Guardrails Action AI Messaging Recommendations

From: Guardrails Action
To: Interested Parties
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Throughout the month of September, Guardrails Action conducted extensive research in Michigan, Iowa, and Ohio to better understand the attitudes of swing state voters around AI issues. We conducted polls in all three states and a set of four focus groups with likely voters in those states. Based on that research, which can be found in the polling memo here and the focus group memo here, we have compiled a list of messaging recommendations for candidates who are looking for guidance on how to talk about AI. Here you can also find topline results from the individual surveys in Michigan, Iowa, and Ohio.

Don't be afraid of Big AI money.

Our polling shows that AI super PACs are radioactive with voters and an absolute liability for the candidates they are supporting; voters are less likely to support a candidate backed by AI super PACs than a candidate who voted to cut Medicaid or who supports a nationwide abortion ban. Voters are more concerned about outside spending from the AI industry than Wall Street, crypto, or AIPAC.

Voters are taking AI seriously and so should you.

In all three states we surveyed, over 65% of voters disagreed that the capabilities of AI are overblown, and over 60% of voters believe that AI could pose a risk *to the survival of humanity*. AI may not be the number one issue voters are making their decision on, but it's clear that it is something they are deeply concerned about and want Congress to do something about it. Over 80% of voters in all three states believe AI regulation is important for Congress to act on relative to other issues. We don't need polling or focus groups to tell us this, we know that everyone is talking about AI all the time and it's important for candidates to show leadership on this issue.

Tell a story and make AI billionaires the villain.

Every single AI billionaire we tested had negative favorability with voters, and people strongly believe that AI will increase the net worth of billionaires and not American workers. In every state we surveyed, over 70% of voters disagreed with the statement that AI executives care about people like them. Our focus groups show that while people are generally concerned about the direction of AI, they're still struggling to understand how it will impact their lives. They are

looking for leadership on this issue and candidates should be telling voters a story about the AI billionaires who are pushing this technology on us, without regulations, so that they can make themselves richer at our expense.

Data centers remain politically toxic with voters.

A multimillion dollar PR push from the AI industry has had little effect on voter attitudes towards data centers. More than 70% of voters in all three states oppose data centers being built in their community, and over 80% said it's important for Congress to address the construction of data center facilities. People's concerns about AI are diverse and you should not limit yourself to talking about data centers, but data centers are the most concrete and salient way in which many voters are dealing with AI issues.

Taking on the AI industry is a recipe for winning over persuadable voters.

Over 25% of voters in all three states we surveyed said that they would be willing to vote for a politician of the party opposite theirs who took a strong stance against AI companies when their opponent did not. It is not just anecdotal evidence, our polling shows that a quarter of voters are willing to cross party lines to vote for a candidate willing to take on the AI industry. Voters distrust both political parties equally on AI and you can earn their trust by taking a strong stand against industry and for regulation.

Pick the solutions that you believe in and can speak to.

Proposed regulations for AI are overwhelmingly popular with voters. Forcing data centers to pay the cost of the energy they use, ending tax breaks for data centers, and a moratorium until stronger regulations are passed all polled above 70% in all three states. Common-sense protections like banning AI companion chatbots for kids, holding AI companies financially liable for damages they cause, and banning the use of AI to decide who gets a job, loan, or apartment all polled against 80% in all three states. And ambitious economic programs to address the impacts of AI like a jobs guarantee, guaranteed health care, and universal basic income all polled above 60% in all three. Pick the regulations, in accordance with consulting with experts, that make sense to you and that you feel you can speak most powerfully.