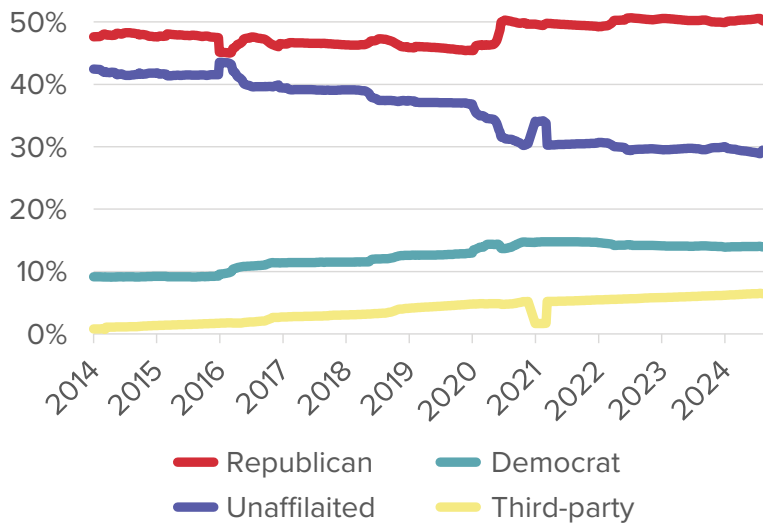
Utah's partisan landscape has different layers. If looking at outcomes on the surface – Utah Republicans form nearly a supermajority. Looking over 2020 statewide elections where at least a Republican and Democratic candidate were both on the ticket, 61% of participating voters selected the Republican and 34% selected the Democrat, with 3% of participating voters choosing a third-party candidate. There were several candidates not affiliated with any party – ending up with less than 1% of the total vote.¹

While this view helps understand the likely outcomes of statewide elections, it misses some nuances. For example, it does not really illustrate the share of Utahns who choose not to be a member of a party. Under the surface of voter outcomes, party registration provides another layer in understanding Utah's partisan landscape. As of 2024, 53% of Utah voters were registered

¹ Utah Lt. Governor's Office, Historical Election Results, 2020 General Election, [Vote.Utah.gov](https://vote.utah.gov), <https://vote.utah.gov/current-voter-registration-statistics/>. Utah Foundation calculations

Over the past ten years, more voters have been picking a side.

Figure 2: Voter Registration by Party, 2014-2024

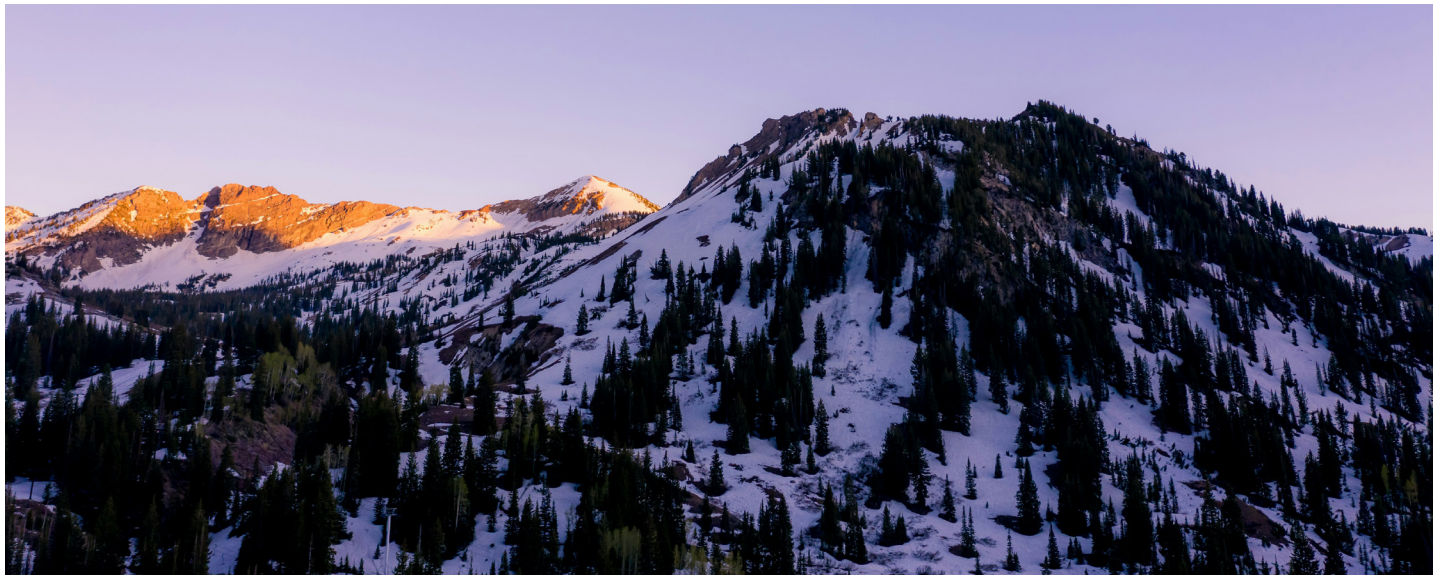


Source: Utah Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Note: The dip in third-party voters in 2021 reflects the Independent American party losing party status for several months.

as Republicans.² Only 14% of Utahns are registered as Democrats. Third-party registrants represent 6% of voters, while 27% are unaffiliated. (See Figure 2.) While some refer to unaffiliated voters as “independent” voters, the Utah Foundation prefers the term unaffiliated voters. This reflects the same terminology used when Utahns register to vote, and how the state classifies voters. It also avoids confusion as one of the third parties in Utah is the Independent American Party.³

The voter registration layer adds a level of nuance. It highlights the party people wish to be involved with. This involvement often includes participating in caucuses and primaries, and registering their personal information with a party to allow for communication and outreach services. However, just like the surface layer, party registration has some limitations. The fact that Utah’s Republican caucus and primary are closed while Democrats have an open caucus and primary creates some interesting



- 2 Utah Lt. Governor’s Office, Current Voter Registration Statistics, as of July 22, 2024, [Vote.Utah.gov](https://vote.utah.gov/current-voter-registration-statistics/), <https://vote.utah.gov/current-voter-registration-statistics/>. Data represent “active” registrants.
- 3 Some claim that the Independent American party is the largest third party in the state because voters are confused about the use of the word “independent” and actually end up registering with the Independent American party instead as an independent, or rather, unaffiliated voter. See the Utah state elections director’s quote in Jones, McKhelyn, 2020, “Utah’s Independent American Party is seeing explosive growth, but it’s unclear what’s driving it,” Salt Lake Tribune, January 20, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2020/01/20/utahs-independent/>.

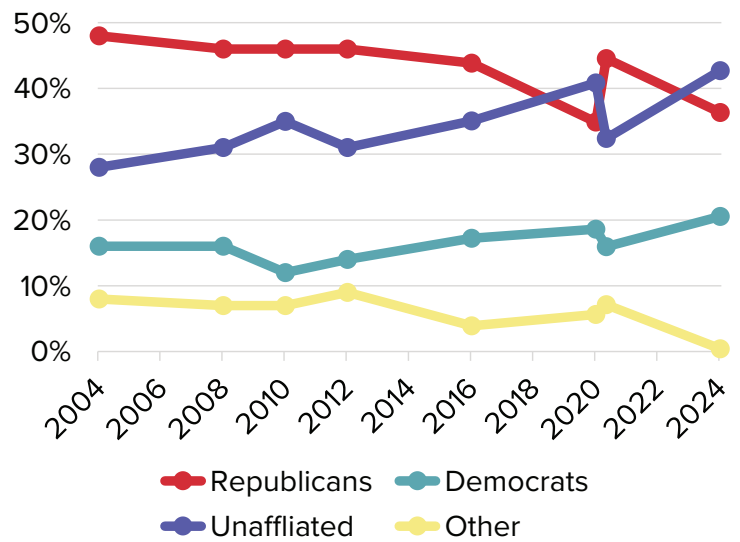
incentives. Individuals can only participate in the Republican party’s primary or caucus if they are registered Republicans. But anyone can participate in the Democrat primary or caucus – as long as they have not also participated in the Republican primary or caucus. Voters may register as a Republicans to participate in the primary or caucus even if they would otherwise consider themselves unaffiliated or Democrats. As a result, Republican party registration tends to spike around competitive Republican primary elections, with the election in 2020 being one of the most prominent examples.⁴ (See Figure 3.)

The Utah Foundation’s survey adds another layer to help understand the political landscape – using self-identification. The Utah Foundation asks voters how they see themselves. This measure tends to be more flexible. Utah Foundation survey results showed that 36% of voters self-identified as Republican, 21% self-identified as Democrat, and 43% of Utahns self-identified as unaffiliated.

It is possible that fewer Republicans completed the Utah Foundation survey, which would lead to a different balance of party identification. However, pollsters have long understood that party self-identification is different from party registration. Self-identification is more likely to fluctuate over time and shows both short-term and long-term trends. The Pew Research Center reports cases where the same individuals were interviewed before and after an election – in one case less than three weeks apart – and 16% to 18% of respondents reported identifying with a different party after the election than previous to it.⁵

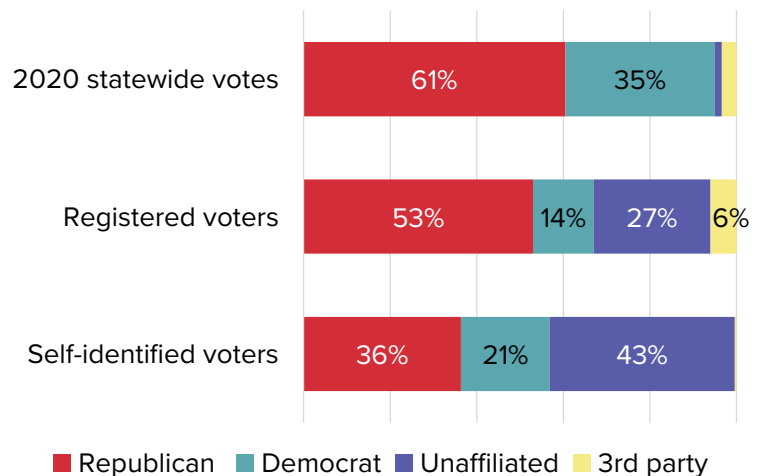
The share of voters not registering with a party has been falling, but the share of voters not identifying with a party may be rising.

Figure 3: Party Self-Identification, 2004-2024



Utah’s partisan landscape has several layers.

Figure 4: Different Methods of Understanding Utah’s Political Landscape.



4 The prospect of voters changing their registration right before a primary became such a big concern that the state legislature limited how soon before the primary a voter could change their registration. See HB 197 of the 2021 General Session, <https://le.utah.gov/~2021/bills/static/HB0197.html>. The Princeton Electoral Innovation Lab looked at the records and found that most of the 2020 republican registration bump came from unaffiliated voters, and that Democrats registering as Republicans had a much smaller (although still visible on the graph) effect. See Coopersmith, Andrew, 2021, “Memo on Utah House Bill 197,” <https://election.princeton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Utah-memo-final.pdf>.

5 Pew Research Center, 2004, “Party affiliation: What it is and what it isn’t,” Pew Research, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2004/09/23/party-affiliation-what-it-is-and-what-it-isnt/>.

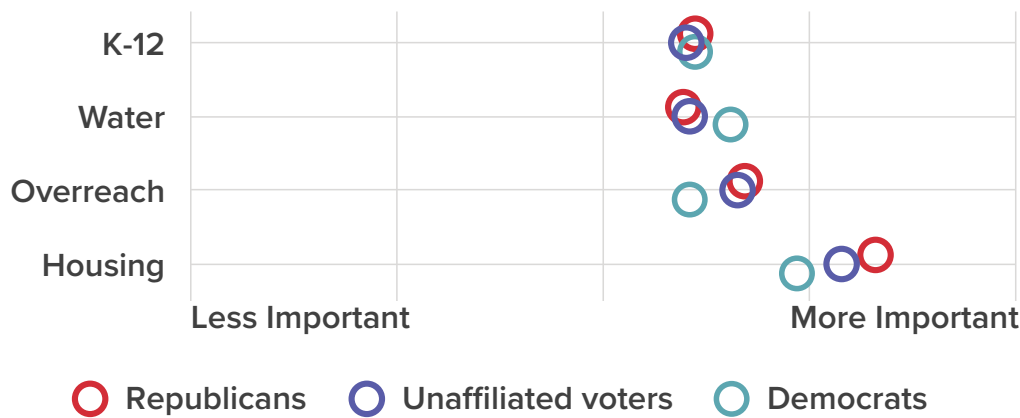
Ultimately, Utah’s political landscape looks different depending on the layer one investigates. This study primarily focuses on the self-identification layer, which is useful when political discussions are less about who will win an election than about preferences, policies, and priorities. However, other layers are necessary to better understand different questions. Registered voters would be a better layer if the question involves the caucus or primary process. If one seeks to estimate the outcome of the upcoming election, the layer showing revealed preferences would be the most helpful. However, focusing on any one layer might cover important data that helps better describe the political landscape of Utah.

PARTISAN PRIORITIES

Voter priorities by political affiliation reveal far more differences than other demographic subgroups. That said, when it comes to the issues

K-12 education, having enough water, government overreach, and housing affordability are prioritized very similarly across political parties.

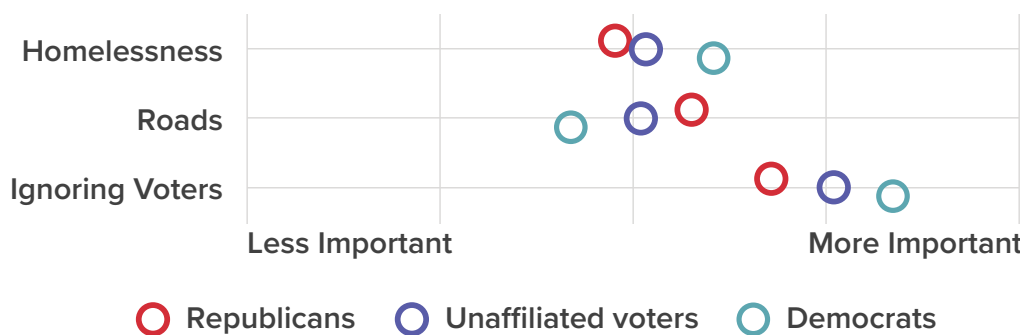
Figure 5: List of Priorities of Utah Voters by Political Affiliation – Very High Agreement



Utahns think are most important, Utahns agree more than disagree. For example, Republicans and Democrats are indistinguishable about *housing affordability, government overreach, having enough water, and kindergarten through 12th grade education*. (See Figure 5.) Of the four issues, *housing affordability* is a “most important” issue for all parties in the 2024 Utah Priorities Project.

Homelessness, roads and transportation, and politicians [not] listening to voters are prioritized similarly across political parties.

Figure 6: List of Priorities of Utah Voters by Political Affiliation – High Agreement



There is also a high similarity for Utahns among all parties regarding *homelessness and roads and transportation*, and each is of “medium importance.” There is also high similarity regarding whether politicians are listening to voters. (See Figure 6.)

Six issues have a high level of difference between the parties. (See Figure 7.) Four of the issues are more important to Republicans, while two are more important to Democrats. They span the ranking of Utah’s priorities from “high importance” to “low importance.”

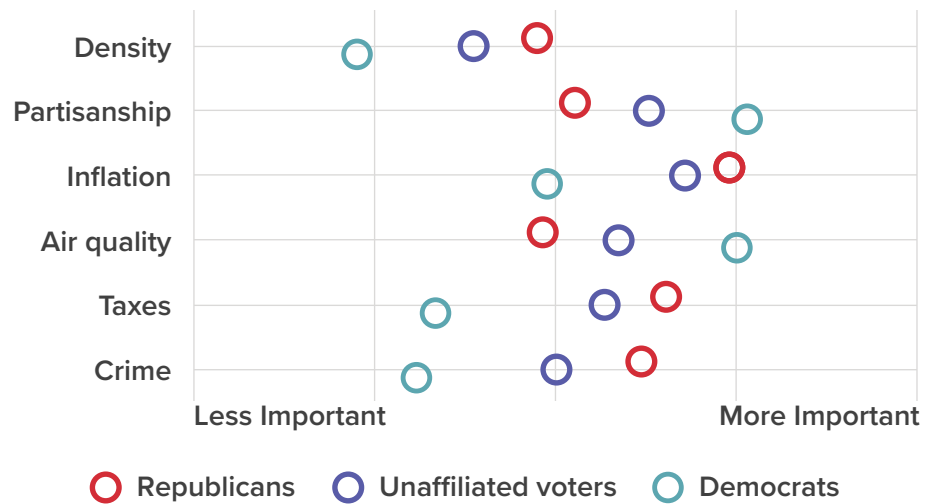
There are several issues where Utahns are in very strong disagreement about whether they are essential. The most apparent difference is in Democrats’ ranking of *abortion and women’s issues* as the top issue. *Transgender rights and access*, *immigration*, and the *Great Salt Lake* also look very different between the parties. (See Figure 8.)

These four issues show considerable disagreement. Because there are far fewer Democrats than Republican and unaffiliated voters in Utah, the overall results tend to be ordered similarly to Republicans’ priorities. For example, Democrats prioritized *abortion and women’s issues* higher than any other issue.

However, because Republicans prioritized the issue lower, and there are more Republicans than Democrats, the overall prioritization of the issue was only of medium importance. The unbalanced share between Democrats and Republicans in Utah means that the *Great Salt Lake* and *transgender rights and access* are near the bottom of the list by overall importance. However, not all items of high disagreement are among the lowest items. *Abortion and women’s issues* and *immigration* are both among items of medium importance. However, it would be difficult for an issue to make it among the most important items without wide agreement across parties.

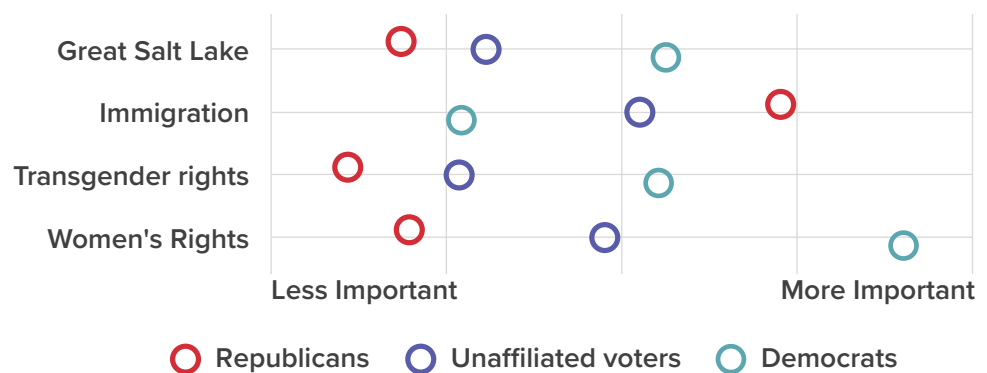
Six issues are prioritized dissimilarly across political parties.

Figure 7: List of Priorities of Utah Voters by Political Affiliation – Low Agreement



The Great Salt Lake, immigration, transgender rights and access, and abortion and women’s issues are prioritized very dissimilarly across political parties.

Figure 8: List of Priorities of Utah Voters by Political Affiliation – Very Low Agreement



While Utah’s unaffiliated voters are somewhat different than Republicans and Democrats on most issues, they appear to be more aligned with Republicans on many of the 17 issues.

IDEOLOGY AND THE PRIORITIES

The Utah Foundation analyzed Utah Priorities Project issues by voter ideology. This was based on respondents’ self-identification, revealing how they consider themselves when addressing political issues – very conservative, somewhat conservative, moderate, somewhat liberal, very liberal.

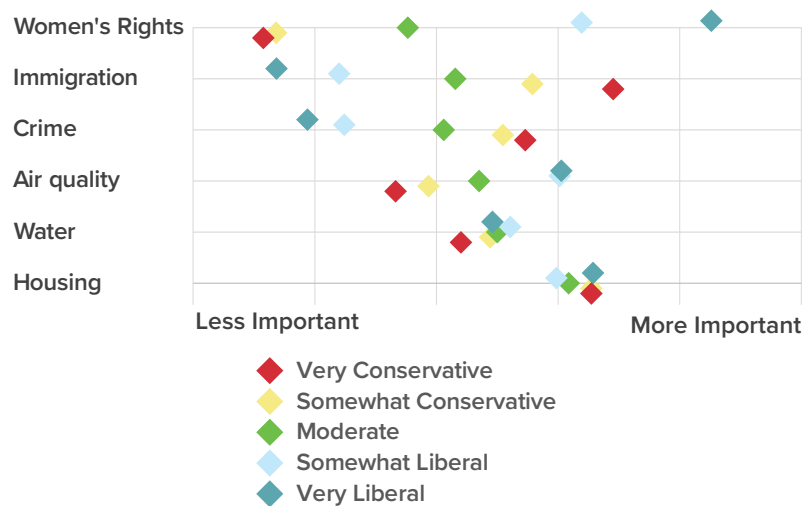
When combining the “somewhat” and “very” groups, Utah voters’ ideology aligns with their political party on the top-ten priorities lists. Like independents, “moderates” more closely align with conservatives, particularly with those who consider themselves “somewhat conservative.”

Like the level of importance by political affiliation, *kindergarten through 12th-grade education* is nearly indistinguishable across ideology. *Housing affordability* and general water concerns also show very high agreement. (See Figure 9.)

The biggest differences across ideology are with *abortion and women’s issues*, *immigration*, and *transgender rights and access*. As a result, these issues fall toward the bottom of the list of 17 issues.

Some priorities see a wide ideological spread – like *immigration* and *abortion and women’s issues*. Others have a lot of similarities across ideologies – like *housing* and *water*. Issues like *crime* and *air quality* fall in the middle.

Figure 9: Select Priorities of Utah Voters by Ideology



IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDES AND CONNECTIONS

Since the 2016 Utah Priorities Project, the Utah Foundation has included survey questions to measure Utahns' ideological consistency. To allow for comparisons between Utah and the nation, the questions mirrored those developed and used by the Pew Research Center.⁶

Survey respondents are provided with two opposing positions on a topic – one with a traditionally conservative view and one with a traditionally liberal view. Respondents are asked which position comes closer to their own views. Responses are used to create a scale from negative ten for those who chose the liberal position on each of the ten issues to positive ten for those who took the conservative position on each of the ten issues. This translates respectively into the categorization of consistently liberal to consistently conservative.

The Pew Research Center used a consistent survey between 1994 and 2020. Their analysis showed that Republicans and Democrats became more polarized over the five years from 2014 to 2019, continuing a trend since the turn of the millennium.⁷ In 2016, the Utah Foundation showed that unaffiliated and Democratic voters generally were more consistently liberal in Utah, while Utah Republican voters largely aligned with their national counterparts.⁸

Using the same questions in 2020, the Utah Priorities Project showed that the proportion of consistently or mostly liberal voters increased while the proportion of consistently or mostly conservative voters decreased.⁹ Also, when comparing Utah in early 2020 to the United States in late 2019, Utah Democrats were, again, more consistently liberal than their national counterparts. Utah Republicans' ideological consistency was not significantly different from their national counterparts.

Due to the methodological changes in 2021, the Utah Foundation can no longer show changes over time.¹⁰ However, this report uses the same methodology with different questions to highlight how Utah differs from the nation.

6 Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, "American Trends Panel wave 53," September 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/dataset/american-trends-panel-wave-53/>; Pew Research Center, "2014 Political Polarization Survey," 2014, www.pewresearch.org/politics/dataset/2014-political-polarization-survey/.

7 Ibid.

8 The Utah Foundation, 2016 Utah Priorities Project Part I: Survey of Voters' Issues and Concerns, www.utahfoundation.org/uploads/rr739.pdf.

9 The Utah Foundation, Utah Priorities 2020 | Red, Gray and Blue: The Issues that Unite and Divide Utah Voters, <https://www.utahfoundation.org/reports/utah-priorities-2020-red-gray-and-blue-the-issues-that-unite-and-divide-utah-voters/>.

10 Pew Research Center, Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/11/09/beyond-red-vs-blue-the-political-typology-2/>.

In measuring these ten questions purposefully designed to surface key differences Utahns, more than two-thirds agreed on six of the ten issues, and not just because Utah’s Republicans and Independents overwhelmed the Democrats. In those six cases, most Utahns agreed with the “traditionally liberal” statement over the “traditionally conservative statement.” See Appendix B for more details.

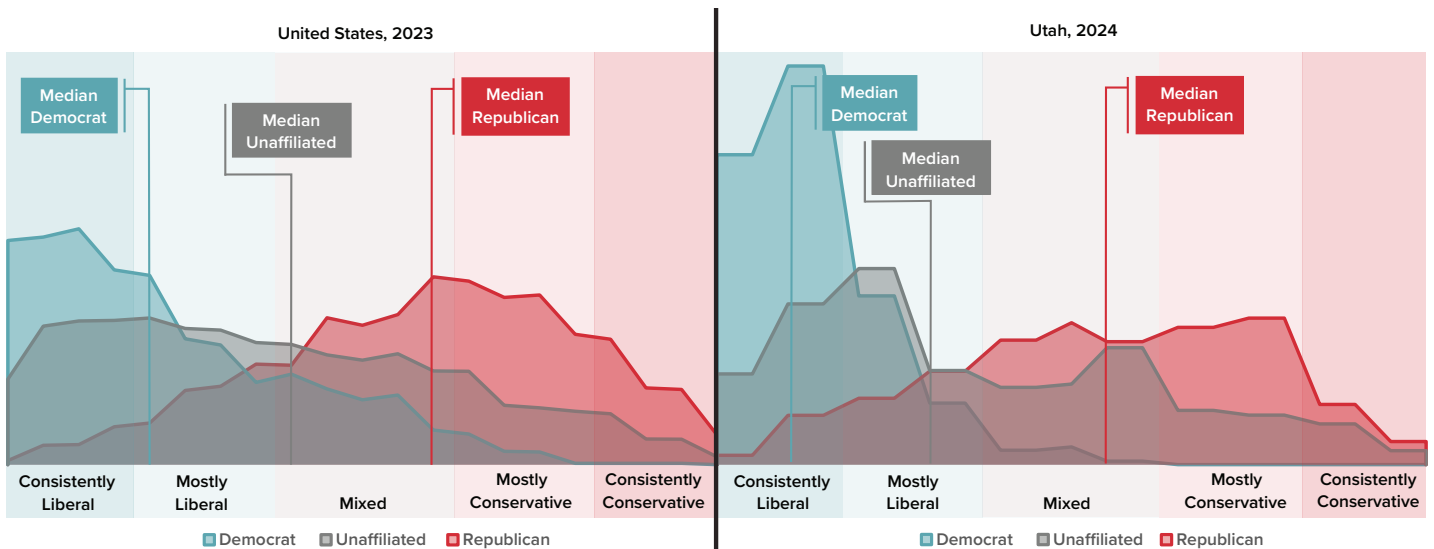
Generally speaking, Utah Republicans are as conservative as their national counterparts. The same is true for independent voters. However, Utah Democrats are more likely to choose the traditionally liberal position, indicating that they are consistently more liberal than Democrats around the country.

The Figure 10 analysis compared polarization within political parties. For this figure, each political party was the same size: 100%.

Utah’s ideological consistency among political parties looks substantially different once one accounts for the fact that Democrats make up 21% of Utah’s registered voters while unaffiliated voters make up 43%. That means although 72% of Democrats are consistently liberal, they are numerically equivalent to the 38% of Republicans that are either mostly or consistent-

The Utah median voter of each political party is more liberal than their national counterpart.

Figure 10: Ideological Scale, Utah 2024 and U.S. 2023, Unweighted



Source: Utah data from the Utah Foundation. National data from Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The opinions expressed herein, including any implications for policy, are those of the author and not of Pew Research Center.

ly conservative. Figure 11 shows the parties weighted by their respective size in terms of the proportion of voters in the state.

POSITION STATEMENTS

The Utah Foundation asked voters to take positions on several statements. With some of these statements, there was broad agreement. Others varied wildly by ideology and party identification.

Areas of Agreement

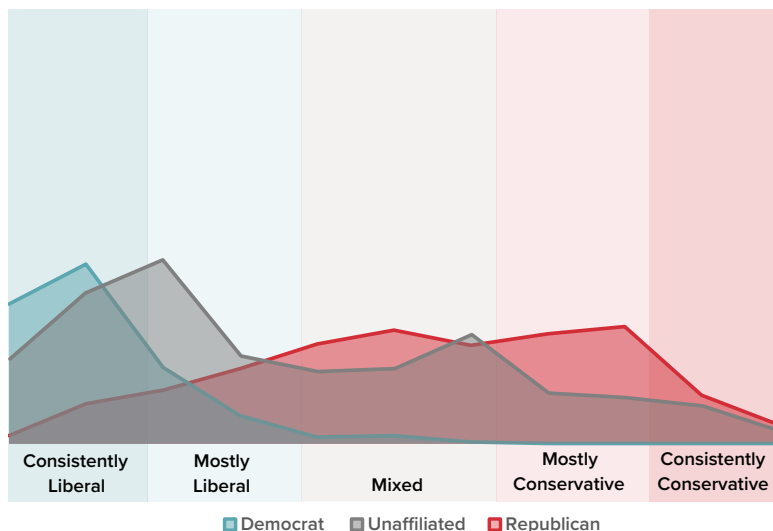
About 70% of Utahns agreed that inflation in the cost of groceries had the largest impact on their family budget – a startling amount of agreement considering voters chose only one of ten factors (aside from housing costs). Interestingly, there was no significant difference among household income level, political party, or ideology.

Another area of broad agreement was how willing individuals would be to save water. When asked, “I am willing to remove 50% of my lawn or allow it to be brown during summer months to reduce the cost of Utah’s water infrastructure investments by 30%,” 55% said they would be “very” or “extremely” willing. Only 19% said they were not at all or not very willing to do so, while the remaining 26% indicated they would be somewhat willing to do so. (See Figure 12.) Among each group of Democrats, Republicans, and unaffiliated voters, more voters expressed a higher level than a lower level of willingness to save water.

In a similar type of question about trade offs in education, Utah voters broadly agreed that they were not willing to make the trade off. When asked, “I am willing to pay \$500 per year more in taxes to increase by 10% the proportion of children who are good readers by third grade,” 49% of Utah voters stated they would be not at all willing or not very willing.

Even though there are fewer Democrats in Utah, there are more consistently liberal Democrats than any other grouping.

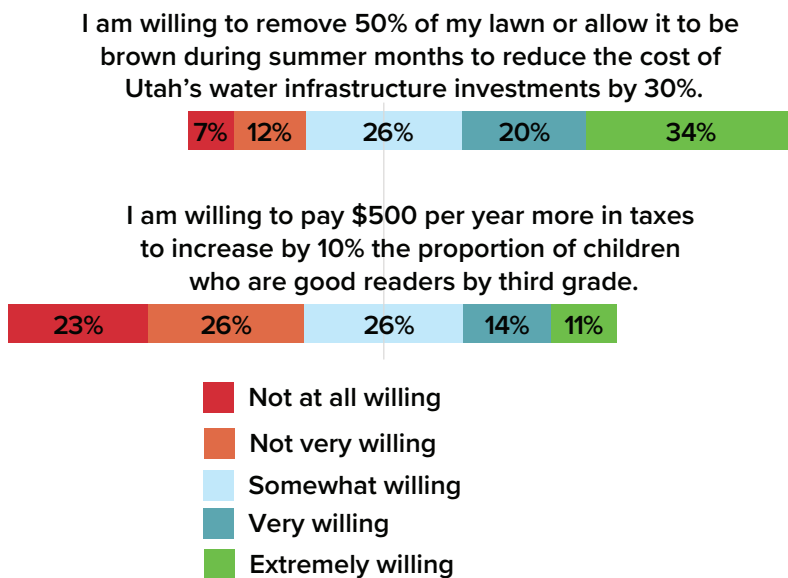
Figure 11: Ideological Scale, Utah 2024, Weighted



Source: The Utah Foundation.

Some policy proposals see strong agreement among Utah voters.

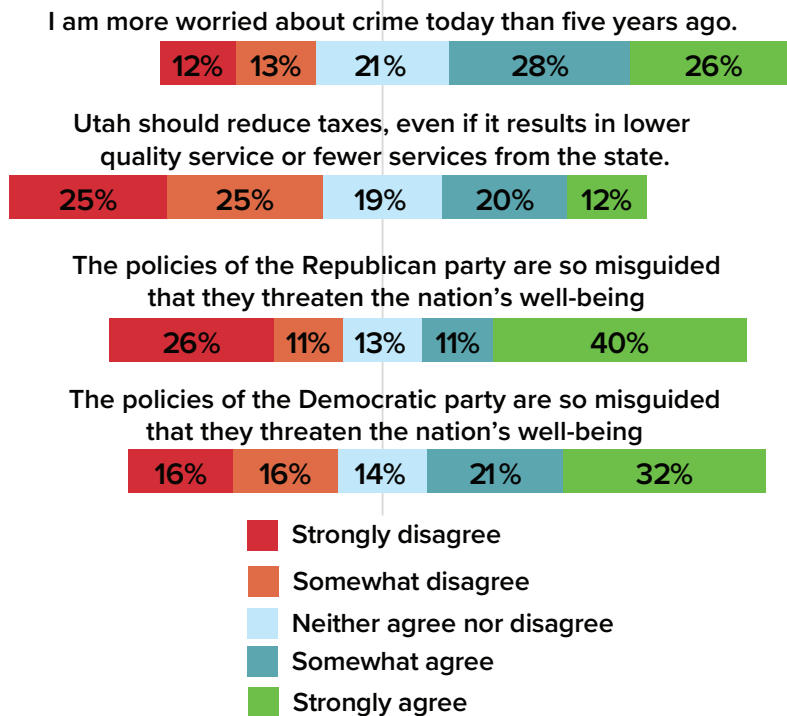
Figure 12: Utah Voters on Select Trade offs



Source: The Utah Foundation.

There are also several positions where Utah voters do not agree.

Figure 13: Utah Voters on Select Policy Positions



Source: The Utah Foundation.

Only a quarter of Utah voters indicated they would be very or extremely willing to make that trade-off, while the remaining 26% were only somewhat willing. Democrats tended to be more willing than Republicans and unaffiliated voters, but this was one question that saw some of the most agreement. While Utah voters may be willing to pay more for education, it appears that this specific trade off is not widely supported.

Another area of broad agreement is with regard to the statement, “I am more worried about crime today than five years ago.” About 55% of voters agreed with the statement, while only a quarter of voters disagreed with the statement. (See Figure 13.)

There was relatively broad agreement in opposition to the idea that Utah should lower taxes at the expense of current government services. When asked, “Utah should reduce taxes, even if it results in lower quality service or fewer services from the state,” 49% of voters disagreed, while only 30% agreed.

Areas of Disagreement

Just as there were areas of broad agreement, there were also areas of disagreement. When voters were asked if they agreed that “The policies of the Democratic party are so misguided that they threaten the nation’s well-being” or whether “The policies of the Democratic party are so misguided that they threaten the nation’s well-being,” there was broad levels of disagreements on both questions. (See Figure 13.) As expected, this fell closely along partisan affiliation.

CONCLUSION

While partisan divides clearly exist, there are issues upon which Utahns agree across party lines. For instance, there is close agreement among Republicans, unaffiliated voters and Democrats as to the relative importance of making housing more affordable. They all want politicians to do a better job of listening to voters. They all want lower levels of inflation. They all want less government overreach. They all want enough water, a good education system, and better air quality. With most of these topics, the differences are less about their goals than how to achieve them. Even then, there are broad areas of agreement. Such issues represent fertile ground that can be used to nurture consensus-driven public policy.

APPENDIX A: OVERALL STRUCTURE OF PROJECT

Overall Structure of Project

The Utah Foundation's Priorities Project is built around two surveys. The initial survey simply asks respondents to answer two open-ended questions:

- "What would you say is the most important state or local issue for Utah's governor to address?"
- "What is the next most important issue?"

These responses are categorized based on voters' first issue mentioned. The categories determined from an open-ended survey become the issues prioritized in a second survey.

The second survey includes the following elements:

- Asks voters about their quality of life and if the state is headed in the right direction.
- Has voters prioritize issues.
- Has voters prioritize sub-categories of issues likely to be among the top 10, such as:

"When thinking about housing affordability, what is your top priority?"

- Affordable housing for low-income Utahns
- Affordable housing for myself
- Affordable housing for first-time home buyers"

- Gauges the direction of sentiments of issues likely to be among the top 10, such as:

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Utah should invest more in roads, even if I have to pay more taxes."

- Has voters report demographic information to ensure a representative sample and to be used in examining group trends.

In 2024, the Utah Foundation partnered with Y2 Analytics to conduct the surveys. Y2 Analytics conducted the two-question, open-ended preliminary survey from January 20 to January 31, 2024, for which 709 individuals responded out of 29,149 individuals invited, with an estimated response rate of 2.4%.

For the main survey, Y2 Analytics created the sample by randomly drawing from a complete list of registered voters in Utah. Y2 Analytics emailed and texted potential respondents several times to increase participation. They conducted the main survey from February 24 to March 24, 2024, where 656 individuals responded out of 57,403 individuals invited, with an estimated response rate of 1.1%

Prioritization Methodology

The Utah Foundation prioritized issues using the best-worst scaling technique, also known as MaxDiff. With this methodology, long ranking lists are broken up into shorter sections. In this instance, voters were presented with a list of four topics. Voters identified which of the four topics they were most concerned about and which they were least concerned about. Voters were shown a series of eight questions, allowing them to see the same item several times and rank it against different items.

The resulting data were analyzed using a hierarchical Bayesian model, which looks at overall trends and assigns a coefficient for each topic with each individual. That coefficient can then be transformed into a probability scale that indicates the probability the voter would rank that particular issue first out of the 17 topics. Issues were ranked by their average coefficient value.

Voters in the survey were weighted based on age, race and ethnicity, and gender to conform with the 2022 U.S. Census Bureau report of registered voters in Utah. Missing data were imputed using a hot-deck method.

APPENDIX B: IDEOLOGICAL SCALE METHODOLOGY

The Utah Foundation posed a series of 10 questions to respondents. These questions asked respondents whether they would take a traditionally conservative position or a traditionally liberal position on a number of issues. If a respondent selected the liberal position they would receive -1 point (to make them appear on the left of the graph) if a respondent selected the conservative position, they would receive +1 point (to make them appear on the right of the graph). Respondents were categorized into five groups.

It should be noted that it was possible to rate an odd number on the scale only if respondents skipped or refused to answer a question. Adopting Pew's methodology, the Utah Foundation smoothed the figures in this report by showing the average of two consecutive points on the scale.

This methodology is built to measure a conservative-liberal axis. It is the most commonly used form of identifying how voters will act beyond party identification, which can be problematic with unaffiliated voters. At the same time, it misses some nuances. It should be noted that while borrowing Pew's methodology allows us to compare Utah to the nation at large, it also places our survey at the mercy of Pew's questions. If left to our own choices, we might add or subtract certain questions. For instance, the fact that Pew does not ask about abortion would seem to leave a significant gap in determining left-right views. Furthermore, there are certain answers that Pew classifies as liberal or conservative that could arguably be attributed to the opposite viewpoint as politics evolve. For instance, an answer considered "conservative" under Pew's approach is to state that "Military strength is the best way to ensure peace," although in recent years, non-intervention-

ism has regained currency in conservative circles. Likewise, anti-corporation populism has become increasingly associated with the right, and therefore the answer “Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit” might not be as reliably a “conservative” answer as in the past.

Which statement comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right?

- The economic system in this country unfairly favors powerful interests OR The economic system in this country is generally fair to most Americans
- Compromise is how things get done in politics, even though it sometimes means sacrificing your beliefs OR Compromise in politics is really just selling out on what you believe in
- Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace OR The best way to ensure peace is through military strength
- Business corporations make too much profit OR Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit
- America’s openness to people from all over the world is essential to who we are as a nation OR If America is too open to people from all over the world, we risk losing our identity as a nation
- Voting is a fundamental right for every adult U.S. citizen and should not be restricted in any way OR Voting is a privilege that comes with responsibilities and can be limited if adult U.S. citizens don’t meet some requirements
- Sometimes laws to protect people from themselves are necessary OR It’s not the government’s job to protect people from themselves
- Government aid to the poor does more good than harm because people can’t get out of poverty until their basic needs are met OR Government aid to the poor does more harm than good by making people too dependent on government assistance
- Society is better off if people make marriage and having children a priority OR Society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children
- Government often does a better job than people give it credit for OR Government is almost always wasteful and inefficient



UTAH FOUNDATION

RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

PLATINUM MEMBERS

The **Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley** Foundation

GEORGE S. AND DOLORES DORÉ ECCLES
FOUNDATION



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
FOUNDATION



GOLD MEMBERS



SILVER MEMBERS

American-Pacific Corp.
Deloitte
Fidelity Investments
Garbett
HNTB

The Kanter Family Foundation
Molina Healthcare
Staker Parson Companies
Utah League of Cities and Towns
Utah System of Higher Education

WCF Insurance
Wells Fargo
Western Governors University
Wheeler Machinery

BRONZE MEMBERS

Brigham Young University
Community Foundation of Utah
Cottonwood Heights
Davis County Chamber
Denise Dragoo
Granite School District
HDR Engineering
Holland & Hart
J Philip Cook, LLC

Magnum Development
my529
Revere Health
Ronna Cohen & Stan Rosenzweig
Salt Lake Chamber
Salt Lake Community College
Sandy City
Snow College
Suazo Business Center

United Way of Salt Lake
University of Utah
Utah Hospital Association
Utah State University
Utah Tech University
Utah Valley University
Weber State University
West Jordan
West Valley City