Date: November 18th, 2026
From: The Vandenberg Coalition, polling by J.L. Partners

New poll: Midterm voters did not see Iran conflict as driving the cost of living; Republican base strongly prefers strong Iran policy and support for Israel

- **Postmortem poll of election result finds grocery prices were bigger driver of inflation concerns than gas prices; tariffs as significant drivers as Iran**
- **Nearly three quarters of Republicans continue to view Israel as an ally**
- **Republicans reject accommodation with Iran as part of a deal**

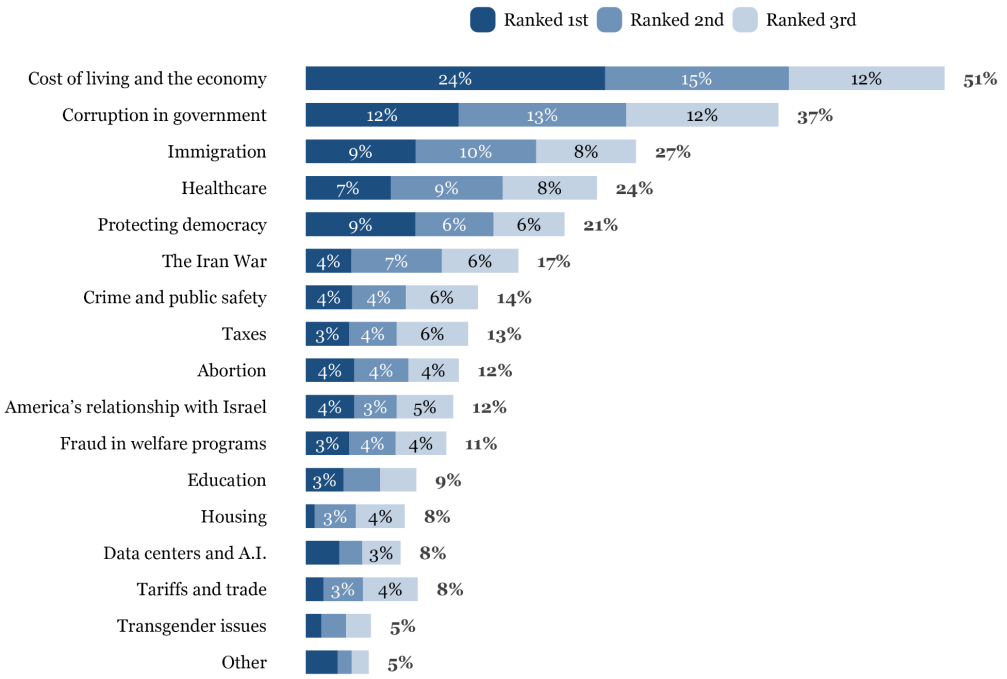
Washington, D.C., November 18 2026: The midterm elections saw the Democratic Party receive strong majorities in both the House and Senate. The Vandenberg Coalition commissioned J.L. Partners to survey 1,000 registered voters with an oversample of 500 Republicans to find out what really motivated voters and determined their choice. The survey asked not only what issues most inspired their votes, but also dug deeper into what they believe are the causes behind those issues.

Four key findings came through:

1. **The Iran conflict per se was not a top five issue. The dominant issue was the cost of living. Grocery and food costs, not gas prices, were the top driver of those affordability concerns, with healthcare and housing also significant factors. Voters' sentiments about Israel were not a significant factor.**

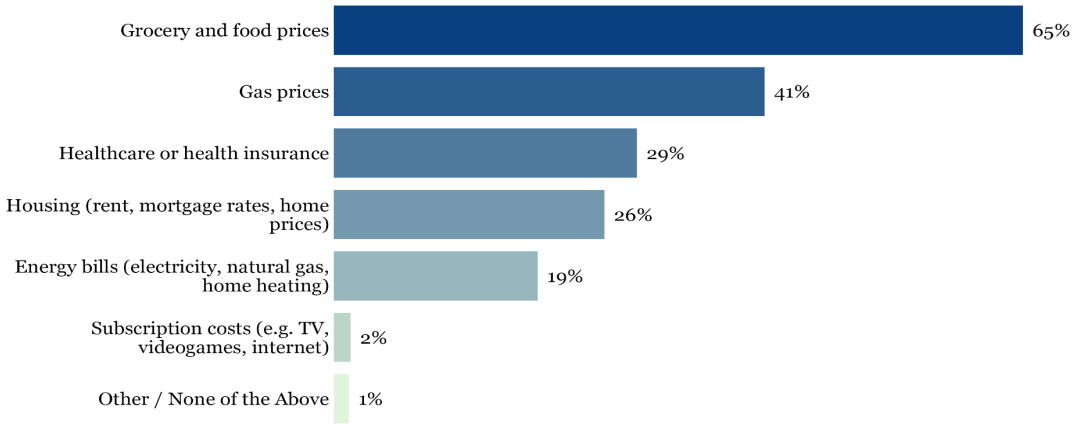
The cost of living and the economy were the issues that mattered most to 2026 voters, with 51% choosing it in their top three most important issues and 24% choosing it as their top issue when given a list of options. The Iran War was a top three issue for 17% of voters and the top issue for 4% of voters. 12% of voters also chose America's relationship with Israel as a top three issue.

Graph 1: Issues that mattered most in deciding the vote among 2026 voters



Furthermore, despite some of the commentary since the election, gas prices were not the only or even the primary pain point within voters' cost of living concerns. Among respondents who ranked the cost of living as a top three issue, 65% cited groceries and food prices as one of the two most important aspects of that concern, compared to 41% who selected gas prices. Notably, among younger voters - more likely to have defected from the Republicans to the Democrats in this election - housing was much more important than with overall voters — at 53% for 18-29 year olds compared to 26% for all voters.

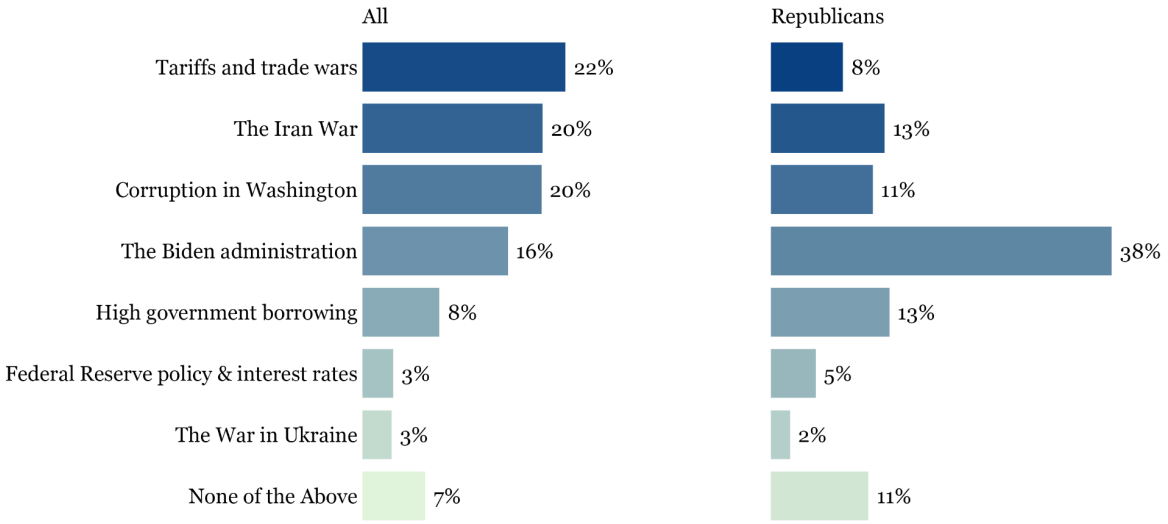
Graph 2: Among those that selected the cost of living as a top three issue: Which part of the cost of living in your own life was most important to your vote this year? (TOP 2)



2. Tariffs and corruption in Washington were seen as major drivers of the cost of living — as much or more than the Iran conflict

Only 20% of voters - and only 13% of self-identified Republicans who voted for any candidate in 2026 - saw the Iran War as the most responsible factor behind the cost of living. As many or more respondents pointed to tariffs and trade wars (22%), corruption in Washington (20%), and the policies of the Biden Administration (16%). Registered Republicans who voted for any candidate in 2026 are much more likely to blame the Biden Administration (38%) and high government borrowing (13%) than voters overall.

Graph 3: Factor most responsible for the increase in the cost of living among all 2026 voters and Republicans who voted in 2026



3. Republicans understand the goals of the war and reject any accommodation with Iran

While Democrats and Independents are more likely to want to exit the war, 71% of Republicans who voted for any candidate in 2026 feel the U.S. priority should be to ensure that America achieves its objectives and exits the conflict on favorable terms. Fewer that one in four (24%) of Republicans want to prioritize exiting the war immediately, and this support erodes further when respondents were asked to consider specific U.S. concessions.

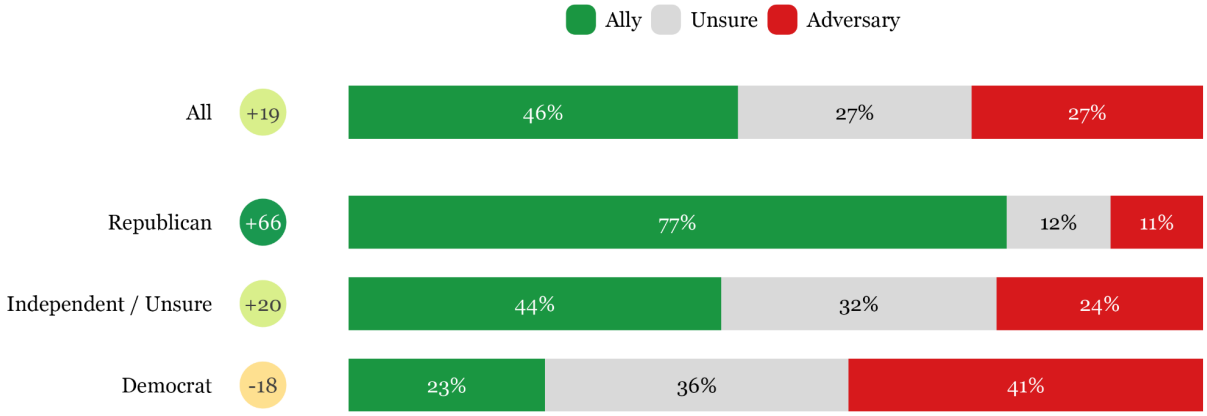
Of the minority of Republicans who prefer to prioritize an exit, only 7% say America should provide Iran with sanctions relief to secure a deal, only 6% say Iran should be able to close the Strait of Hormuz in the future, only 5% say Iran should be able to restart its nuclear program, and - the lowest - only 4% say America paying reparations would be acceptable. Even among respondents who initially preferred a quick end to the conflict, 65% say none of these concessions would be acceptable and 11% are unsure.

4. Voters, and especially Republicans, see Israel as an ally with common interests

Among all 2026 voters, 46% see Israel as an ally, compared to 27% who see the nation as an adversary and 27% who are unsure.

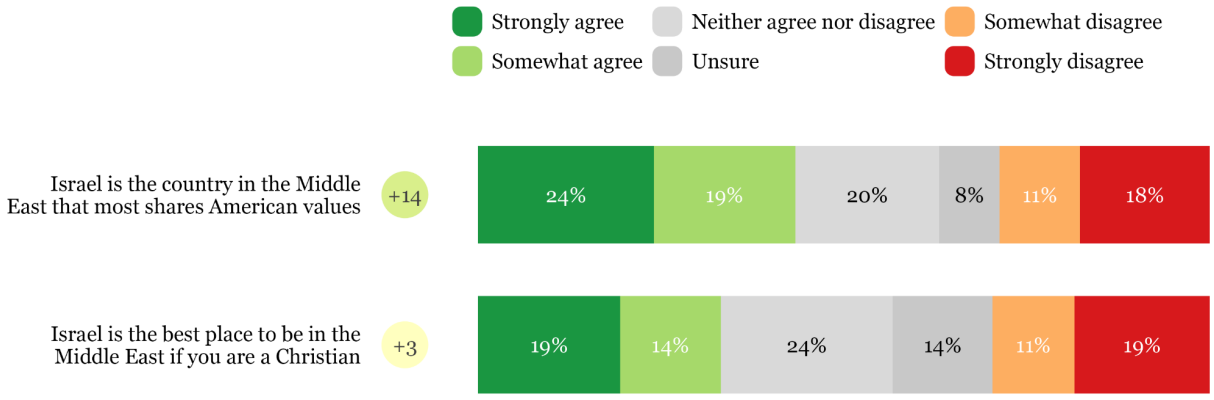
Far from what some of post-election commentary would suggest, this remains driven by a sharp partisan divide. Among Republicans — no matter how they voted in 2026 — 77% say Israel is an ally and only 11% say it is an adversary. Only 12% of Republicans are unsure of how they view Israel.

Graph 4: View of Israel today as an ally or adversary among 2026 voters, by party ID



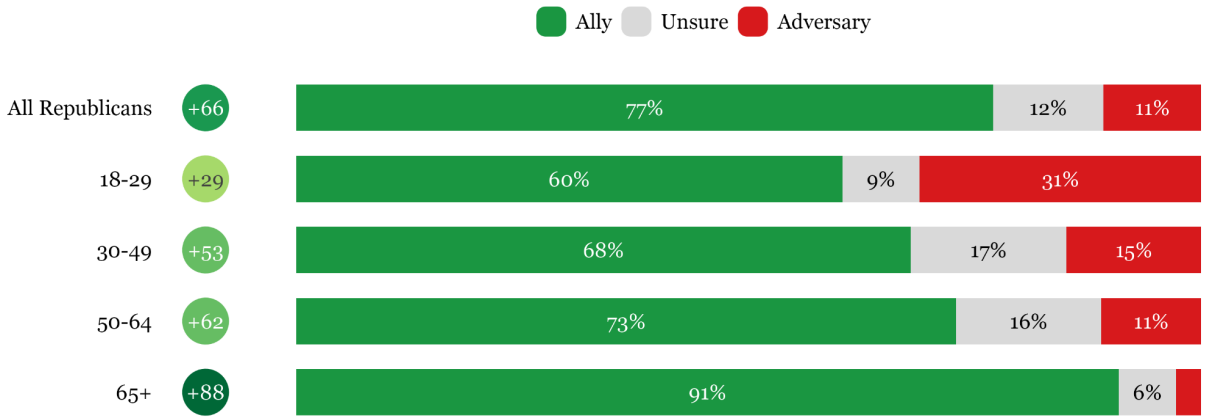
Voters also see Israel as the best place in the Middle East for Christians and the country in the Middle East which most shares American values. Further, voters see Israel and the United States as allies through common moral values and interests with strong pluralities agreeing.

Graph 5: Agreement with statements about Israel among 2026 voters



Republicans who voted in 2026 are much more likely to view Israel as an ally than Democrats and Independents, Although Republicans' view of Israel as an ally varies by age, they are still all firmly in support of viewing Israel as an ally.

Graph 6: Republicans overwhelmingly see Israel as an ally, regardless of age



Carrie Filipetti, Executive Director of the Vandenberg Coalition, said:

“To understand the midterm results, we must go the source- the American people. It is clear from this poll that while there were a lot of factors that contributed to the GOP's losses in the midterms, cost of living challenges were the most significant and far outweighed concerns about U.S. foreign policy. And while some Republicans have questions about the execution of our operations in Iran, the data shows the party remains firmly behind President Trump’s decision to take military action against a nuclear-armed Iran, even at the cost of a short-term electoral hit.”

Method

J.L. Partners polled a representative sample of 1,000 registered voters using SMS-to-web, live calls to cell, and online panel between November 11-14, 2026. The sample includes an oversample of Republicans, for 500 Republicans in total.

J.L. Partners weighted the data to the national registered voter population on gender, age, education, race, region, party ID, 2024 presidential vote, population density, and D+13 2026 Congressional ballot results.

Results for “2026 voters" include 862 respondents who said they voted in the November 3 election. The margin of error is ±3.1% for all registered voters and ±3.3% for 2026 voters. For Republicans, it is ±4.4% for all Republicans (n=500) and ±4.7% for Republicans who voted in 2026 (n=432).