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Research Report

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2016 Utah Priorities Project

Part II: Gubernatorial Candidate Report



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The mission of Utah Foundation is to promote a thriving economy, a well-prepared workforce, and a high quality of life for Utahns by performing thorough, well-supported research that helps policymakers, business and community leaders, and citizens better understand complex issues and providing practical, well-reasoned recommendations for policy change.

2016 Utah Priorities Project

Part II: Gubernatorial Candidate Report

The presidential race is not the only high-profile race this election season. In 2016, Utah will also vote for governor from a pool of 11 candidates. This report – Part II of the Utah Priorities Project – is a useful tool for Utah voters to gain a better understanding of the gubernatorial candidates' positions.

Seven of the 11 candidates responded to the same questions as Utah voters, which voter responses are detailed in Part I of the Utah Priorities Project. This report uses data from the surveys to get an understanding of how the gubernatorial candidates compare to each other, to their own party constituents, and to Utahns overall.

Level of Concern on Priorities of Gubernatorial Candidates to Utah's Top 5 Priorities

Top 5 Priorities of Utah Voters	Republican			Democrat		Other	
	Gary Herbert	Nate Jensen	Jonathan Johnson	Vaughn Cook	Mike Weinholz	L.S. Brown	Gary Van Horn
1. Healthcare	2	5	5	4	5	5	3
2. Air quality	4	2	5	4	5	3	4
3. K-12 education	3	4	5	4	5	3	5
4. State taxes & gov't spending	5	5	5	3	4	5	5
5. Jobs & the economy	4	5	5	4	5	5	5

KEY FINDINGS:

Candidates

- Seven of 11 gubernatorial candidates participated in this survey.
- Unlike voters who typically believe that Utah is “heading in the right direction,” all but one of the candidates challenging Utah’s Governor believe that Utah is “on the wrong track.” (see page 2)
- Six of the seven participating candidates gave a rating of 5 – very concerned – to *public lands*. Five of the seven gave a 5 to *state taxes and government spending* (see pages 6-8).
- Both Democratic candidates shared the same ideological score as the median Democratic Utah voter. The two Republican candidates who participated in the ideological section of the survey were more conservative than the median Utah Republican voter (see page 9).

Voters

- While rankings for priorities differed greatly between Democratic and Republican voters, average ratings were almost the same for a handful of topics – *state taxes and government spending, jobs and the economy, public lands, and energy issues* (see page 4).

This research report was written by Utah Foundation Research Analysts Mallory Bateman and Christopher Collard and Research Director Shawn Teigen. Assistance was provided by Research Intern Susan Palmer. The authors can be reached for comment at 801.355.1400.

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INTRODUCTION

Part I of the Utah Priorities Project addressed the top priorities of Utah registered voters, both in aggregate and in breakout groups. This report, Part II, highlights the responses of the gubernatorial candidates to an abridged version of the voters survey. The candidates survey included two general questions about the quality and direction of the state, 21 questions rating priorities, and 10 questions meant to gauge each candidate's political ideology. This report shows the candidate responses and compares them to each other and their related voting bases.

All 11 individuals who declared candidacy for governor by the March 17, 2016 filing deadline were invited via email to participate in this survey. Seven of the 11 participated – three Republican candidates, two Democratic candidates, one Independent American candidate, and one unaffiliated candidate.

The following candidates did not participate in the gubernatorial survey: Superdell Schanze, Independent American; Brian Kamerath, Libertarian; Carlos J. Tavares Jr., Republican; and Ken Larson, Libertarian.

Candidates who responded to the Utah Foundation survey are listed below, along with their initials, which identify their responses in this report's figures.

(LB) – L.S. Brown, unaffiliated

(VC) – Vaughn Cook, Democrat

(GH) – Gary Herbert, Republican

(NJ) – Nate Jensen, Republican

(JJ) – Jonathan Johnson, Republican

(GVH) – Gary Van Horn, Independent American

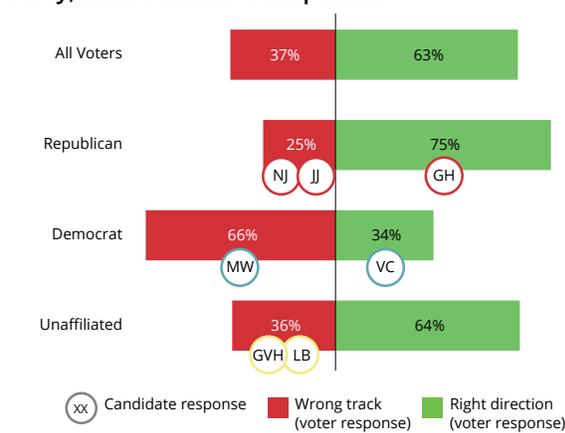
(MW) – Mike Weinholtz, Democrat

In situations where multiple candidates are in the same category, they are listed alphabetically by last name.

RIGHT TRACK

When asked if the state was “headed in the right direction” or “on the wrong track,” it is not surprising that opinions were starkly divided along party lines. Democrats are the minority party in the Utah State Legislature and without a representative in a statewide office. Accordingly, they likely feel the state is on the wrong track because their issues or proposed solutions only get traction when a substantial share of Republicans agree with them.

Figure 1: Is Utah “Headed in the Right Direction” or “On the Wrong Track,” for Utah Voters by Political Party, with Candidate Responses



Among Republican voters, there were differences in their responses related to location and race and ethnicity. Only 20% of urban (Salt Lake, Utah, Davis, and Weber) Republicans thought the state was on the wrong track, but that number doubled among more rural Republicans. Likewise, 75% of white Republicans thought the state was headed in the right direction, while less than half of their non-white counterparts agreed.

Among Democrats, Millennial respondents disagreed markedly with older generations. The majority (62%) of Millennial Democrats thought the state was headed in the right direction while a majority (75%) of the older generation Democrats thought it was on the wrong track.

Among unaffiliated respondents, religion was a dividing line. Only 27% of LDS Church members and 39% of “other Christian” respondents thought the state was on the wrong track, while over half (52%) of respondents who did not identify with any religion stated they thought the state was on the wrong track. In fact, among unaffiliated voters, religion – or rather not identifying with a religion – was a stronger predictor than how conservative or liberal they were in thinking the state was on the wrong track. Additional discussion about this can be found in the Ideology section, below.

Among gubernatorial candidates, only two aligned with the majority view of their respective voter bases – Governor Gary Herbert (R) and candidate Mike Weinholtz (D). The unaffiliated voter base is likely a more diverse group than either party; this may explain why neither of the non-major party candidates indicated that they felt the state was on the right track despite the fact that a majority of unaffiliated respondents felt it was (see Figure 1).

QUALITY OF LIFE

When Utah voters were asked if their quality of life was better or worse than it was five years ago, 36% said it was “somewhat better” or “much better” and 44% said it was “about the same.” For Republican, Democratic, and unaffiliated voters, “about the same” as a response only varied from 48% to 40% (as seen in Figure 2). Two candidates chose the “about the same” category, two candidates chose “somewhat worse,” and the other three candidates were spread across the remaining divisions.

Among Republicans, income was linked to respondents’ reported quality of life. When looking at only those who said life was either better or worse (excluding those who responded “about the same”), 53% of Republicans who make under \$50,000 responded “somewhat better” or “much better.” Conversely, three-quarters of Republican voters who made more than \$50,000 reported a better quality of life.

Similar to their responses about whether the state was headed in the right direction or on the wrong track, Democrats were divided along generational lines. Over half (51%) of Millennial Democrats reported a better quality of life, compared to only a quarter (22%) of older generation Democrats.

PARTISAN PRIORITIES

As mentioned in Part I of the Utah Priorities Project, the top priorities of Utah Democrats and Republicans differ substantially. Only *healthcare*, *K-12 education*, *air quality*, and *water supply and quality* are shared across the top 10 list for both major political parties. The remaining six items in each group are different, from *states’ rights* for the Republicans to *equal protection for LGBTQ people* for the Democrats (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Quality of Life Compared with Five Years Ago, by Political Party, with Candidate Responses

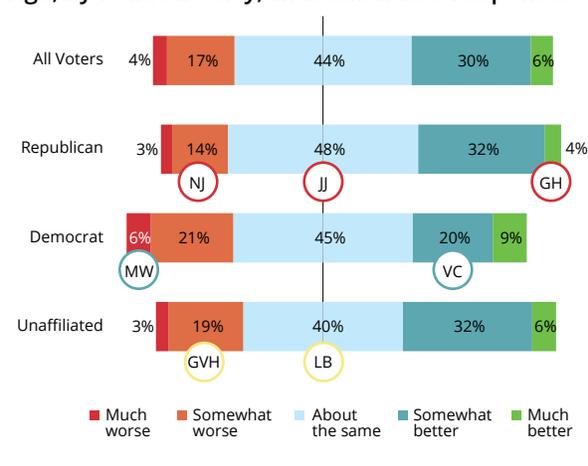


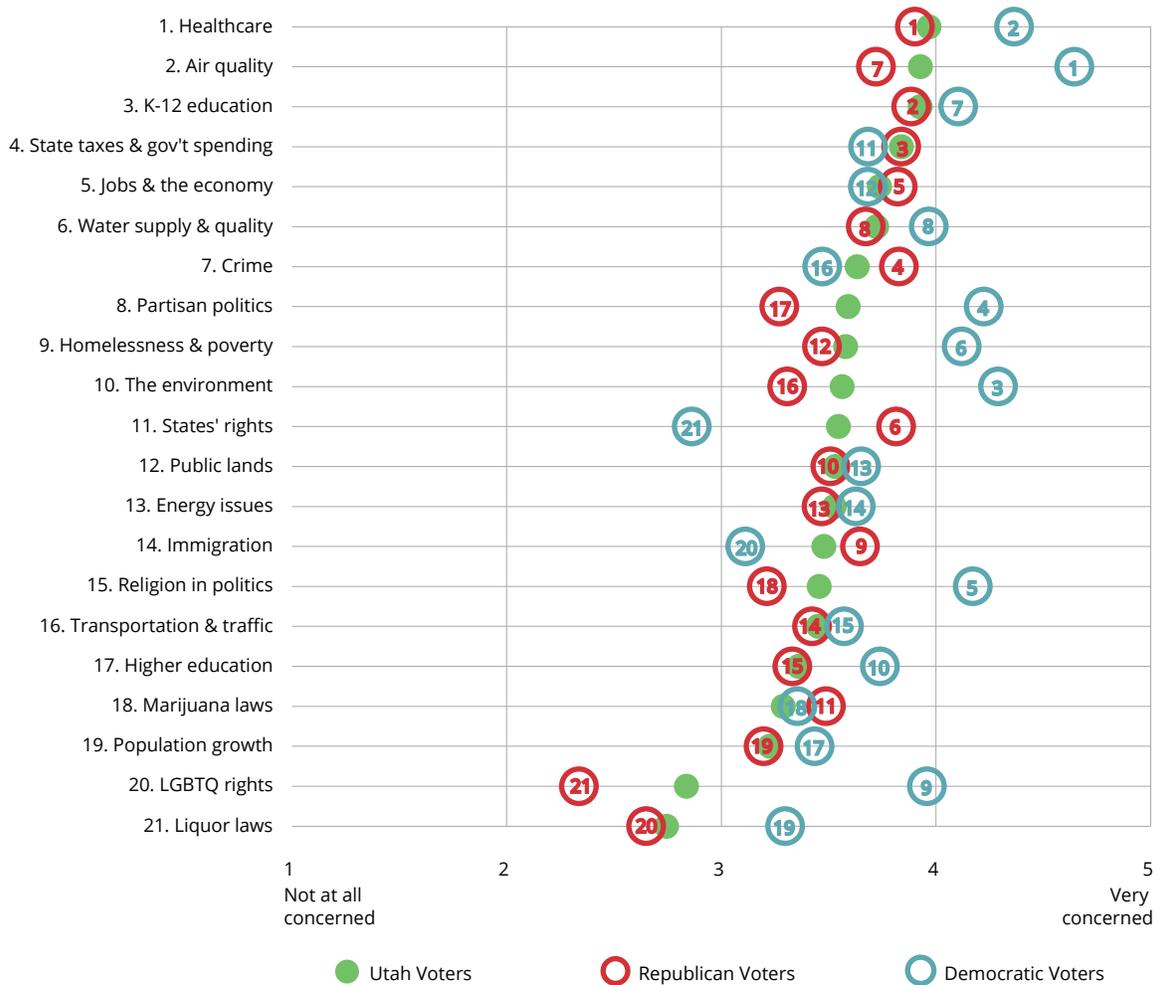
Figure 3: Top 10 Priorities of Utahns, by Political Party Identification

Republicans	Democrats		
Healthcare	1	Air quality	
K-12 education	2	Healthcare	
State taxes & gov't spending	3	The environment	
Crime	4	Partisan politics	
Jobs & the economy	5	Religion in politics	
States' rights	6	Homelessness & poverty	
Air quality	7	K-12 education	
Water supply & quality	8	Water supply & quality	
Immigration	9	Equal protection for LGBTQ people	
Public lands	10	Higher education	

■ Unique to breakout group

Figure 4 shows a further breakdown of priority differences, comparing average ratings given by both major political parties and all Utah voters. It is interesting to note that although there is some agreement on the average rating for several topics (*state taxes and government spending, jobs and the economy, public lands, and energy issues*), the order of these topics on their top 10 lists are quite different. This is due in part to the relatively high ratings given by Democrats, which places the average rating of the majority of their top 10 list above the top priority for Republican respondents.

Figure 4: Average Rating of Priorities of Utah Voters, and by Republicans and Democrats



Note: Ranking of priority list reflects all Utah voters.

GUBERNATORIAL BREAKOUT

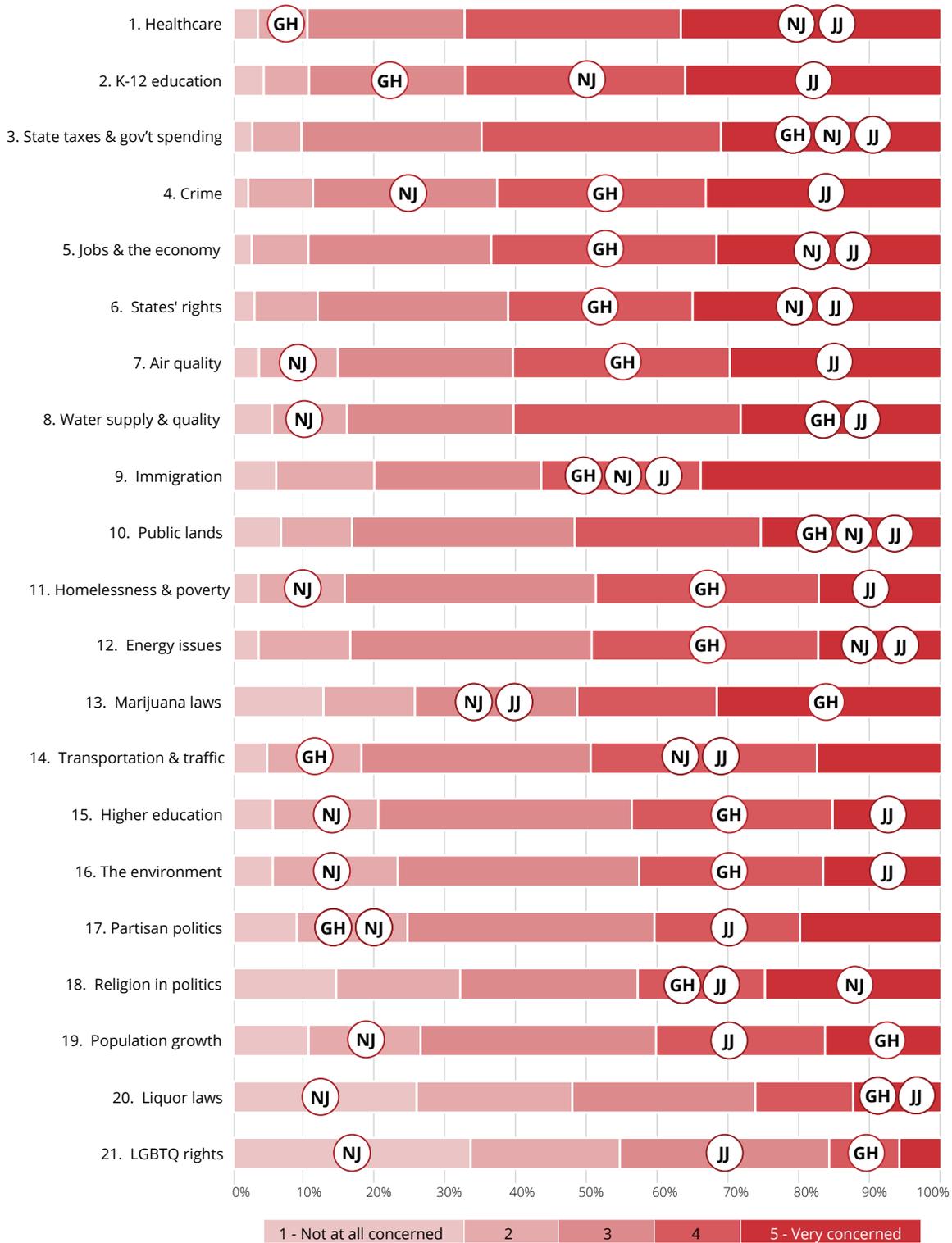
All seven candidates rated their level of concern of the 21 topics from the voter survey on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not at all concerned” and 5 being “very concerned.” Although candidates’ responses were diverse, there were some similarities across party groups. Figures 5, 6, and 7 highlight candidates’ ratings for each topic compared to the share of their party voting base that provided the same rating. For the two candidates outside of the two major parties, the base was considered to be any registered voters who did not identify as Democrat or Republican in the voter survey.

The Republican candidates had the same rating for their level of concern on three topics. *State taxes and government spending* and *public lands* received a 5 – “very concerned” – from all three Republicans, while *immigration* received a 4. Both Governor Gary Herbert and candidate Nate Jensen gave seven of the topics a 5 rating, while Jonathan Johnson gave the highest level of concern to 14 of the 21 topics. These responses can be seen in Figure 5.

The Democratic candidates also rated three topics the same. Both *population growth* and *higher education* received a rating of 4 from both candidates, while *immigration* received a 3. Mike Weinholtz gave a 5 rating (the highest level of concern) to 15 of the 21 topics, while Vaughn Cook did not rate any topics at a 5. However, Cook did give ten topics a 4 rating. Figure 6 compares the responses of the two Democratic candidates with the breakdown of responses from Democratic voters.

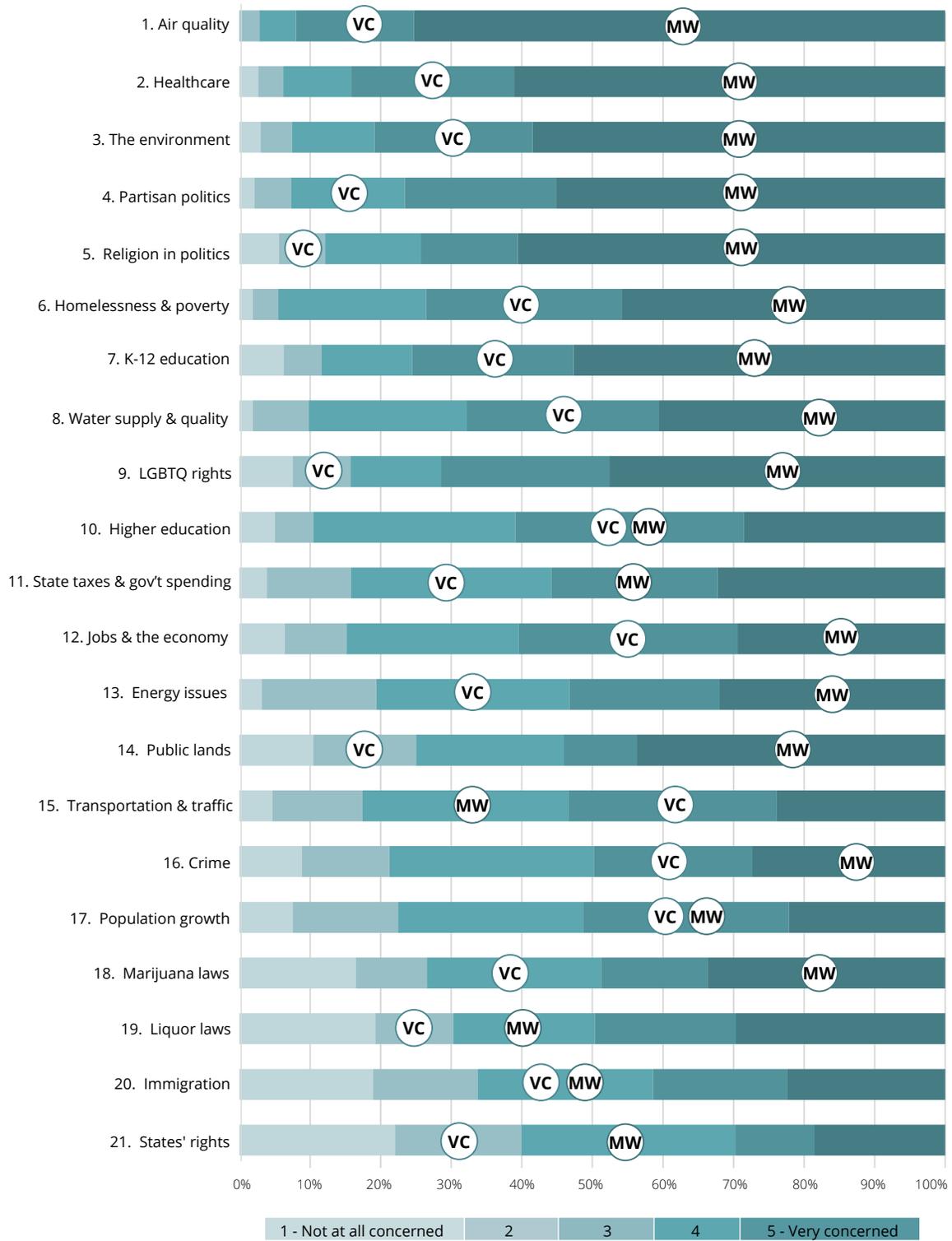
There seemed to be a higher level of agreement of concern between the two non-major party candidates. Both candidates gave a 5 rating to the same five topics – *state taxes and government spending*, *jobs and the economy*, *states’ rights*, *public lands*, and *immigration*. Additionally, this was the only group of candidates where a ranking of 1 – “not at all concerned” – was given out. Gary Van Horn gave five of the topics a 1. See Figure 7 for these responses.

Figure 5: Gubernatorial Candidates' Rating and Share of Voters at Each Level of Concern (Republicans)



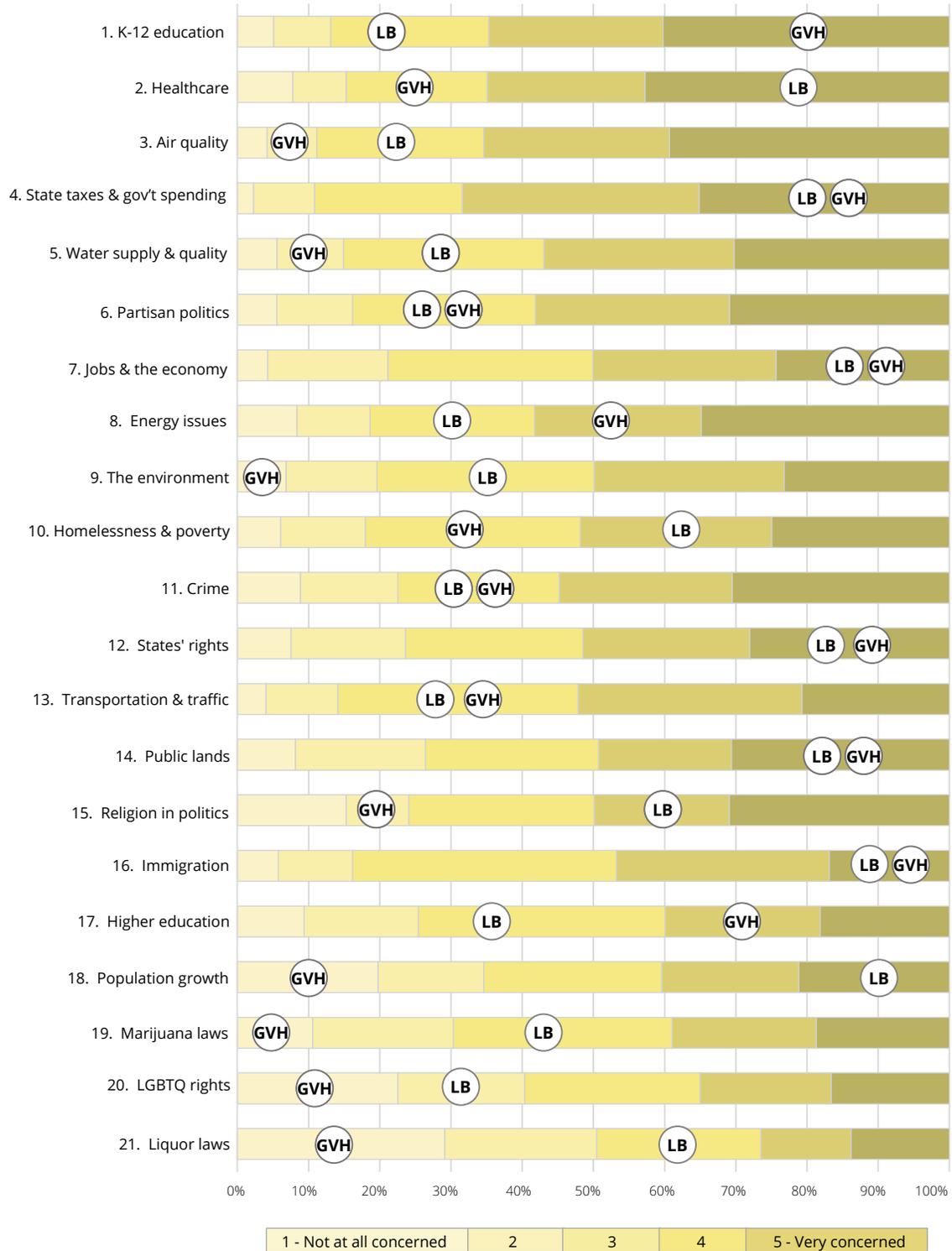
Note: Ranking of priority list reflects that of Utah Republican voters.

Figure 6: Gubernatorial Candidates' Rating and Share of Voters at Each Level of Concern (Democrats)



Note: Ranking of priority list reflects that of Utah Democratic voters.

Figure 7: Gubernatorial Candidates' Rating and Share of Voters at Each Level of Concern (Unaffiliated and Other Party Candidates)



Note: Ranking of priority list reflects that of Utah unaffiliated and non-major party voters.

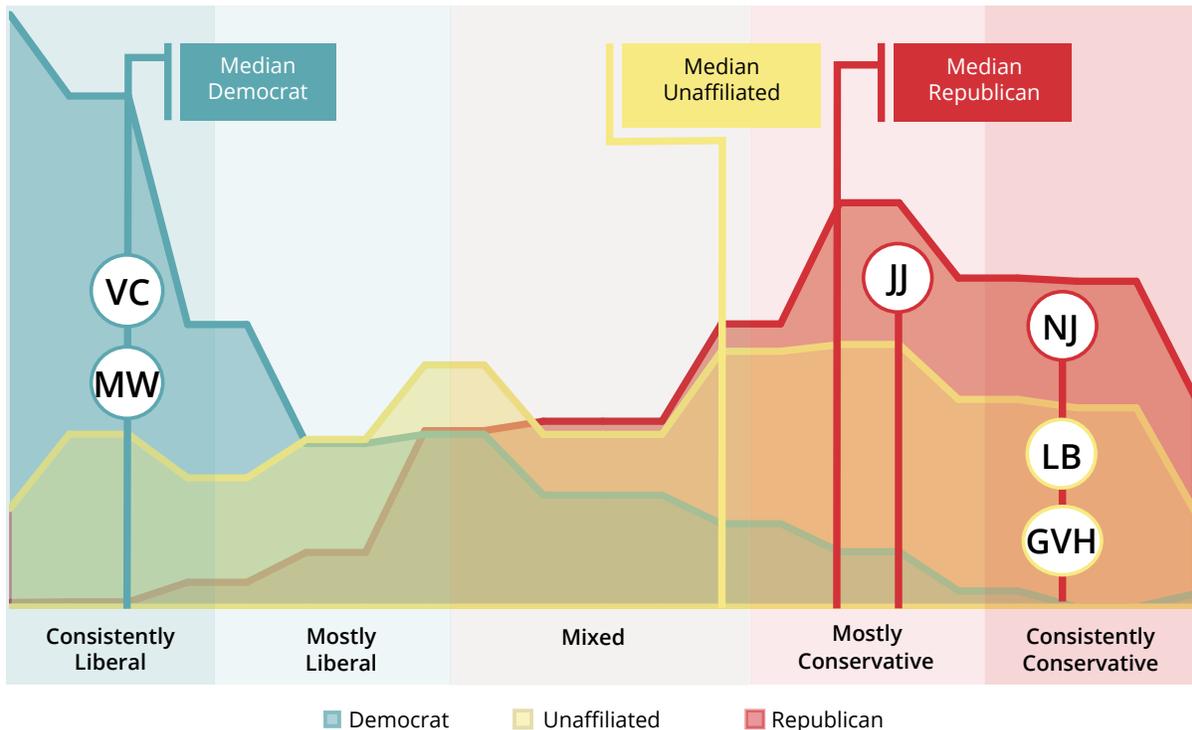
IDEOLOGY

Of the seven candidates who participated in the survey, six completed a section designed to ascertain their political ideology. These questions followed methodology developed and used by the Pew Research Center since 1994. Survey respondents were asked whether they identified more with a typically conservative or liberal position on ten issues. Responses were used to create a scale from negative ten to positive ten, or “consistently liberal” to “consistently conservative.” More information on this methodology can be found in Part I of the Utah Priorities Project, Appendix B.

The two Democratic candidates both fell in line with the ideology of the median Democratic Utah voter. The two Republican candidates who answered the ideology questions were more conservative than the median Republican Utah voter. Both of the non-major party candidates were more conservative than the median unaffiliated voter, and more conservative than the median Republican voter. Three of the candidates (one Republican, one Independent American, and one unaffiliated) all shared the same ideological score in the “consistently conservative” region (see Figure 8). Governor Gary Herbert did not participate in this section of the survey.

The ideological scores of the candidates reflect the trend seen when comparing Utah to the nation. While the divide between the Republican and Democratic parties nationally has increased since the early 2000s, the divide in Utah is even more pronounced due to the heightened levels of identification with “consistently liberal” among Utah Democrats. This leaves a gap in candidates for voters who have a “mixed” or “mostly liberal” ideology.

Figure 8: Ideological Scale of Utah Voters with Candidate Responses



Note: Governor Gary Herbert did not participate in this section of the survey.

The two most common third parties identified in the voter survey were the Constitution Party (0.7% of Utahns) and the Libertarian Party (2%). All Utah voters who identified with the Constitution Party fell in the “consistently conservative” section of the scale, but Libertarians were spread across the scale, with the median Libertarian voter being “mostly conservative.”

CONCLUSION

With the excitement of the presidential election, voter turnout could be higher than the last presidential election. A higher level of turnout could alter the outcome of the gubernatorial race in surprising ways. Voters can use the information in this report to identify which candidate most closely aligns with their positions. Voters can also visit utahpriorities.org to see how other candidates across the state have responded to the same survey provided to the candidates for governor.

Disclosure: Overstock.com is a member of Utah Foundation and has a seat on its Executive Board. Gubernatorial candidate Jonathan Johnson is the Overstock.com representative on the Utah Foundation board. Mr. Johnson recused himself from discussions about the Utah Priorities Project at board meetings and was not privy to any Utah Priorities Project survey results before any of the other candidates.

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