

First Report on Swing Blue Alliance-Swing Left Greater Boston Survey

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## Executive Summary

This first report to Swing Blue Alliance (SBA) respondents is based on a survey of more than 900 supporters carried out between July 22<sup>nd</sup> and September 9<sup>th</sup> of 2021. This report offers a snapshot of Swing Blue Alliance supporters which may be of interest to respondents and useful in accomplishing the organization's goals.

We focus on four areas: respondents' political participation in the 2018 midterms, respondents' candidate support during the Democratic primary season both in terms of preference and in terms of actual campaign activity on candidates' behalf, respondents' issue preferences and priorities, and respondents' views of political figures.

The key insights include:

- Swing Blue Alliance supporters are an extremely active group politically even before 2020.
- A majority of respondents favored Elizabeth Warren during the Democratic primary.
- Swing Blue Alliance supporters put their money where their mouth was (both figuratively and literally).
- A competitive primary did not depress activity for the Biden-Harris ticket.
- Respondents overwhelmingly view themselves as liberal and support progressive policy change.
- Swing Blue Alliance supporters' views of prominent Democrats reflect internal party divides.

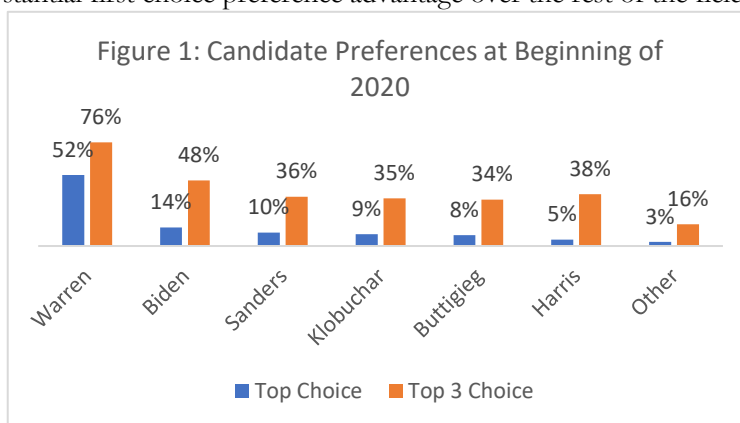
## Details

**SBA supporters are an extremely active group.** In 2018, 94% of respondents were active in congressional races in some way. Eighty-six percent gave money, almost half canvassed either in person or via telephone (46%), and more than 60% wrote postcards, letters, or blogs on behalf of candidates. SBA supporters are thus clearly an important Democratic constituency (less than 1% identified as Republican) heading into the 2020 Democratic primaries given their level of activity.

**A majority of respondents favored Elizabeth Warren during the Democratic Primary.** The 2020 primary featured choices between progressive (Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders) and traditional Democrats (Biden, Klobuchar and Buttigieg), with Kamala Harris straddling the divide. But Warren, sharing Massachusetts residence with most of respondents, had an additional advantage over the other candidates.

As Figure 1 shows, Warren enjoyed a substantial first choice preference advantage over the rest of the field. In fact, she attracted a majority of the first place preferences over the field of seven candidates about whom we asked. Warren attracted support from 52% of respondents, almost four times the level of support for Joe Biden, the second most popular candidate with 14%. Sanders, Klobuchar and Buttigieg clustered around 10%.

Warren's support was broad-based. When considering how frequently a candidate was listed as a top three choice, an additional quarter of the sample rated her second or third, meaning 75% of respondents had her in the top three. Where might this support have gone after she dropped out of the primary? Thirty-four percent of Warren supporters preferred Sanders as their second choice, followed by Harris (20%) and Biden (16%). With Harris no longer an option come March 2020, it's likely that Biden benefitted even more from Warren's dropping out, even though Sanders benefitted the most.



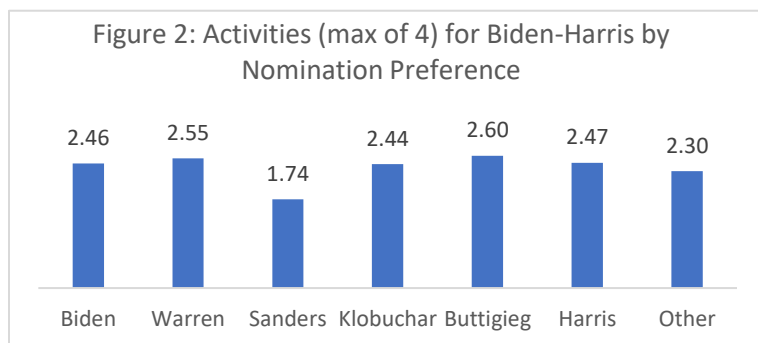
**Of the remaining candidates, Joe Biden benefitted most from candidates dropping out of the primary.** While only 14% rated him as their top choice, almost half (48%) rated him among their top three.

**SBA supporters put their money where their mouth was (both figuratively and literally).** More than five in six (84%) reported doing something for their favored candidate, including contributing money or trying to persuade others to support the candidate. A majority of respondents reported doing some activity for Warren (57%), followed by a quarter who did something for Biden, and about 15% who did something for each of the other candidates. Interestingly, almost half of respondents did something for more than one candidate, with 20% materially supporting three or more candidates

Warren supporters' activity reflects her progressivism and party commitments. About 20% of her supporters did some activity for Sanders, with another 20% doing something for Biden.

**A competitive primary did not depress activity for the Biden-Harris ticket.** While Biden was the top choice of only one-in-seven SBA supporters during the primary, upwards of 90% of the supporters of every candidate did at least something for the ticket.

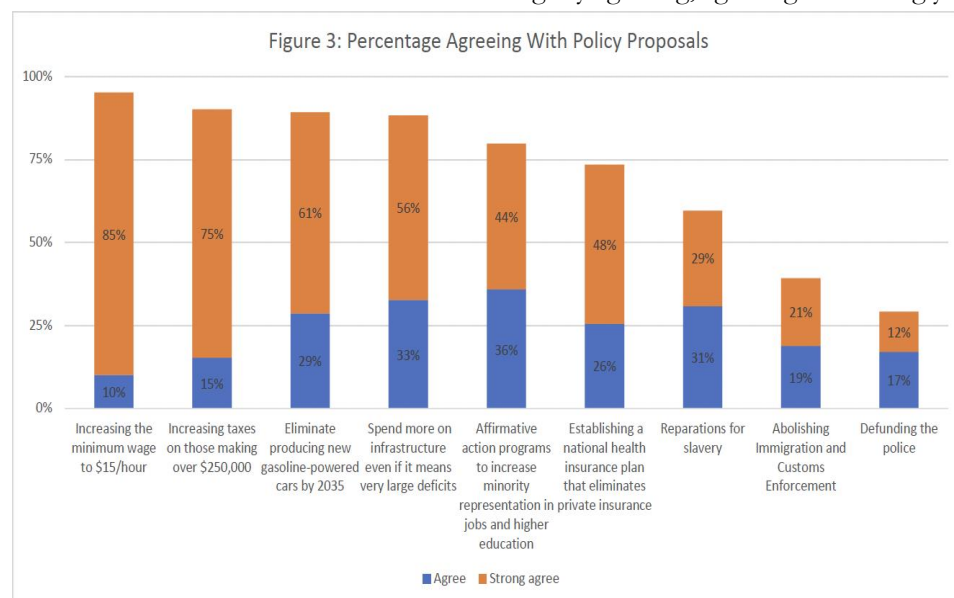
In Figure 2 we show the average number of activities (out of four possible) for Biden-Harris based on respondents' top primary choice. It is impressive that Warren supporters and Buttigieg supporters are slightly more active for the ticket than are Biden's primary supporters, and Harris and Klobuchar supporters are equal in general election activity.



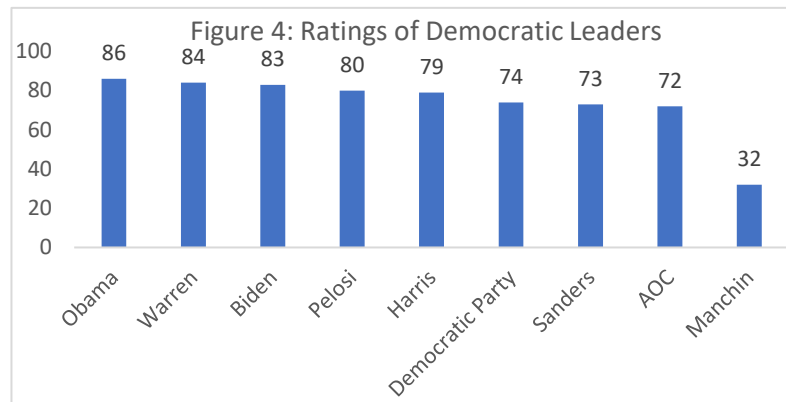
In fact, if we divide the sample into those who supported Biden as their first choice and those who supported someone else, general election activity does not differ between these groups (2.5 in both cases).

**SBA respondents overwhelmingly view themselves as liberal and support progressive policy change.** Perhaps unsurprising given its name, almost 90% of respondents called themselves “very liberal” or “liberal” and only 3% identify as middle-of-the-road or conservative. And to a great degree this is reflected in issue positions as well. We asked about nine issues. If we combine those slightly agreeing, agreeing and strongly agreeing there is majority support for all nine. But that obscures strong differences in the strength of support.

In Figure 3 we show the percentage either agreeing or strongly agreeing with each proposal. Only four issues see a majority strongly support the policy, with these tied to economic and environmental policy.



**SBA supporters' views of prominent Democrats reflect internal party divides.** Respondents rated how positively or negatively they felt about prominent Democrats using a 0 (most unfavorable) to 100 (most positive) scale. As Figure 4 shows, respondents viewed most all figures we asked about quite positively. Barack Obama, Biden and Warren rate at the very top with average ratings around 85. Slightly lower are Kamala Harris and Nancy Pelosi with ratings around 80. Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, while still rated very positive are rated significantly below the Biden-Warren-Obama group and slightly below Pelosi and Harris.

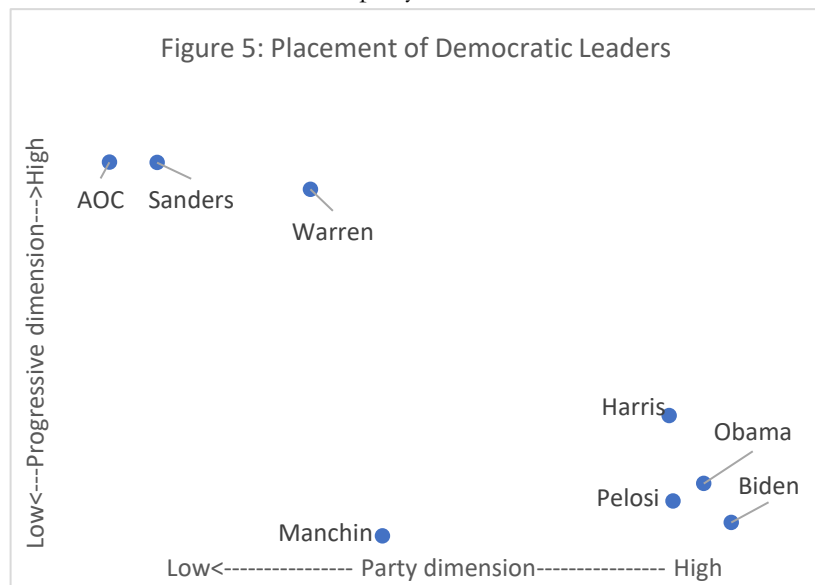


The only Democrat about whom we asked that rated below 50 on the scale was Joe Manchin at 32. This indicates the level of Democratic intra-party rancor and anger at Manchin (and presumably Sinema as well). To indicate how low Manchin's rating was, he was rated 10 points more negatively than both Liz Cheney and Mitt Romney, Republicans with voting records far more conservative than Manchin's.

We also find strong reflections of the 2020 nominating contents' progressive vs. traditional divide. People who felt positively about Sanders also felt positively about AOC, and people's feelings about Obama, Biden, and Pelosi were also related to one another. But whether one felt positively about Sanders and AOC did not translate into more positive or negative feelings for Obama, Biden, and Pelosi. Relatedly, we found little relationship between respondents' identifying as a Democrat and identifying as a Progressive.

### Two different dimensions appear to explain SBA supporters' views of Democratic figures:

**progressivism and Democraticness.** In Figure 5 we show where these politicians place on each dimension based on the results of a statistical technique called factor analysis. First, the results show that the two most dissimilar individuals are AOC and Biden. AOC scores lowest on the party dimension and ties with Sanders for highest on the progressivism dimension. Obama, Biden, and Pelosi all place similarly, with high scores on the party dimension, indicating they are seen as more traditional Democrats, and relatively low progressivism scores.



Most figures place high on one dimension and low on the other. The most interesting exception is Elizabeth Warren who rates very high on Progressivism, along with AOC, but unlike the other two, Warren rates further to the right (higher on the Party dimension) than the other two. This suggests that at least at the time of the survey, she occupied a position from which she was viewed as being related to both Progressives and Traditional Democrats. Joe Manchin is also unique. He does not place high on either dimension, helping to explain his uniquely low favorability rating.