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The Trump Electorate and LGBTQ Equality Post-Election Survey and Election Result Analysis

To: The Human Rights Campaign and Equality North Carolina

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

Whatever message voters sent Tuesday, Nov. 8, they did not signal any kind of retreat from LGBTQ equality. LGBTQ issues were not a major part of the national debate this cycle and only 44 percent heard anything about Donald Trump and Mike Pence's position on "gay rights and LGBT issues." Nonetheless, impressive majorities of the electorate that sent Donald Trump to the White House support marriage equality and the Equality Act; and more fundamentally, 63 percent of voters believe the right to marry for same-sex couples is now a permanent right in this country.

Civil right issues were a major part of the election in North Carolina and these issues cost Republican Pat McCrory his job. The controversy over HB-2 defined this race and defined voters' choice for Governor. In an otherwise triumphant day for Republicans, McCrory is the only incumbent Governor—Democrat or Republican—to fall short on Election Day and the only major Republican candidate to lose in North Carolina. A 62 percent majority of the electorate, who sent McCrory packing, oppose HB-2.

While more research is required to truly understand the 2016 election, it is clear that there has been a fundamental shift in the debate over LGBTQ issues since previous elections when support for LGBTQ equality was seen as a possible vulnerability. That shift signals the end of the era of anti-equality candidates running against the LGBTQ community without paying a massive political price.

This memorandum summarizes the results of two post-election surveys: a national survey of 1,100 voters and a statewide of 500 North Carolina voters. Both surveys were taken November 6 – 8. The national survey carries a margin of error of +/- 2.95 and North Carolina survey carries a margin of error of +/- 4.38.

HB-2 Cost McCrory Dearly in North Carolina

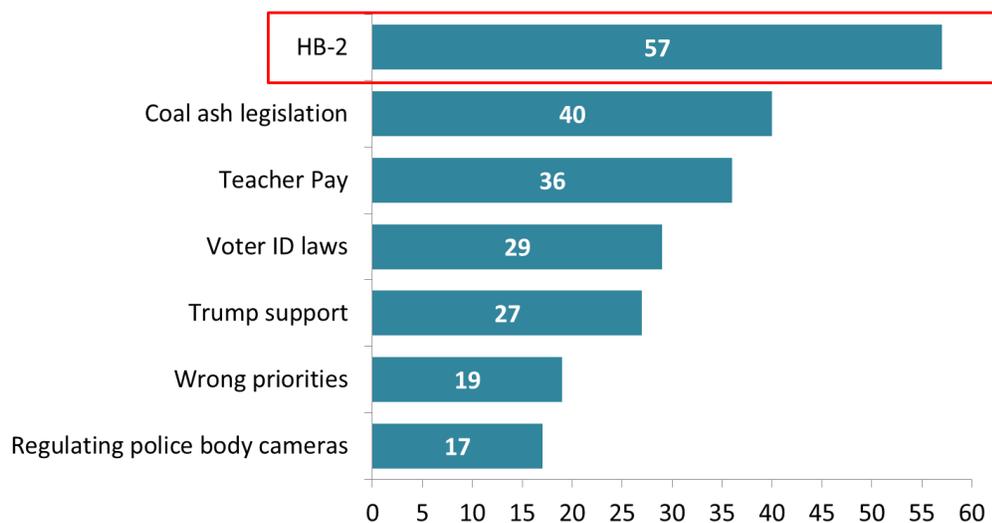
As of this writing, the North Carolina race is still being tallied, but there is no question the HB-2 issue played a leading role in Pat McCrory disappointing outcome. This is a Governor who boasted of a “Carolina Comeback” and cutting North Carolina’s unemployment in half, who bragged about teacher salaries and successfully managed a state response to Hurricane Matthew. Nonetheless, on a day when Trump won North Carolina’s electoral votes and Republicans successfully defended Richard Burr’s hotly contested seat, Pat McCrory came up short.

The reason why is HB-2.

- North Carolina voters oppose HB-2 in this survey by a 62 to 30 percent margin. This question was also asked in the network exit surveys where 65 percent opposed HB-2.
- HB-2 is the leading reason voters give for voting against McCrory. In the open-ended questions, 25 percent of Cooper voters volunteer “HB-2 opposition” as the reason why they support this candidate, the highest issue-related response on this question. In a close-ended question, HB-2 is easily the biggest doubt about reelecting McCrory.
- McCrory lost on Election Day because, unlike Trump and Burr, he did not dominate independent voters. Both Trump and Burr won the Independent vote by 21 points; McCrory only won this vote by 9 points. A 65 percent majority of independent voters in North Carolina oppose HB-2.

■ Figure 1: Most Important Reason Not to Support Pat McCrory

Regardless of how you voted, which THREE describe the most important reasons NOT to vote for Pat McCrory?



- HB-2 dominated the debate in North Carolina. A 57 percent majority heard a great deal about this issue over the course of the election. Moreover, over 62 percent of voters described this issue as important to their vote, rating it a ten or higher on a ten-point scale. HB-2 opponents took this issue more seriously (70 percent 6-10) than HB-2 supporters (62 percent 6-10).
- HB-2 opponents also out-communicated the other side. A 63 percent majority recall seeing television ads opposing HB-2 and 36 percent saw other communication (e-mails, mailers, phone calls, text messages, door knock) opposing this law. In contrast, only 49 percent heard advertising in support of HB-2, 28 percent saw other communication.

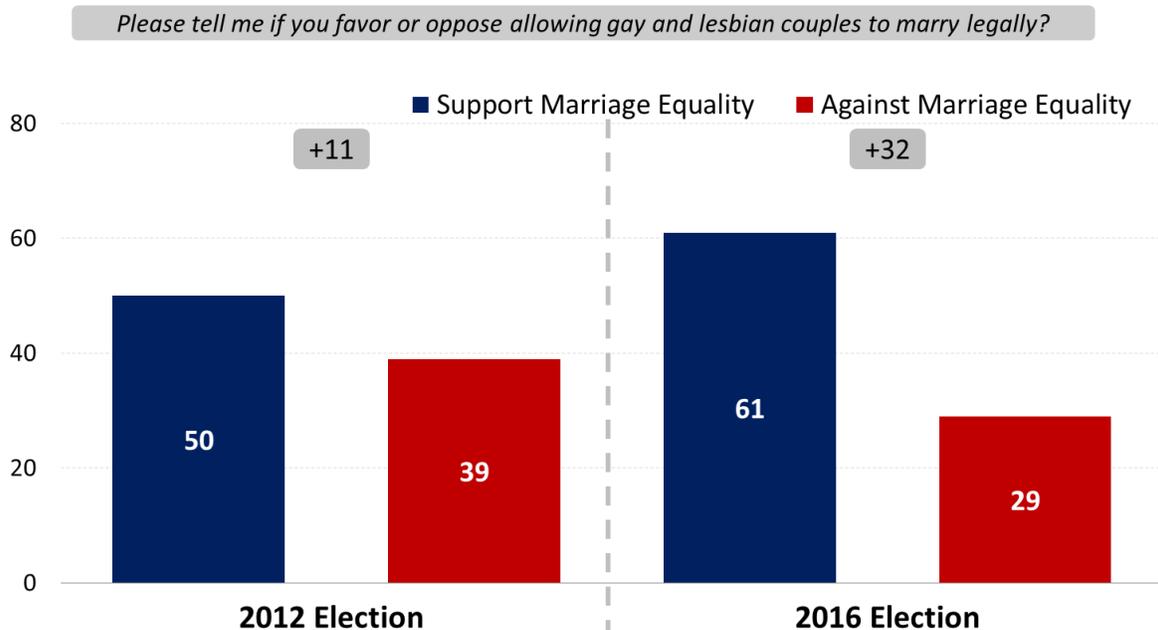
This Governor had a lot going for him, not least of which was a Republican wave that delivered this strongly contested state to Donald Trump. But McCrory lost on Election Day because he passed a law that voters recognize as not only unenforceable, but cruel and discriminatory.

American Voters Remain Committed to LGBTQ Equality

Whatever else Nov. 8 represented, it was not a repudiation of the progress this country has made on LGBTQ issues. Over the last decade, the LGBTQ community made enormous strides from ending “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” to securing marriage equality to passing anti-discrimination laws in dozens of states and more than 100 major cities. Despite Trump’s rhetoric on rolling back the Supreme Court decision on marriage and selection of Mike Pence as his running mate, Trump’s victory was in no way a reaction to that progress.

- Voters strongly support marriage equality. The electorate that sent Donald Trump to the White House supports marriage equality by a 61 to 29 percent margin. In a post-election survey taken after the 2012 election—a far more progressive outcome—50 percent supported marriage equality.

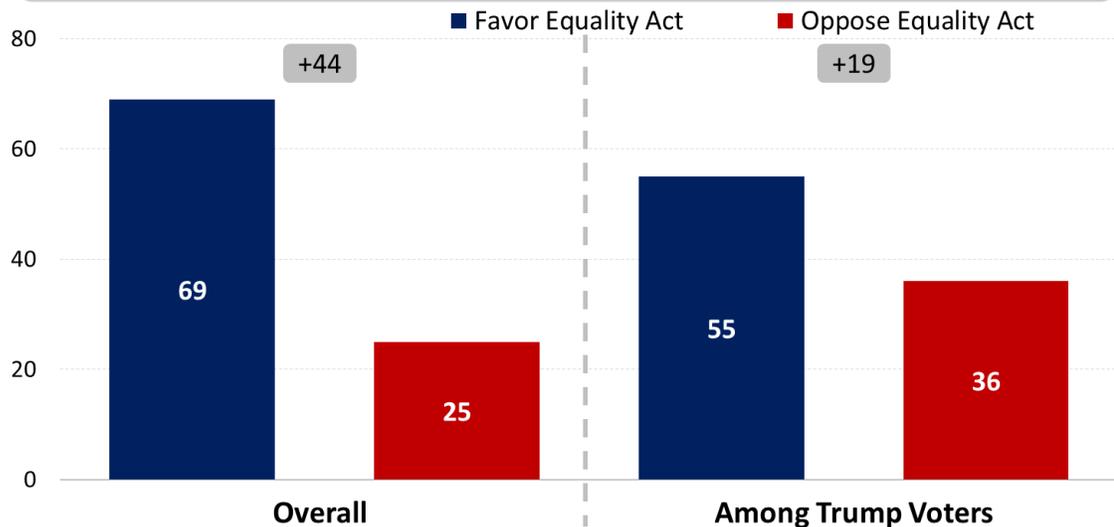
■ Figure 2: Marriage Equality Support Over Time



- Voters also believe that the marriage issue is settled. A 63 percent majority of voters argue same-sex marriage is now a permanent right in this country. Trump's recent pledge to leave the marriage decision alone shows he understands where voters are on this issue.
- Looking ahead, an impressive 69 percent of voters—including a 55 percent majority of Trump voters—support the Equality Act which would broaden—not contract—equality in this country.

■ Figure 3: Support of the Equality Act

Some have proposed a federal law called the Equality Act which would amend existing civil rights laws to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people from discrimination in areas of employment, housing, credit, education, access to public spaces and services, federal funded programs and jury service throughout the country. Generally speaking, do you favor or oppose the Equality Act?



- LGBTQ issues did not play a major role in the national narrative. Only 44 percent recall hearing something about Donald Trump's and Mike Pence's position on "gay rights and LGBT issues."

Conclusion

We still have a lot to learn about the 2016 race, but we do know that it is no longer a politically advantageous to campaign on an anti-equality platform. This country is committed to equality. We only need to ask Pat McCrory whose misreading of voters in North Carolina prevented him from riding a Republican wave in that state and may have cost him his seat.