

# The Political Case For Student Debt Cancellation

## WHY RUN ON THE STUDENT LOAN DEBT CRISIS?

The 44 million Americans caught in the Student Loan Trap are a powerful voting bloc with the potential to exert a decisive influence in state and national elections. According to an [analysis by the Levy Institute](#), this plan would boost the economy by up to \$108 billion per year. Student debt cancellation as part of a plan for economic growth and job creation has net support across among Americans across the country who are less enthusiastic about voting.

## KEY FINDINGS OF OUR RESEARCH:

Student debt cancellation is an exciting and powerful political issue with the potential to increase voter turnout. A majority of student debt holders would support legislation to cancel student debt. Politicians have everything to gain by embracing this issue.

- Student debt cancellation has net positive support nationally and in the vast majority of states.
- Student debt holders are progressive, but are not as enthusiastic to vote.
- Student debt cancellation is popular among individuals who are somewhat enthusiastic to vote.

## INTRODUCTORY STATISTICS:

- People who voted for Obama in 2012, but did not vote in 2016, were more likely to have student debt than people who voted for Obama in 2012 and Clinton in 2016.
- Nonvoters who hold student debt preferred Clinton over Trump 60 percent to 36 percent (the rest chose a third party candidate).

## METHODOLOGY:

Data for Progress commissioned polling from YouGov Blue designed to test support for recent legislation to cancel student debt. The question asked respondents, “Would you support or oppose reversing the tax cuts recently passed by Congressional Republicans and signed by President Trump, and using any proceeds to cancel outstanding student debt?” The survey was a nationally representative survey with a sample of 1,515 that was fielded from July 13th to July 16th, 2018. In addition, Data for Progress analyzed data from the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Studies survey, a nationally representative survey fielded during the 2016 election with 64,000 respondents.

## WHAT WE FOUND:

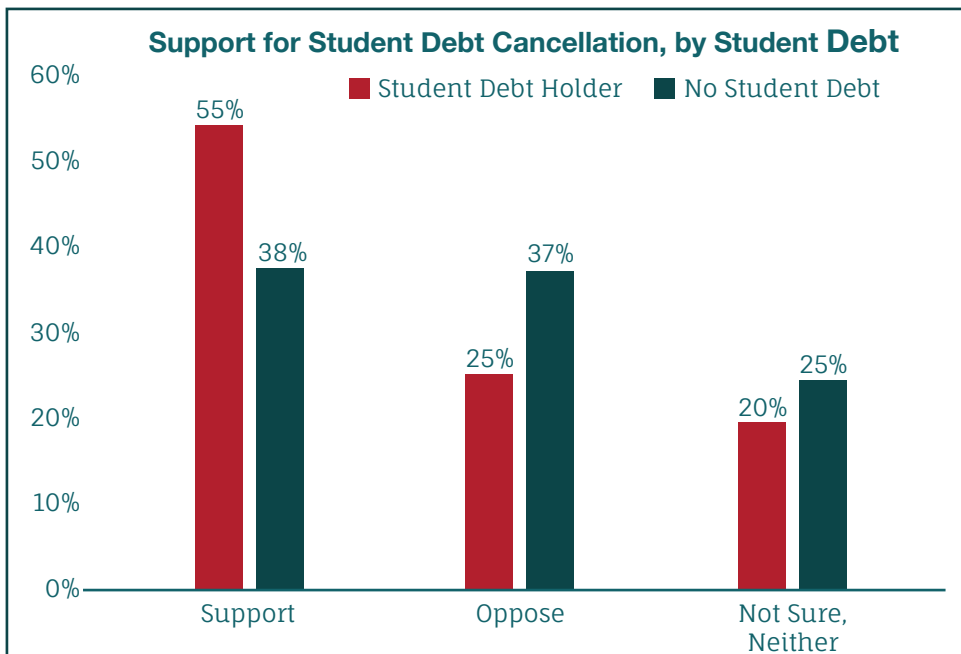
### 1. Student Debt Cancellation Enjoys Wide National Support

Our polling shows nationally, student debt cancellation has net positive support. Forty-one percent of Americans support the legislation, 35 percent oppose it and 24 percent don't know or neither support or oppose it. That gives it net support of +6 points.

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## 2. Student Debt Holders Overwhelmingly Support Student Debt Cancellation

Some 44 million Americans are caught in the student loan trap, and they overwhelmingly support this proposal. Among those responsible for paying off student loans, 55 percent support student debt cancellation and 43 percent “strongly” support the proposal, indicating high intensity. Only 25 percent of this group opposes the proposal, indicating +30 net support.



## 3. Student Debt Cancellation Has Support Across The Country

Data for Progress modeled support for student debt cancellation at the state level. The legislation has net positive support in 38 states and DC. Net support was greater than or equal to +5 in 29 states and DC1. Net support was greater than +10 in 16 states and DC. Support was neutral (the same share in support and opposed) in three states.

## 4. Voters of Color Support Student Debt Cancellation By Large Margins

The legislation was extremely popular with Black (+28) and Latino voters (+15). Among white voters there was net positive support.

## 5. Young Voters Strongly Support Student Debt Cancellation

The policy was most popular with young Americans, and was only opposed by a slim margin of older Americans. Support is extremely strong among voters below 44 years of age (15-16 percent net support). Support is even among those 45-65, and there was only modest opposition among those older than 65 (-4).

## 6. Student Debt Cancellation Excites Nonvoters and Mobilization Targets

Cancellation has net positive 17 percent support among nonvoters, suggesting this could be a good policy to excite them. In addition, among voters who are “very” excited to vote, net support is +2. Among voters who are “somewhat” excited to vote, net support is +11.

DC, Vermont, Minnesota, Colorado, Oregon, Iowa, Massachusetts, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Dakota, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, California, Maine, New York and Washington.