Immediate Release

The GovLab Publishes Report Examining Public Opinion on

Government Reform

Survey data reveals mixed American public opinion surrounding path to reform in the Biden administration

http://www.thegovlab.org/what-americans-want-from-government-reform/

Brooklyn, New York, Wednesday, December 8, 2021 — Today, The Governance Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering released an interactive report entitled "What Americans Want from Reform." The report by Paul C. Light, Paulette Goddard Professor at the NYU Wagner School of Public Service and Senior Fellow at the GovLab, analyzes six key indicators about American attitudes toward government.

The report, which combines key findings from recent public opinion surveys and original analysis, finds that American demand for major government reform is still above the 50% mark with 65% of Republicans now favoring very major reform, compared with 42% of Democrats. Nonetheless, Americans remain deeply divided on whether reform translates into a vision for bigger or smaller government.

Do Americans trust Biden to fix the government? Light says "yes," but notes that public approval for Biden's job running the federal government fell from 51 to 44% between June and October while his fair/poor rating jumped nine points from 48 to 57% as the Afghanistan withdrawal and debt ceiling stalemate took their toll on his ratings.

As a result of Biden's declining approval numbers, "the Republican party emerged from summer with a 15-point margin as the party better able to protect the nation from international threats, and a nine-point lead as the party better able to keep the country prosperous," said Light.

The report and its accompanying analysis address six major questions and provides the latest survey data in response:

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1. Do Americans still favor very major government reform?
2. Do Americans still favor a bigger government that provides more services?
3. How big is the federal government's blended workforce?
4. What kind of government reform will Americans support?
5. Do Americans trust Biden to fix the government?
6. Can Biden reverse the breakdown curve?

"When it comes to the subject of government reform, very few researchers have produced findings as comprehensive and meticulous as Professor Light," said Beth Simone Noveck, director of The GovLab. "One of the preeminent experts on government failures, Light's latest report is a must-read for public servants, policymakers, and anyone seeking insight into Americans' expectations for their government."

Light's analysis includes a quantitative analysis of government failures over time. Light argues that Biden can reduce the odds of further breakdowns and turn around his declining numbers by urgently focusing more attention on the successful functioning of public administration. "It has now been twenty-five years since Al Gore's reinventing government campaign, forty since the Supreme Court voided the president's reorganization authority, fifty since Jimmy Carter's civil service and sunshine in government reforms, and sixty-five since Herbert Hoover gaveled the second national Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch to a close."

The report is now available for downloading at http://www.thegovlab.org/what-americans-want-from-government-reform/. Professor Light's past research on the demand for government reform can be found on his Brookings Institution profile.

About The Governance Lab
The Governance Lab's mission is to improve people's lives by changing the way we govern. Our goal at The GovLab is to strengthen the ability of institutions — including but not limited to governments — and people to work more openly, collaboratively, effectively, and legitimately to make better decisions and solve public problems. We believe that increased availability and use of data, new ways to leverage the capacity, intelligence, and expertise of people in the problem-solving process, combined with new advances in technology and science, can transform governance. For more information, visit thegovlab.org.

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering
The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute. A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences as part of a global university, with close connections to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. NYU Tandon is rooted in a vibrant tradition of entrepreneurship, intellectual curiosity, and innovative solutions to humanity's most pressing global challenges. Research at Tandon focuses on vital intersections between communications/IT, cybersecurity, and data science/AI/robotics systems and tools and critical areas of society that they influence, including emerging media, health, sustainability, and urban living. We believe diversity is

integral to excellence, and are creating a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable environment for all of our students, faculty and staff. For more information, visit engineering.nyu.edu.

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