# After the Vote: What Do the Midterms Mean for the Health Justice Movement?

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Health Justice Framing Forum
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FRAME WORKS



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Unscientific Reaction Poll

# In the chat:
# Your name, where you work, and what you're celebrating today.

# Bonus: Emoji(s) that express your response to the election

# Here’s how we’ll share space today

- **We are recording today’s session.**
- **We will share the recording and slides with registrants as soon as we can.**
- We will remove any AI note-takers.
- To bring a question or comment to the presenters’ attention, **use the Q&A function.** Note that others in the meeting will be able to see your question.
- **Presenters probably won’t see the chat.** The chat is open for participants to interact with each other or respond to content in real time. FrameWorks may also post links there.
- For general reactions, please feel free to use the reaction feature.

# We can’t achieve health justice without powerful communication.

# FrameWorks' Health Justice Program is designed to support the field (you!)



Original Research



Framing & Narrative Strategy



Deep Reframing Partnerships

**Frequent Frames:**
Health Care Costs +
The System Is Rigged

**Government Is...**
**Provider? Protector? Tyrant?**

**Today's Session**

**Deservingness**

**Who belongs? Who is the "other?"**

**Discussion & Takeaways**
Reactions, resources, what's next

# Unquestioned, widespread assumptions that powered campaigns

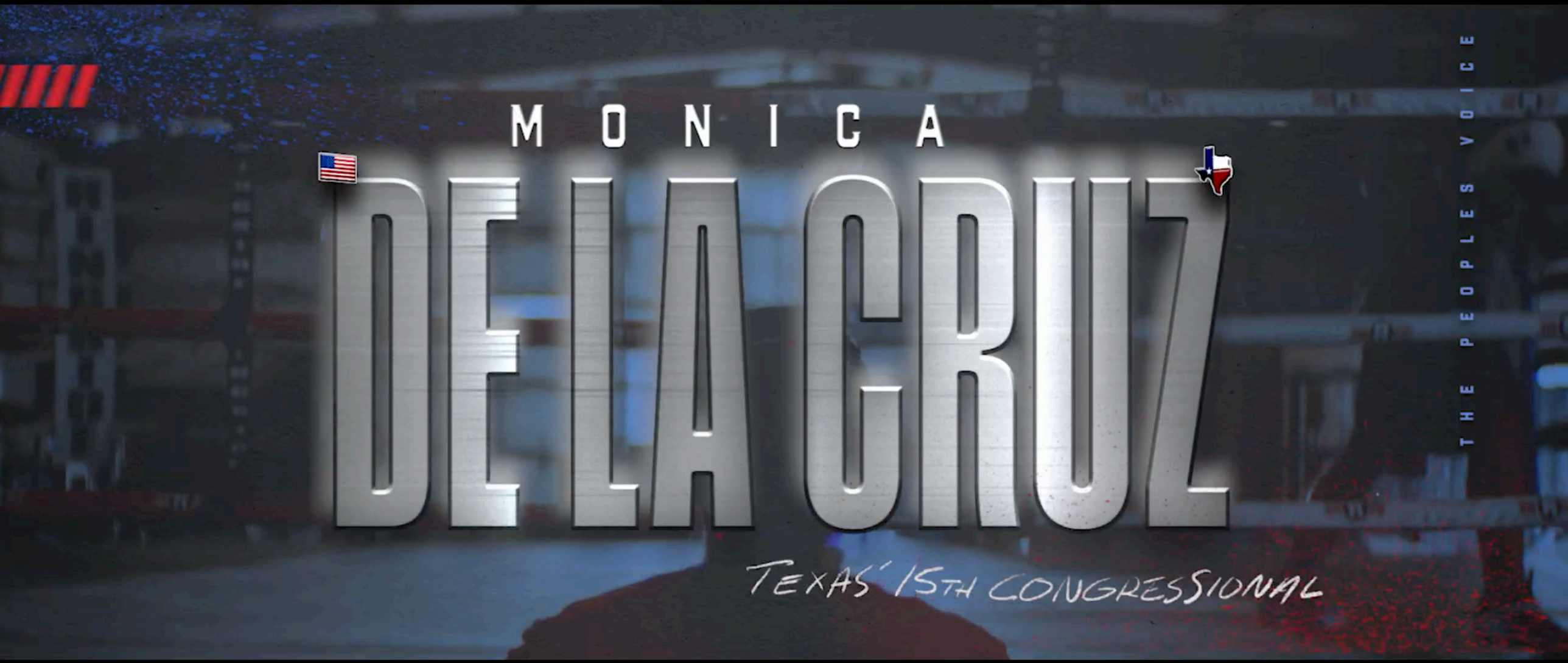
The mindsets that many campaigns relied on to move their voters

# Affordability was the defining issue of the cycle

- Drove voter attention and turnout
- Dominated campaign ad spend
- Defined how candidates talked about healthcare and argued for reforms




BOBBY PULIDO


MONICA
DE LA CRUZ
TEXAS' 15TH CONGRESSIONAL
THE PEOPLES VOICE

# What did you notice?



# Affordability campaigning rarely challenged consumerist thinking

- When health is modeled as a service that we get through a financial transaction ...
  - People are more likely to accept disparities in health care access
  - We lose sight of health as a fundamental human right and collective good



Photo by Victoria Alexandrova on Unsplash

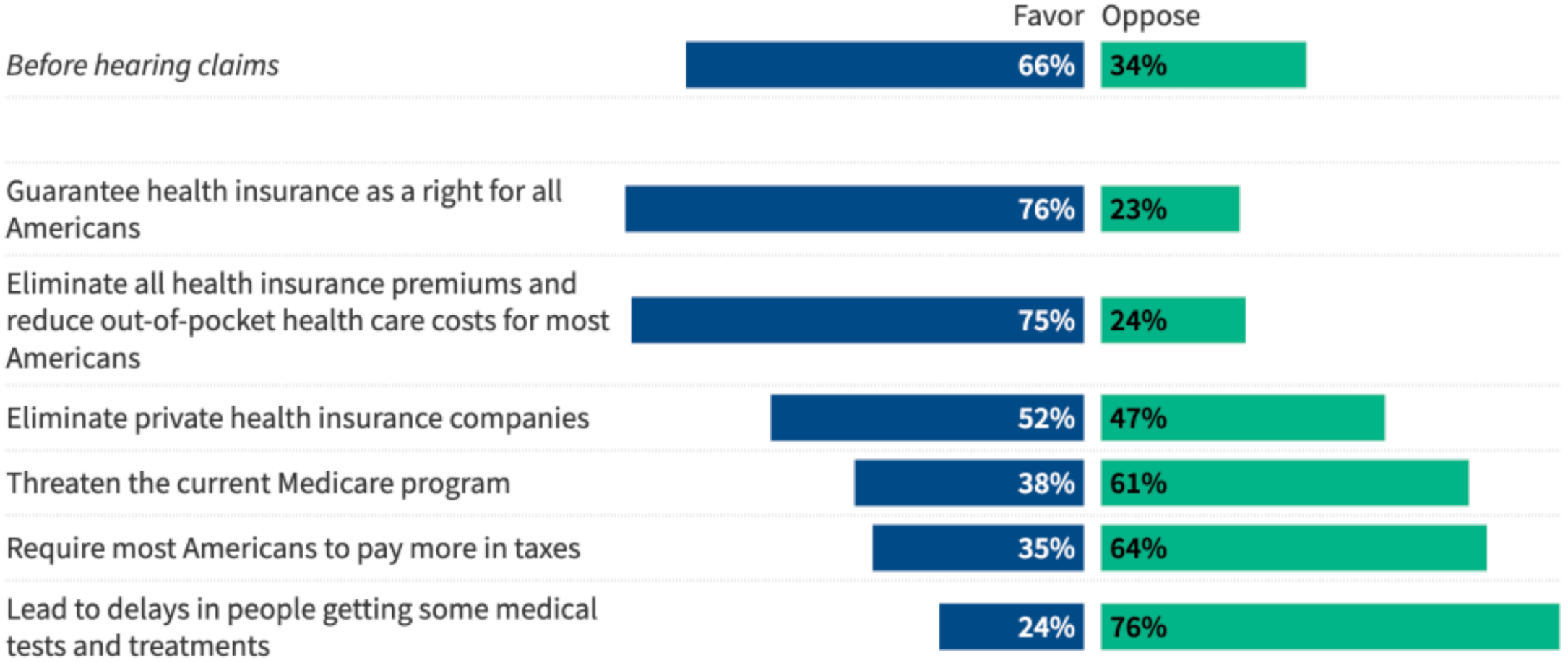



## HEALTHCARE THAT WORKS FOR WORKING FAMILIES

1. OPEN THE BOOKS +
2. SAVE ON 'SCRIPTS +
3. PAY PREMIUMS. GET COVERAGE. +

## Public Opinion on Medicare-for-All Shifts After Hearing Claims Made by Proponents and Critics

Would you **favor** or **oppose** a national Medicare-for-all plan if you heard that it would do each of the following?

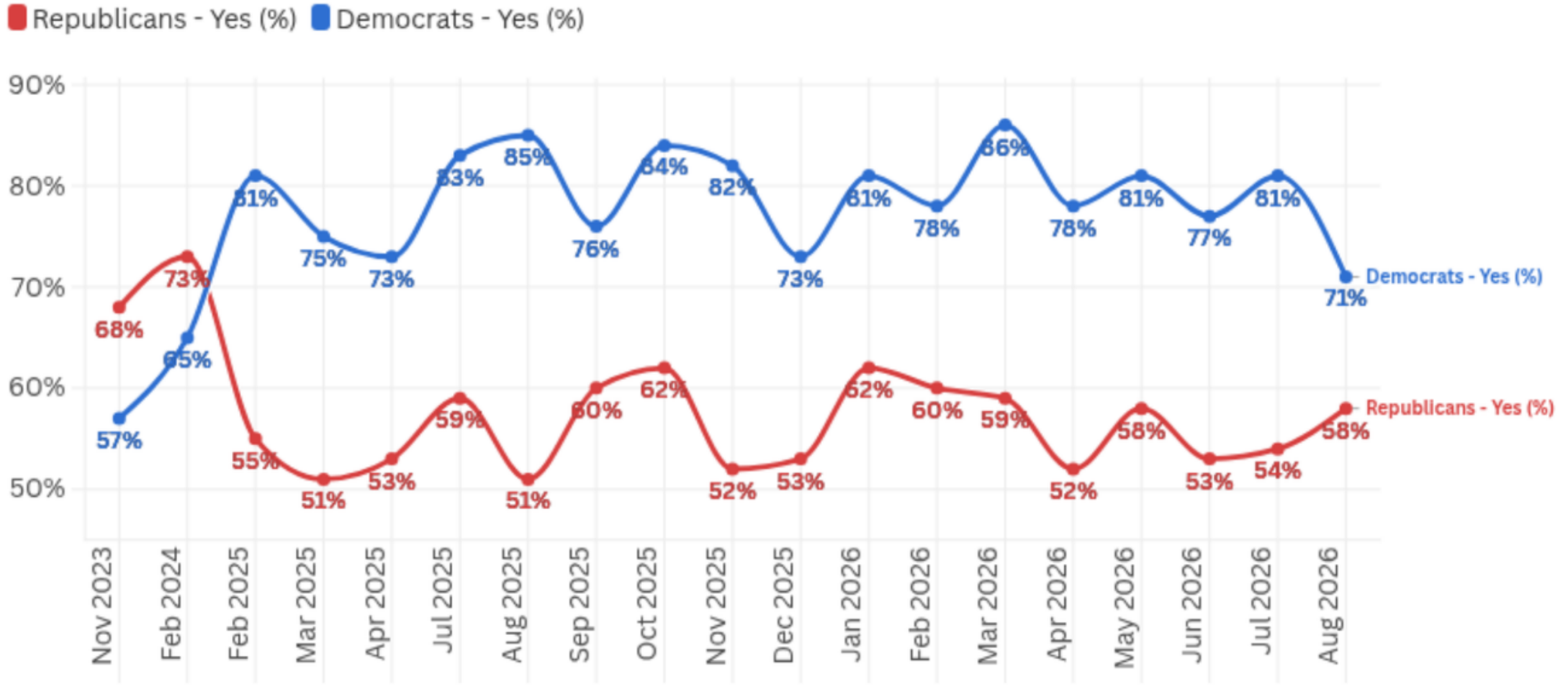



Note: See topline for full question wording.

Source: KFF Health Tracking Poll (September 16-21, 2026) • Get the data • Download PNG

KFF

# The majority of both Democrats and Republicans believe that 'the system is rigged'




Source: FrameWorks Institute, 2026. Democrats n = 9,496. Credibility intervals for Democrats across waves range from + / - 3.6 to + / - 10.3. Republicans n = 7,612. Credibility intervals for Republicans across waves range from + / - 5.0 to + / - 9.9.

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# Campaigns consistently appealed to “system is rigged” thinking

- This mindset is widely held, but lightly sketched: it has “blanks” that need filling in
- The Trump administration’s central arguments tap into this mindset
- **FrameWorks research has been showing for some time that a progressive, democracy-oriented version of this narrative can be highly effective**



| The Basic Mindset | Slots to be Filled | What Isn't Filled in? |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **People in Power** | **Who is Rigging the System?** Corporations, Politicians, Coastal Elites, Media | What do "they" do? |
| **"The System"** | **What System?** Economy, Government, Healthcare, Immigration System | How does it work? |
| **"Regular" People Get a Raw Deal** | **At Whose Expense?** White Middle Class, The 99%, Native-born Americans, People of Color | How does this happen? |

Every dollar that the federal government allows to be lost to fraud, waste, and abuse is a dollar stolen from American patients and the American taxpayer. And that's money that should be going to legitimate healthcare... If left unchecked, that kind of fraud threatens these programs and the people who rely on them, the most vulnerable populations in our country. President Trump wants to protect Medicaid and Medicare, and we are doing that by remaining strong and guarding against the fraud, waste, and abuse that jeopardizes those programs and the Americans who rely on them.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Federal Briefing on Oversight and Expenditure Integrity (July 21, 2026)



Senate Island, here we come.🏝️

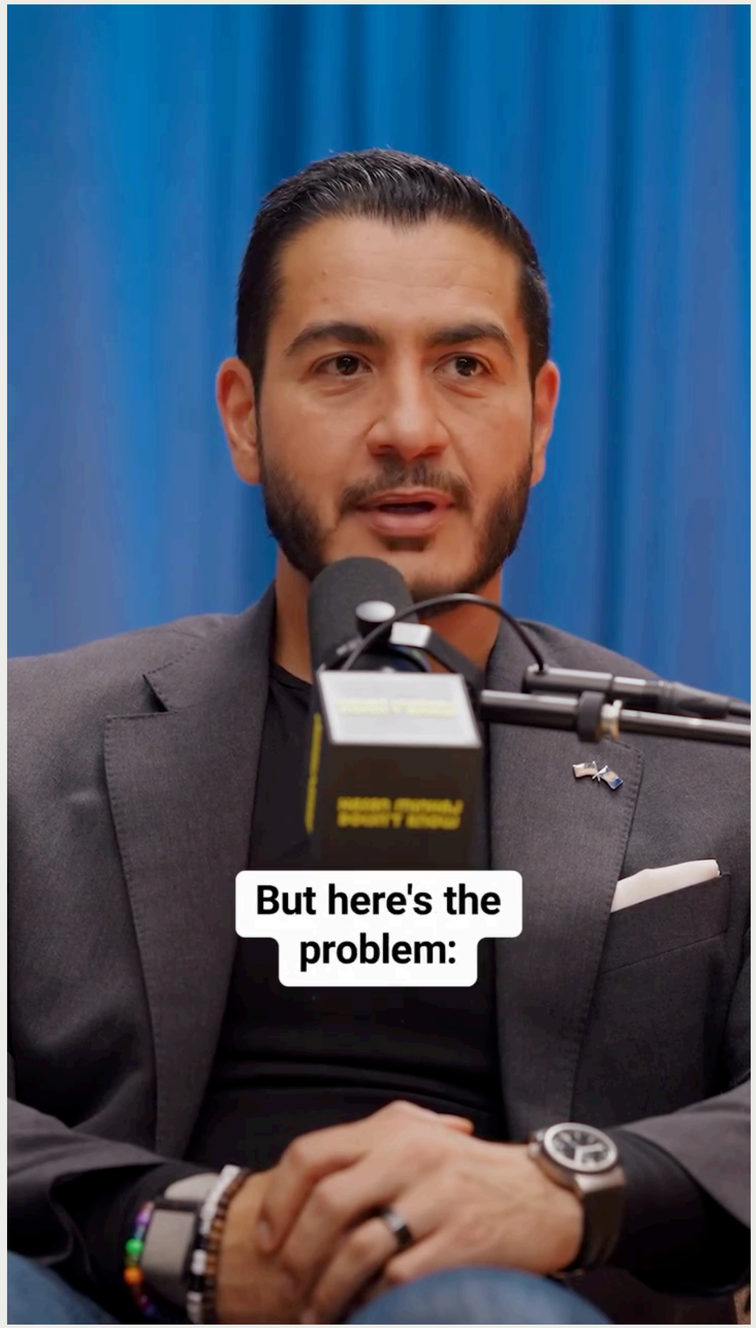


Senate Island, here we come.🏝️




Senate Island, here we come.🏝️






- “Corruption” was a major theme of the cycle, which connects to “system is rigged” thinking
- We found few candidates who didn’t use some element of a “system is rigged against you” narrative
- Democratic candidate for Senate from Michigan Abdul El-Sayed was notable for consistently deploying a “system is rigged” narrative that went beyond saying *who* is rigging the system. His campaign also said *how* and *how to unrig it.*

# Now is the moment to lean into “unrigging the system”

- To make progress toward universal access to affordable, quality care, we have to **move public thinking  and discourse away from consumerism. We need to help people imagine an alternative system.**
- Health justice topics benefit from stories that show how we can unrig systems through collective power and collective action,

# Campaigns leveraged mindsets toward role of government

Across ideologies and issues, shared patterns of thinking are the terrain of campaigns

# People toggle between different, contradictory mindsets



Government As Provider: Government should ensure affordable access to essential goods and services.



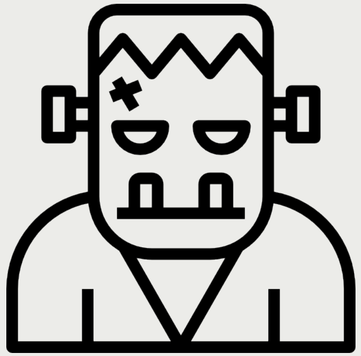
Government As Protector: Government should prevent, reduce, and fix threats to people's health and safety



Government As Tyrant: Government - especially federal government - does things that curtail individual liberties in ways it shouldn't.

*These are not three competing opinion segments. People can/do hold all these models in mind.*

# What is government protecting us from?



Threat of Modernity:
New technologies and social arrangements that we can’t control or don’t understand

# MAHA-endorsed candidates tapped into“threat of modernity” mindset

- Democratic campaigns focused on health care affordability and rarely talked about upstream, environmental causes of disease
- Candidates endorsed by MAHA Action / MAHA Institute consistently campaigned on need for government to protect residents from exposures to unsafe (or supposedly unsafe) substances and technologies



Photo by Bruno Guerrero on Unsplash

# Iowa's statewide campaigns focused on *government as protector from* environmental health threats

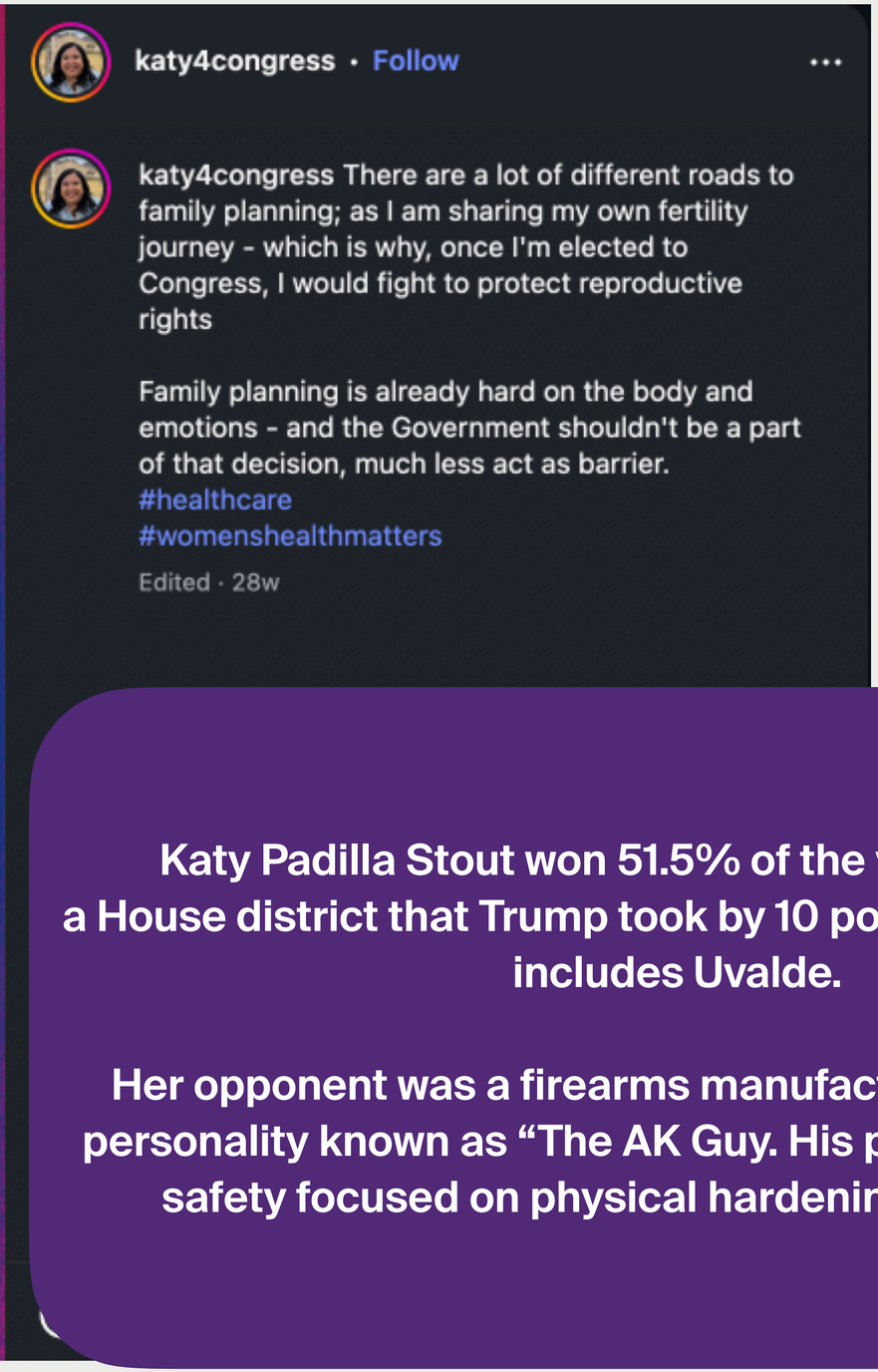
- Iowa's spike in cancer cases was a defining issue in Iowa races for governor and US Senate
- Water quality was defining issue in race for Iowa Secretary of Agriculture (nitrate runoff from fertilizer)

# Freedom from government featured in many campaign issues

- Many campaigns revolved around “who decides” on health issues — people or government?
  - Reproductive freedom
  - Medical freedom






Katy Padilla Stout won 51.5% of the vote in in TX-23, a House district that Trump took by 10 points in 2024 and that includes Uvalde.

Her opponent was a firearms manufacturer and YouTube personality known as “The AK Guy. His proposals for school safety focused on physical hardening of campuses.

# Understanding mindsets toward government helps us thread the needle

- Tapping into “government as provider” mindset helps people see the role of government in ensuring the vital conditions for health
- Tapping into “government as protector” mindset helps make the case for policies and programs that keep people safe from threats to health and safety.
- When talking about ways to make government more responsive and effective, remember that Americans are increasingly looking for transformational change.

# Campaigns sparked and shared ideas about “the other”

Who belongs? Who is the “other?” How do these claims affect the policies we adopt?

Campaigns shaped surround sound on “deservingness”




Photo by Mareko Tamaleaa on Unsplash

# What’s on your mind and what’s next?

# Let’s chat

Any questions, comments, or other reactions?



# These insights suggest that now is the moment to...

- Talk about access to quality health care in non-consumerist ways.
- Talk about upstream, systemic solutions to health threats in our environment and food systems
- Talk about about the role of systemic racism in health access, environments, and outcomes
- Tell stories that show how we can unrig systems through collective power and collective action
- Expand our repertoire for tapping into mindsets toward government.

# Reframing resources for the work ahead: public health and social determinants

- Explaining the value of public health
- Explaining the social determinants of health



# Reframing resources for the work ahead: health equity

- Communicating Now: Framing for health equity
- Reframing health disparities in rural America



# Reframing resources for the work ahead: system is rigged

- Why most Americans think the system is rigged
- Filling in the blanks: Contesting what system is rigged means



# Reframing resources for the work ahead: trans youth

- How to communicate about transgender youth





November 10, 1-5pm ET

# **Reclaiming the conversation on childhood vaccination:** Framing strategies that work (differently)

# Research we’re pursuing

- Public mindsets about Medicaid
- New narratives for governmental public health
- System is rigged stories in health
- Public mindsets on maternal health and mortality
- Strategies for vaccine communication
- How to communicate about government’s role in health
- Framing strategies to support healthcare reform

# We want to hear from you



# Let’s stay connected!

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@frameworksinstitute

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# About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis®, offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks®, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.