

February 18, 2022

## Strong Bipartisan Support for the Protect Our Democracy Act

### Results of a new national survey and focus groups

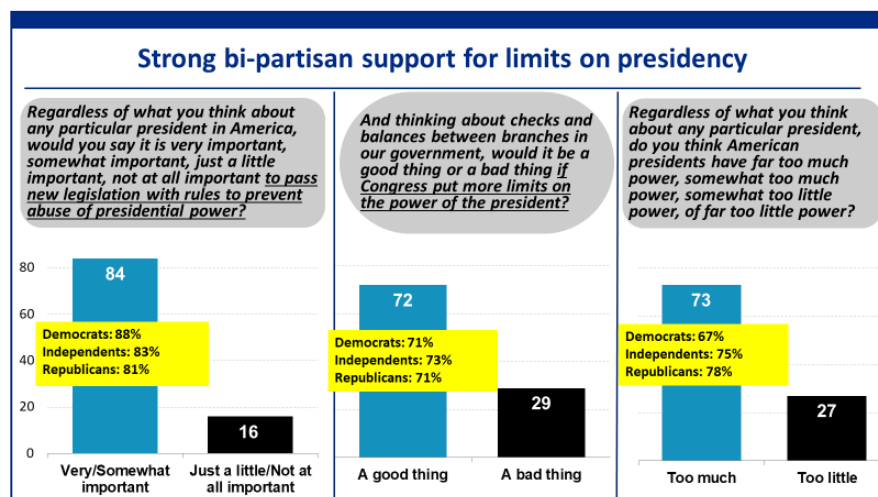
To: Interested parties

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A new nationwide survey and set of focus groups conducted by a bi-partisan team of pollsters from GQR and The Tarrance Group show strong support among both Democratic and Republican voters for the Protecting Our Democracy Act (PODA). PODA is a package of pro-democracy reforms to create and strengthen guardrails preventing the abuse of executive power, while strengthening the transparency and accountability of the presidency. Support for PODA reflects a strong bi-partisan desire to prevent presidential abuse of power and to establish new limits on the power of the presidency. The research was funded by Stand Up America and Protect Democracy.<sup>1</sup>

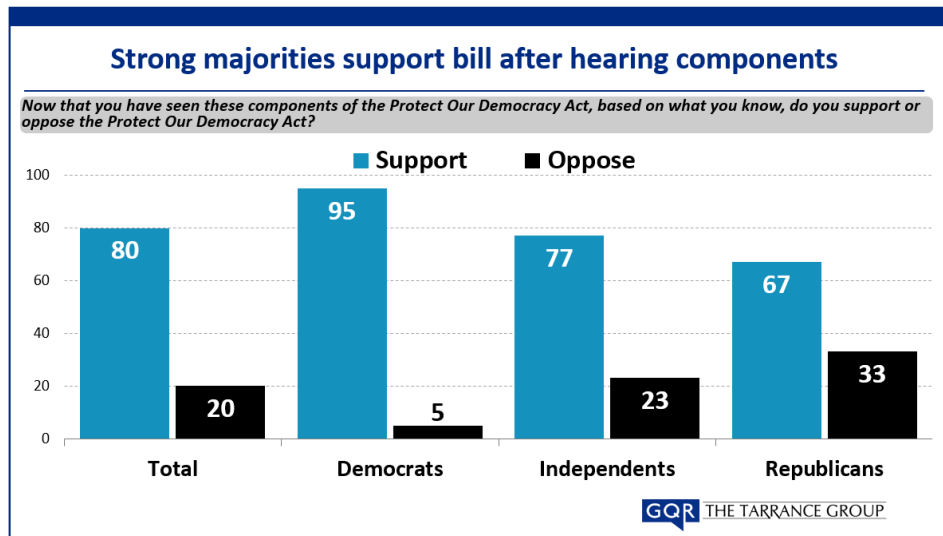
PODA would reform a wide range of executive powers, including by setting limits on the president's pardon power, strengthening prohibitions on foreign interference in campaigns and elections, enforcing the ban on presidents using the office to enrich themselves, and much more. The bill passed the House in December 2021 in a bi-partisan vote, and the White House has also endorsed it.

The survey shows a large majority of the public already supports new limitations on presidential power. A full 84% of voters say passing legislation to prevent presidential abuse of power is very or somewhat important, including 88% of Democrats and 81% of Republicans. Similarly, 72% say it is a good thing if Congress put more limits on the power of the president, while 73% say American presidents have too much power.



<sup>1</sup> These findings are based on a nationally representative online survey with 1,000 registered voters and a set of two online focus groups, conducted by GQR and The Tarrance Group. The survey fielded January 20-25, 2022. The focus groups were conducted on December 22, 2021 – One Democrat-leaning group of older upper-educated women and one Republican-leaning group of younger, lower-educated men. Each group was homogenous by age, education, and gender.

This widespread support for new protections against presidential abuse underlie strong support for PODA. After hearing about the bill’s individual components, 80% of registered voters support the Act, including 37% who **strongly** support it. Support includes 67% of Republicans, 77% of independents and 95% of Democrats. One female voter in the focus groups says, “[The Act] would stop conflicts of interest so decisions [have] nothing to do with personal gains.”



In fact, majorities support all 13 of the presented individual components of the Act. Its most popular provisions include rules to strengthen “the emoluments clause,” which prohibits elected officials from receiving gifts or things of value from foreign representatives or from federal or state governments; protections to stop government employees from using public office for personal gain; and provisions that bars presidents from pardoning themselves or for using pardons as bribes. A Republican-leaning man says, “That [provision] is important because using a pardon to pardon themselves is a dictatorship and not a democracy.” A Republican-leaning man says, “Being president shouldn’t give you an automatic shield from everything. There should be critique on everything you do from financial entanglement to criminal acts, because you are the leader of the country.”

This support for PODA and its components comes despite very low initial awareness of the bill. Initially, only 17% can correctly state what the bill addresses or any of its provisions.

Despite Americans’ focus on the pandemic, inflation, and health care costs, Americans are also concerned about US democracy and think that Congress can and should prioritize these pressing issues and democracy at the same time. Overall, 6 out of 10 voters say they are not satisfied with how democracy is working in the country, including two-thirds of independents and 4 out of 5 Republicans.

In focus groups, some note PODA could help mitigate a double standard where presidents can get away with things that average people could never do in their own jobs. A Democratic-leaning woman says: “In the job I do, I have to declare *everything*, and I don’t have nearly the power [that they do]. If I don’t [make those declarations], I can lose my job.”