EMPLOYEE-VOTERS

INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM EMPLOYERS DIRECTLY IMPACTED EMPLOYEES’ MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION PROCESS.

- 52% of those who got information from their employer said it led them to register to vote.
- 65% of employees are more likely to vote based on the information received from employers.
- 83% found the information received from employers helpful in deciding how to vote.

“Employee voters determine who policy makers are and employee advocates help determine the policies that they support.”

-Jim Gerlach, President & CEO, BIPAC
Former U.S. Congressman for Pennsylvania’s Sixth Congressional District
Overview

As in our 2014 national survey of private and public sector employees, our 2016 post-election survey finds employers with a slight edge over political parties or labor unions as being the most credible information source for employees on political issues and elections that affect jobs, companies, or industries. Nationally, 34% (31% in 2014) rate information from their employer as the most credible, 32% (25% in 2014) rate information from political parties the most credible, and just 14% (16% in 2014) report the same about information from labor unions.

Today, nearly four-in-ten respondents (38%) are most likely to have seen, read, or heard information about political and workplace issues related to the election from the business community (down from 49% in 2014). Nearly a third (30%) recall receiving information from organized labor or a labor representative (down from 40% in 2014), and one-in four (27%) report the same from their employer or employer’s representative (31% in 2014).

Information received from employers directly impacted employees’ motivation to participate in the election process. More than half (52%) of those who got information from their employer said it led them to register to vote (up from 43% in 2014), and 55% said it led them to learn more about an issue (down from 63% in 2014). Most importantly, 65% said information from their employer made them more likely to vote and only 7% said it made them less likely to vote. Overall, among those who received information, 83% found the information helpful in deciding how to vote.

Moreover, a large majority of employees (56%) believes their employer should be active in “promoting policies favorable to their industry and economic success.” But there are caveats:

- Only 7% want to hear specifically about candidates. A plurality (32%) wants to know about issues affecting their job.

- There is a disconnect between public policy issues affecting their job and their employer’s political views: Employees are much more likely to agree with their employer on policy (63% total agree/50% strongly agree) than with their employer’s political views (15% always align/39% sometimes align).

This data shows that voters want their employers to be active in promoting policy issues affecting their jobs, and when employers do so, that engagement has a very significant impact on employee-voter conduct in the electoral process.
RESPONDENT PROFILE

A wide majority of surveyed employed adults work full-time (76%) and roughly one-quarter (24%) work part-time. Currently, 62% are employed with a private sector entity, 20% in the public sector, and 14% are self-employed. Looking at voters, our current sample closely mirrors the employment by sector in the 2014 voter sample.

Today, 87% of respondents report that they voted in the 2016 General Election. Most (56%) voted at a polling place on Election Day. In 2014, 61% of employed voters cast their ballot at a polling place, 22% voted early in person, and 17% by mail or absentee.

There are variations in voting behavior by region, largely due to voting laws in each state. For example, voters in the North Central, South, and Northeast regions are most likely to have voted on Election Day, while those in the Pacific region were just as likely to have voted by mail as they were to vote in person on Election Day (part of this is due to the fact that Washington and Oregon are almost entirely vote by mail states). In the Mountain/Plains states, voters were equally likely to vote on Election Day as they were to vote early in person. There is no significant difference in voting method based on full or part-time employment status.
This year, voters were more likely to depend on television, either cable (24%) or network (22%), for information to help in their voting decisions. TV is followed closely by Internet searches (15%) and social media (11%). Another 7% depended on online newspapers, just 4% on print newspapers, and 3% on radio. By comparison, in the 2014 election cycle, employed voters were most likely to depend on Internet searches for election information.

Looking at subgroups, we find men (especially younger men) relied on cable TV for information, while women (especially older women) relied most on network TV. Not surprisingly, younger voters were more likely than older voters to use the Internet or social media for political information.

Among the 13% of our sample that did not vote, there is no clear consensus on the source for election news that may have played a role in a decision not to vote. While cable and network TV were mentioned more often, the Internet and social media followed closely as the most popular source.

This survey again asked respondents to rate the credibility of three organizations on political issues and elections that directly affect their job, company, or industry. Today, a current or former employer and political parties are perceived as most credible. Labor unions are considered less credible than employers or political parties.
Credibility of Information Sources

“Which of the following organizations do you feel provides the most credible information on political issues and elections that directly affect or affected your job, company, and industry?”

In addition, another 20% indicated a source other than the three above, including their “own research” (3%), “news/media” (2%), “independent sources” (1%), “Internet research” (1%), “newspapers” (1%), “various sources” (1%), “unbiased sources” (1%), and “family, friends, or peers” (1%). Nothing else was mentioned by more than one percent and another 5% could not identify a specific source.

Looking deeper it is important to note that while labor union households are more likely than non-union households to rate labor unions as credible, union households rate their employer as more credible than either political parties or unions.

There has been minimal change in voters’ credibility ratings of unions, employers, or political parties since 2014

- Your current or former employer
  - 2014: 35%
  - 2016: 34%
- Political parties
  - 2014: 29%
  - 2016: 31%
- Labor unions
  - 2014: 15%
  - 2016: 15%
PROMOTING PUBLIC POLICY BY EMPLOYERS

Today, a majority (56%) believes their employer should be active in promoting public policies favorable to their industry and economic success. Just one-quarter (25%) believe their employer should not be active and another 18% are unsure. Those most likely to agree that their employer should be active include:

- Men age 18-54
- Post-graduates
- Union households

Comparison of Voter’s Sentiments in 2014

When asked whether they generally agree or disagree with their employer’s approach to public policy issues affecting their industry and workplace, more than three-in-five (63%) agree, with fully 50% in “strong” agreement, while just 12% disagree, and 25% are unsure. There is majority agreement among most major subgroups, with younger men, voters, post-grads, and union households most likely to feel strongly about this.

It is also important to note that employed respondents who believe their company should actively promote public policy are also among the most likely to agree with their employer’s approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voters</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, should be active</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, should not be active</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>+2</td>
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Looking back to 2014, we find voters remain most interested in receiving information about public policy from their employers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voters</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public policy issues affecting my job, company, or industry</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting place/where to vote</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates for office</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
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The mechanics of voting are helpful and perhaps necessary for some respondents, but those who voted in the 2016 General Election were most likely to be interested in public policy issues affecting their job, their company, or their industry.
POLITICAL AND ELECTION INFORMATION IN THE WORKPLACE

This survey asked respondents if they recalled seeing, reading, or hearing any information about political and workplace issues related to this year’s election from organized labor/labor representatives, the business community, or from their employer/employer’s representative. In each case, a majority do not recall any such information.

Most likely to recall information from union/union representatives are men, workers age 18-34, full-time employees, public sector employees, voters, post-grads, and union households. Most likely to recall information from the business community are men age 18-54, full-time employees, public sector, and self-employed respondents and voters. Most likely to recall information from their employer include men, respondents age 18-34, and full-time employees.
Information from Unions, Business Community, and Employer

“Do you recall seeing, reading, or hearing any information about political and workplace issues related to this year’s elections from…” (All Respondents)

Among employees who recalled seeing, reading, or hearing from their employer, 55% were motivated to learn more about an issue, 49% were motivated to register to vote, and 20% were motivated to donate money to a person or an organization for a political reason.

In addition, 65% report the information they received from their employer made them more likely to vote in the November election, 7% report it made them less likely, and 26% said the information had no impact. Those most likely to be motivated to vote based on information they saw, read, or heard from their employer include men age 18-54, full-time employees, union households, post-grads, and those who rate information from their employer as most credible.

There has been a marginal increase over 2014 in voters’ likelihood to vote based on information received from employers.

Among those who recall information from their employer, 83% say the information was helpful and just 16% say it was not helpful. All major subgroups found the information helpful. Comparing voter sentiment today with 2014, we find employed voters found the information equally helpful in both election cycles.

By comparison, in 2014, voters were more likely to report having seen, read, or heard information from labor unions and the business community.
CITIZEN-ADVOCATES

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) has said that “citizen advocacy still makes a difference, and more citizen participation in democratic discourse is a very good thing. But it is quality discourse...that really helps to inform policy decisions” (source: congressfoundation.org). An employer can have a huge impact by motivating employees to be citizen-advocates once they are educated about an issue.

The Foundation’s data reinforces the positive effect of educating citizen-advocates and that clearly aligns with BIPAC’s Moore Information survey data as well. CMF says that an in-person issue visit from constituents is the most impactful tool to help influence a legislator. Ninety-seven percent of Congressional staff surveyed by CMF found these in-person issue visits have “a lot of positive influence” or “some positive influence” in the legislative process. That is six times more influential than visits by paid lobbyists. Further, this 97% response was closely followed by “contact from a constituent who represents other constituents,” such as an employer who has employees in that district, with 96% of respondents saying it was influential. The next most successful forms of advocacy are individualized postal letters, emails, and phone calls from constituents.

Why is this citizen advocacy so important and effective? Because legislators want to meet and talk with their constituents. They want to learn more about issues from those constituents who live and work every day in that field of endeavor. And they know the advocate, and his/her family, will be voters in that district or state in the next election. In short, the elected official’s job depends on how well they know and listen to their constituents.

CONCLUSION

Employers of all sizes, whether they are a startup business or a multi-national corporation, are impacted by legislation and regulations everyday. A business has many tools in its toolbox to be on the offense and defense in its government affairs strategy. Employer-to-Employee (E2E) engagement is one of these tools and its use ultimately means legislators hearing directly from constituents on how they could be impacted – positively or negatively – by policy. A large international energy company that uses BIPAC’s E2E model and tools put it this way, “our company does not exist independently of the political process. The success of our company and the jobs it supports largely depends on the political environment in which we operate. On Capitol Hill, one vote can make a difference. That’s why it is critical we support and elect men and women who understand our business community and we will advocate for legislation that enhances our ability to perform.”

Another BIPAC member in the financial services industry echoes that point. They said, “decisions will be made, whether we take part or not. If we do not have a place at the table, we will probably be on the menu.”

The goal of E2E isn’t to tell employees how to vote or how to think. It works best when it is presented in an objective and unbiased way without an ideological or partisan bent. But if you are not speaking to your employees, we can guarantee that other voices are trying to influence them and that may not be in the best interests of their jobs or your company. And those interests are also speaking to policy makers with the hope of enactment of anti-jobs policies.

Communication in corporations is a two-way street. You want to hear what your employees are saying about business conditions. And it is also important to let them know how decisions made, particularly at the political level, are affecting business. I think too many times corporations are unwilling or are afraid to confront their employees with these issues and to communicate to them how public policy affects business for a fear of offending their talent. That is a huge mistake.

Employees may not vote their business interest. They may have other cultural interests or identity interests that frankly might conflict with their business interest. But I think employers have a duty to inform employees on how issues may affect their livelihood in the long-term. And I think employees appreciate these two-way conversations. When a company would come into my office that had 100, 200, or 1,000 citizens that lived in my district – and the issue that they wanted to discuss would impact them – that was the most important thing to me as a legislator. What we fail to do many times is we can get the money into the political action committees of the company, but we don’t let those Members of Congress know that we have constituents in their district.

We also don’t get those Members of Congress out into those plants, into the offices, into the businesses to talk first-hand with company leaders and employees. Those types of forums where the legislator can have a question and answer session and learn first-hand what the employees are thinking are critically important for the policy making process. Learning how the policy issue affects them and most of all, having the legislator know that how he or she votes will affect the business and the constituents matters. This is the one area where labor unions have over-performed and where businesses have under-performed. Members will generally vote their district’s issues before they vote their party - if they know what those district interests are from those interests making their voices heard. If they don’t hear them, it is easy for a legislator to go back and to vote with the party.
About BIPAC
BIPAC is a member-based, bipartisan organization whose mission is as simple as it is vitally important — to help private sector employers EDUCATE and MOTIVATE employees to use their power as private citizens to get involved in the legislative and electoral processes to promote a pro-jobs agenda and foster the growth of American prosperity.

Contact us to learn more about how to implement or expand an employer-to-employee engagement strategy in your company, trade association, or organization.

Methodology of the Survey
This report contains the results of a national online survey conducted November 9-10, 2016 by Moore Information among a representative sample of 1,731 employed adults in the United States who participated in the 2016 general election.

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