

NEW POLL: LESS THAN HALF OF IOWA REPUBLICANS SUPPORT JONI ERNST FOR US SENATE IN 2026

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P: (929) 388-6585

E: info@victory-insights.com

W: victory-insights.com

X: @VictoryPolling

Poll conducted December 6-7, 2024 among 600 likely Republican primary voters throughout Iowa. Responses were collected via Interactive Voice Response and Text-To-Web. This poll was not commissioned by any candidate or committee.





Executive Summary

President-Elect Donald Trump won the 2024 election in style, sweeping every swing state by a comfortable margin. Team Trump has interpreted this outcome as a mandate from the American people to follow through on Trump's bold "America-First" agenda. To do so, President-Elect Trump has made a number of eyebrow-raising picks for his cabinet, aiming to fill it with loyalists whom he believes will execute his agenda effectively and without frictional hesitance or opposition. Pete Hegseth, an Army veteran and Fox News host, is one of these picks.

But despite earning an appointment from Trump, Hegseth's path to confirmation looks rocky. Joni Ernst, the junior Republican US Senator from Iowa, has come under the spotlight as a potential "no" vote on Hegseth's confirmation. She has thus far refused to commit to voting in favor of his confirmation, and says she wants to hear more from him before making a final decision. In the wake of this news, conservative activists have ramped up the pressure on her to support Hegseth, knowing full well that she is up for re-election in 2026.

But could Ernst really be in jeopardy of losing her seat if she refuses to vote in favor of Hegseth and other Trump appointees? Our new poll, conducted December 6th and 7th, 2024, finds Ernst in a far-from-safe position as Republican primary voters demand that she votes in favor of Hegseth's confirmation.

Even before the Hegseth confirmation was discussed with poll respondents, Ernst failed to earn a majority of the vote in a generic 2026 Republican primary, winning 48% of the vote, still besting the 26% earned by "Someone Else," but falling short of the all-important 50% threshold. Additionally, 63% of Republican primary voters say they're in favor of halting US funding to Ukraine for their war efforts, and 73% say they'd like the US Senate to vote to confirm Hegseth as SecDef.

So what happens if Ernst stands up to Trump and votes against some of his cabinet appointees? To put it simply, our poll finds that she would fall out of favor with the GOP electorate. If that were to occur, 53% of voters say Ernst should be replaced with a Senator who is more supportive of President-Elect Trump and his agenda, while only 27% would stick with Ernst.

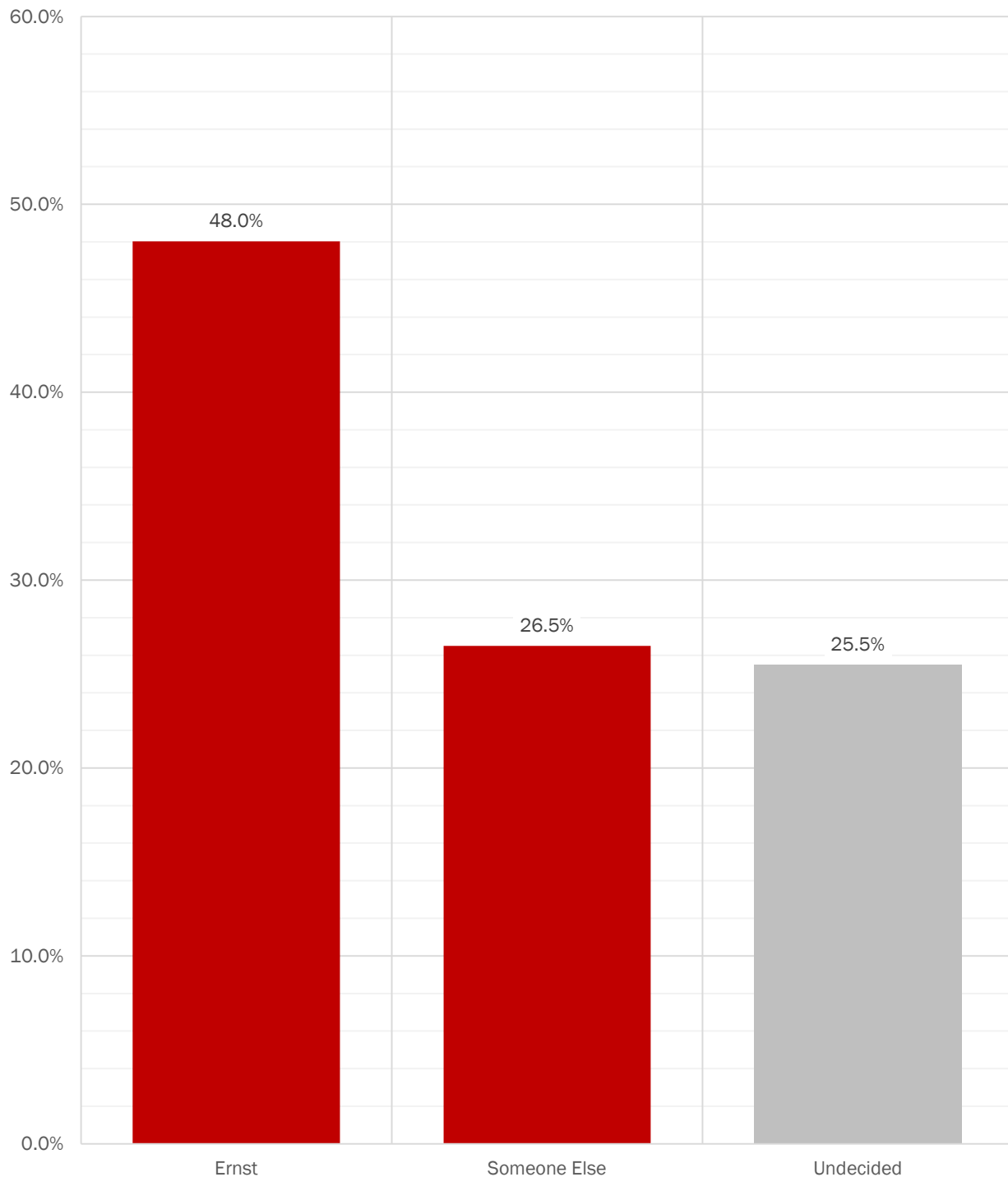
Trump's decisive victory seems to have activated the Republican grassroots across the country. Trump supporters expect their representatives at every level of government to support the president-elect's agenda, and that includes supporting his picks across the Executive Branch. The data is clear: if Joni Ernst fails to support Trump's cabinet appointees – Pete Hegseth being the first big test – she may have trouble winning re-election in 2026.

Read on to learn more.

- ✓ **Ben Galbraith**
Senior Pollster, Victory Insights
X @_BenGalbraith

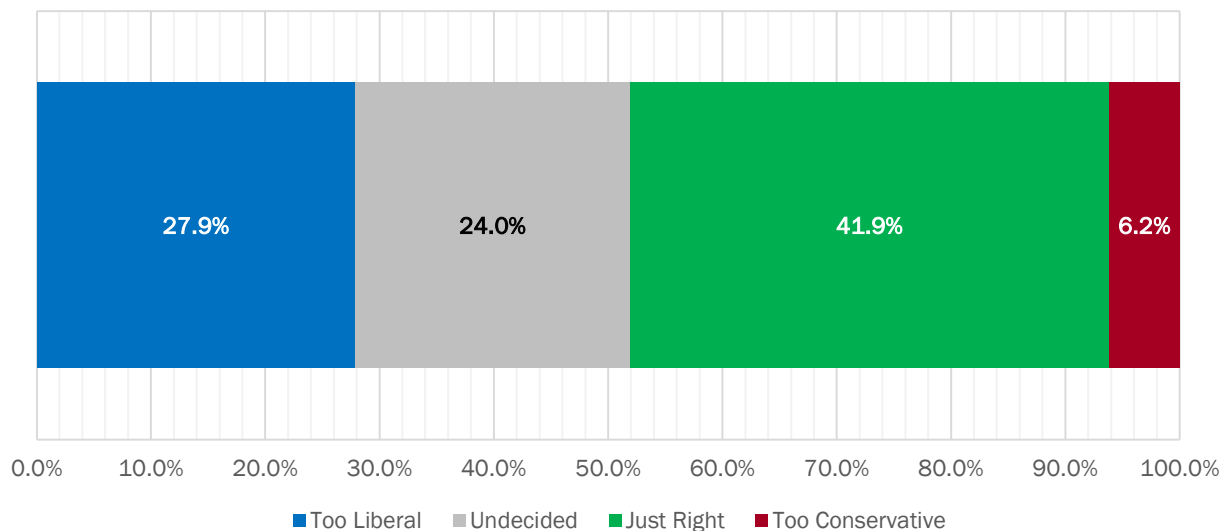
Generic Republican Primary

In a generic Republican primary (Ernst vs. an unnamed “Someone Else”), Ernst would clearly have the advantage, but would still fall short of the 50% mark. Approximately 1 in 4 voters are undecided about who they’d support.



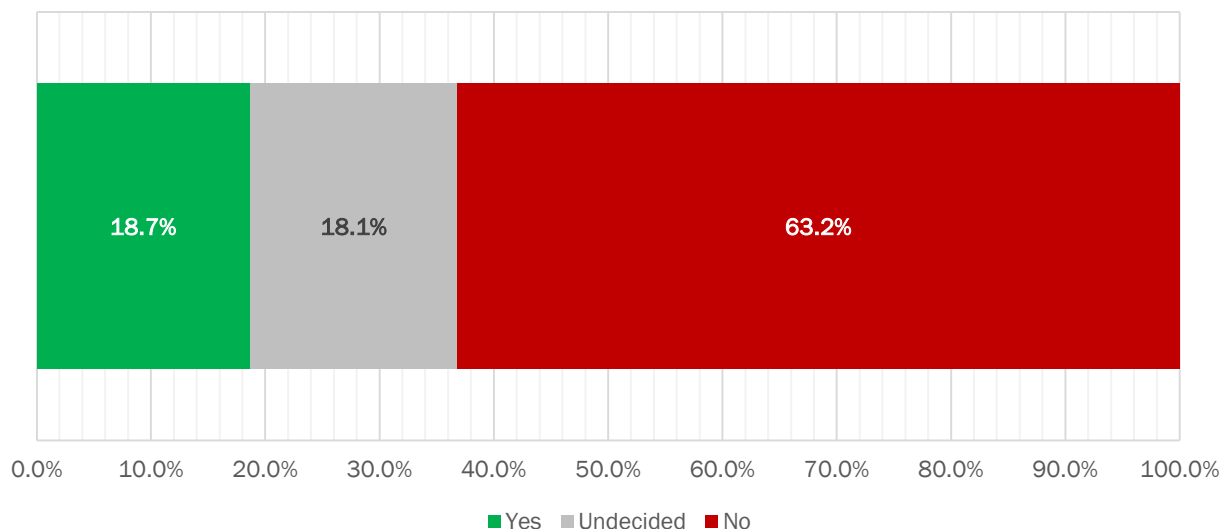
Ernst's Ideology

Just over a quarter of Republican primary voters consider Ernst to be “too liberal,” while only 6% consider her to be “too conservative.” 42%, a plurality, consider her to be “just right,” while another 24% are undecided.



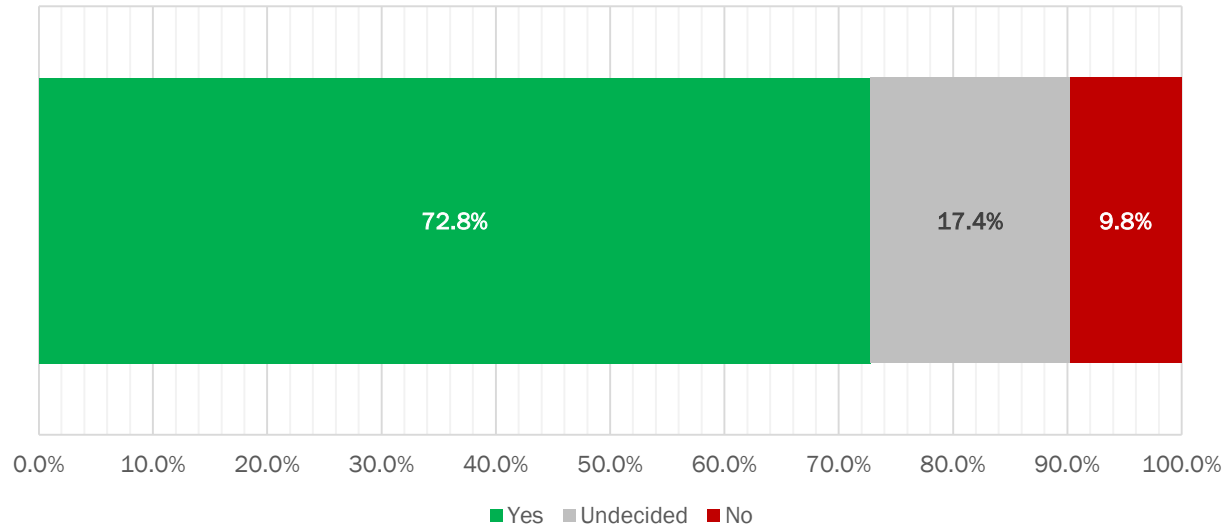
Continue Ukraine Funding

A majority of the Iowa Republican primary electorate is opposed to the US continuing to help fund Ukraine's war effort against Russia. Fewer than 1 in 5 voters want the US to continue providing funding. If confirmed, Hegseth would play a key role in President-Elect Trump's plans to end the war between Ukraine and Russia. The Iowa GOP electorate seems to be aligned with Trump and Hegseth on this issue.



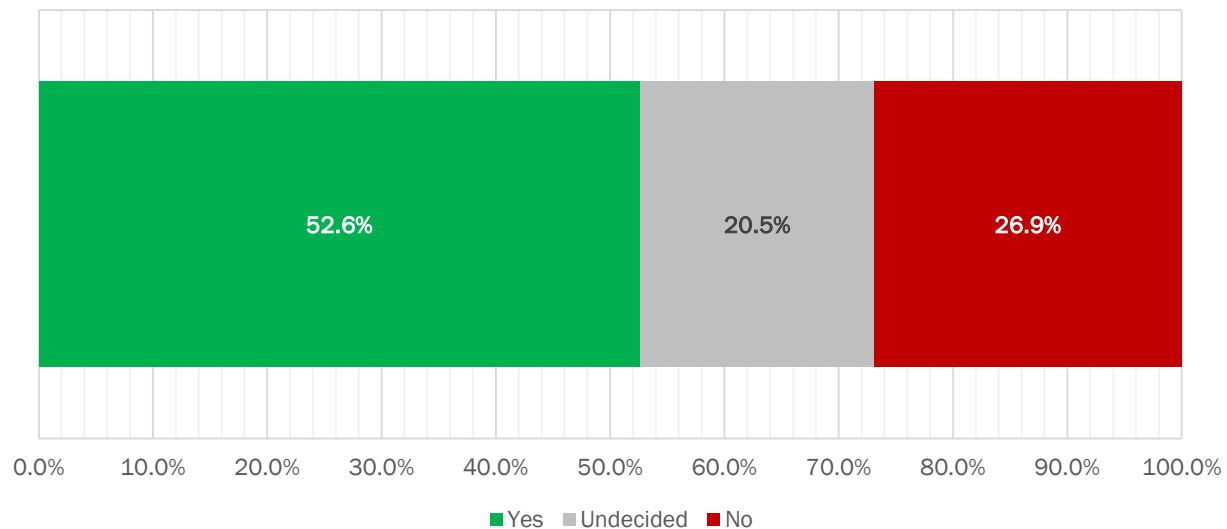
Confirm Pete Hegseth

The vast majority of Iowa Republicans want the US Senate to confirm Hegseth as US Secretary of Defense. Fewer than 1 in 10 voters are opposed to his confirmation. Ernst's apparent opposition – or at least hesitance – to Hegseth's confirmation is out of line with what most Iowa Republicans want.



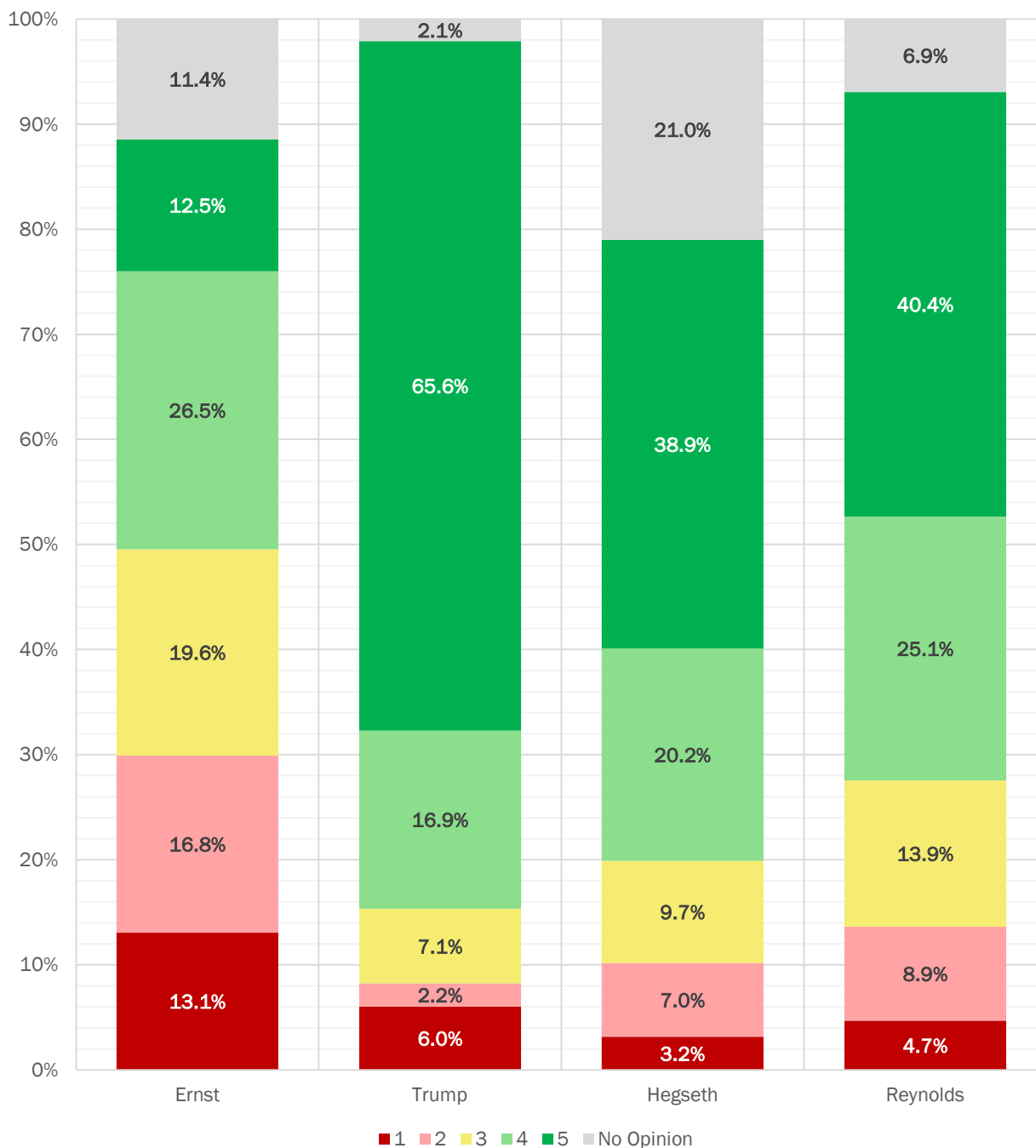
Replace Ernst If She Votes Against Trump Appointees

We then posed a hypothetical scenario to Iowa Republicans: If Ernst votes against confirming some of Trump's cabinet nominees, should she be replaced by a candidate who is more supportive of President-Elect Trump and his agenda? A majority (53%) of voters said yes, she should. Another 21% are undecided, while only 27% say they would continue to stand by Ernst.



Public Figure Favorability

Finally, voters were asked to rate Ernst, Trump, Hegseth, and Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being extremely negative, and 5 being extremely positive. Voters could also indicate that they have no opinion of each public figure. The chart below shows the overall results of these questions. We'll dive deeper into these results on the following page.



Favorability Metrics

From voters' ratings of each public figure, we calculated four different metrics which together provide a near-comprehensive explanation of the results. These four metrics, as well as their definitions, are shown in the table below. For each metric, the best result is highlighted in dark green, the second-best in light green, the second-worst in light red, and the worst in dark red.

	Ernst	Trump	Hegseth	Reynolds
Positive Name ID % of respondents who rated the public figure "4" or "5" out of 5	39.0%	82.6%	59.1%	65.5%
Negative Name ID % of respondents who rated the public figure "1" or "2" out of 5	29.9%	8.2%	10.2%	13.6%
Total Name ID % of respondents who rated the public figure anything other than "No Opinion"	88.6%	97.9%	79.0%	93.1%
Avg. Opinionated Rating (AOR) Average rating (1-5) given to the public figure by those who gave any numerical rating	3.10	4.37	4.07	3.94

Trump sweeps all four metrics, earning the highest Positive Name ID, Total Name ID, and AOR, as well as the lowest Negative Name ID. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Ernst places last in all metrics but one. The one metric in which she places second-to-last is Total Name ID, beating out only Hegseth. In other metrics, Hegseth does quite well, earning the second-lowest Negative Name ID and the second-highest AOR, trailing only Trump in those metrics.



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