As part of our goal to educate and inform voters, as well as encourage open discussion of issues that are important to constituents in the 45th Congressional District, we conducted a study of public opinion in the district from July 17-July 27, 2017. We asked registered voters what they thought were the most important problems facing the country, their positions on specific issues, and whether they approved of the job their representative in Congress, Mimi Walters, was doing. We completed n=283 surveys of registered voters.

We asked voters to tell us in their own words what they thought was the most important problem facing the country. We then classified their responses into categories and found some shifts from the time of our pilot study in April/May 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most mentioned</td>
<td>Economy/Budget/Tax issues (18.6%)</td>
<td>Economy/Budget/Tax issues (18.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second most mentioned</td>
<td>Healthcare (15.2%)</td>
<td>The President (11.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third most mentioned</td>
<td>Political and Social Divisions in the Country (10.7%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth most mentioned</td>
<td>Foreign policy/National Security (9.4%)</td>
<td>Healthcare (9.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Issues not easily classified into distinct categories added up to 19.6%
^Issues not easily classified into distinct categories added up to 21.9%

A CLOSER LOOK

Our pilot study in April/May 2017 gave us a sense of which issues mattered to voters in the district. Based upon the results of our pilot study, we decided to ask voters questions relating to their positions on the following issues:

- Healthcare
- Economic growth vs. Environmental protection
- Immigration Policy
- Regulation of financial industries

HOW VOTERS EVALUATE WALTERS

We asked voters in July 2017, whether they approved of the job their Representative in Congress was doing.

Overall, 15.5% of voters approve of the job Mimi Walters is doing in Congress, 27.7% disapproved, and 56.8% were unable to evaluate the job she is doing.

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1 A description of our Methodology follows the results.
2 Our original pilot study (CA45th Public Opinion Poll #1) results were not weighted; results are weighted here to enable comparison between samples. Weights are applied in order to reflect registered party identification in the district. See description in Methodology.
OUR STUDY

Intrigued by the results of our pilot study in April/May of 2017, we wanted to determine if the issue priorities of voters had changed over time. We also wanted to know if voter evaluations of the job that Representative Mimi Walters is doing in Congress had changed. Finally, we wanted to determine specific voter positions on issues that voters in our pilot study rated as important.

Our survey first asked voters to tell us, in their opinion, what they thought the most important problem was facing the country today. Given the expansive nature of the question, we received a long list of responses. Figure 1 reflects a word cloud made from the responses we received.

FIGURE 1: WORD CLOUD OF RESPONSES TO “WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FACING THE COUNTRY TODAY?”
To facilitate our analysis of voter responses to the most important problem question, we classified the responses into 12 categories of issues: Healthcare, the Environment/Climate Change, Immigration, Civil Rights/Race, Economy/Budget/Taxes, Political and Social Divisions, The President, Liberals/the Left/Democrats, Conservatives/the Right/GOP, Crime/Policing, Foreign Affairs, and Other. These categories were similar to the categories we found in our pilot study. The top four issue categories from both the pilot study and our current study are shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: TOP ISSUE CATEGORIES, MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FACING THE COUNTRY TODAY**

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The issue area most often indicated by respondents involved the economy/budget/tax issues. This was the case in April/May of 2017 (18.6%) and again in July 2017 (18.4%). Healthcare was the second most mentioned issue area in April/May 2017 (15.2%), but by July 2017 it dropped to the fourth most mentioned issue area (9.6%). Concerns about President Trump were the second most mentioned issue area in July 2017 (11.2%). Voters remained concerned by Political and Social Divisions in the country (10.7%).

In our question about the problems that were of concern to voters, we did not distinguish between specific issue positions. We merely recorded and grouped together what voters told us. Based upon our findings from the pilot study, which included a rank ordering of issues using a modified CNN/ORC question, we determined that in our district healthcare, economic growth, and immigration were rated as the most important issues by constituents. Once we established that these issues were the most important ones, we wanted to find out what specific issue positions of voters were.

Figure 2 reflects voters’ response to the following question:

> A recent Washington Post/ABC News poll asked Americans which they preferred: the current federal health care law, known as the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), OR the Republican plan to replace it?[^4] We’d like to know what voters in Orange County think, which do you prefer?

Of the options provided, twice as many (42.8%) voters preferred the Affordable Care Act (ACA)/Obamacare to the Republican Plan (20.7%). These percentages were lower than the national percentages for the ACA (50%) or the Republican Plan (24%), as found in the ABC News/Washington Post Poll. District voters were significantly different from national percentages with respect to preferring “something else” (19.0% of voters in the district compared to 4% of the national survey). “Neither” option was the response for 16.5% of voters in the district, compared to 13% nationally. Although the percentages are different in the district compared to national percentages, they do follow national trends against the Republican Plan. Healthcare seems to be a difficult issue.

Moving from the issue of healthcare, to voters’ views on immigration policy, voters in the district were more uniform. When asked to indicate which one of three options came closest to their view on immigration policy, a clear majority (52.6%) preferred allowing undocumented immigrants to remain in the country and eventually apply for citizenship. The least chosen option would be to let undocumented citizens stay in the country but not apply for citizenship (14.5%). Finally, 28.5% of voters favored requiring undocumented citizens to leave the country. These results are shown in Figure 3.

FIGURE 2: “WHICH HEALTHCARE PLAN DO YOU PREFER?”
Finally, we asked two questions about economic growth. Both questions we asked reflect economic growth as it relates to regulation. According to Representative Mimi Walters, “House Republicans know that complex and burdensome overregulation is killing jobs and stifling our economy.”\(^5\) In line with this emphasis on deregulation and the connection to economic growth, we first asked voters which should be prioritized: economic growth or environmental protection. Previous public opinion research in the district found majority support for environmental protections.\(^6\) The second question we asked voters was whether there should be more government oversight of the financial industry, less oversight, or whether the amount of oversight was fine. This question was chosen given Walters’ agenda to roll back banking reforms established by the Dodd-Frank Act.\(^7\)
When asked to choose the statement one agreed with most, “protection of the environment should be given priority even at the risk of curbing economic growth,” or “economic growth should be given priority even if the environment suffers to some extent,” 62.6% of all respondents indicated that protection of the environment should be given priority, while 30.1% of all respondents indicated economic growth should be given priority. A minority of respondents, 7.3% indicated that they could not choose, or that a choice should not have to be made. This is shown in Figure 4.

The second regulatory question that we asked concerned government oversight of financial companies, such as Wall Street banks, mortgage lenders, payday lenders, debt collectors and credit card companies. We asked voters whether they felt more oversight was needed, less oversight was needed, or whether the amount of government oversight of these companies was sufficient. There was not a clear majority for any of these options. The smallest segment, 26.2%, felt less oversight was necessary. The largest segment, 42.8%, felt there should be more government oversight of financial companies with 27.9% indicating the current amount of government oversight was sufficient. 3.1% of the sample were not able to provide a response. These results are shown in Figure 5.
FIGURE 5: “SHOULD THERE BE MORE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT OF THE FINANCIAL INDUSTRY?”

**Should there be more government oversight of the financial industry?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO Answer</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The current amount of government oversight is sufficient</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be less government oversight of financial companies</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be more government oversight of financial companies</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**JOB APPROVAL RATINGS FOR MIMI WALTERS**

Only 15.5% of voters in our sample approved of the job Mimi Walters is doing in Congress, 27.7% disapproved, and 56.8% were unable to evaluate the job she is doing. Before we asked voters to evaluate the job Mimi Walters’ job performance, we asked voters if they knew who their Representative was. Of those who were correctly able to identify Walters, 18.1% approved of the job Walters was doing in Congress, 48.6% disapproved of the job Walters was doing in Congress, and 33.3% were unable to evaluate her performance. From these results it seems that as familiarity with Walters increased, so too did her disapproval rating.

**IMPLICATIONS**

With respect to specific issue positions, a majority of voters favored protecting the environment even if economic growth was affected along with an immigration policy that allowed undocumented immigrants to eventually apply for citizenship. A plurality of voters favored the Affordable Care Act and more government oversight of financial companies, compared to the Republican Plan to replace the Affordable Care act and less government oversight of financial companies. We note here that our sample was weighted to accurately reflect the distribution of Republican, Democratic, Non Party Preference (NPP) and Other party registration in the district (see Methodology for a description). Overall, our survey results suggest that environmental and immigration issues are most likely to find commonality across party lines along with a lack of familiarity (and the ability to assess) the job that Representative Mimi Walters is doing in Congress.
METHODOLOGY

Our sample was derived from a voter list obtained from the Orange County Registrar of Voters. The voter list consisted of all voters registered in the 45th Congressional District as of March 23, 2017. The total number of registered voters in the Orange County Registrar of Voters database for the 45th Congressional District on this day was 413,419 registered voters. The breakdown of party registration on this day was: 39.6% Republican, 30.4% Democrat, 25.8% No Party Preference (NPP) and 4.2% Other party.

From this voter list we drew a random sample of 3% of the voters which was n=12,224 voters. The percent of our random sample that had contact information (telephone numbers) was 54.9% or n=6767 voters. We called 4001 voters at least one time between July 17 and July 21, 2017 and completed 163 telephone surveys.

We additionally sent emails with links to a SurveyMonkey version of the survey to voters we were not able to reach by telephone (n=2389). This included voters who did not have a telephone number on record, but who did have email addresses on record. These voters received an initial email and one follow-up email between July 20-Jul27, 2017. Using SurveyMonkey, we were able to complete an additional n=120 surveys, for an overall total of n=283 registered voters.

In order to determine how representative our sample was, we examined the party registration percentages for voters completing our survey because we know the absolute breakdown of party registration in the district. Our survey of 263 voters was 28.9% Republican, 39.9% Democrat, 26.4% NPP and 4.8% Other party. These percentages reflected an underrepresentation of Republicans, and overrepresentation of Democrats, NPP and other party voters. Weights were constructed in order to correct for this under/overrepresentation of party registration. For Republicans the weight value was 1.37, for Democrats the weight value was .76, for NPP the weight value was .98 and for other party the weight value was .88. All results have been weighted.

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Email: alexa@california45th.com
Website: www.california45th.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/California45th/

8Weights for the pilot study were Republican= 1.31, Democrat=.72, NPP=.95, Other party= 2.1.