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Focus Group Report

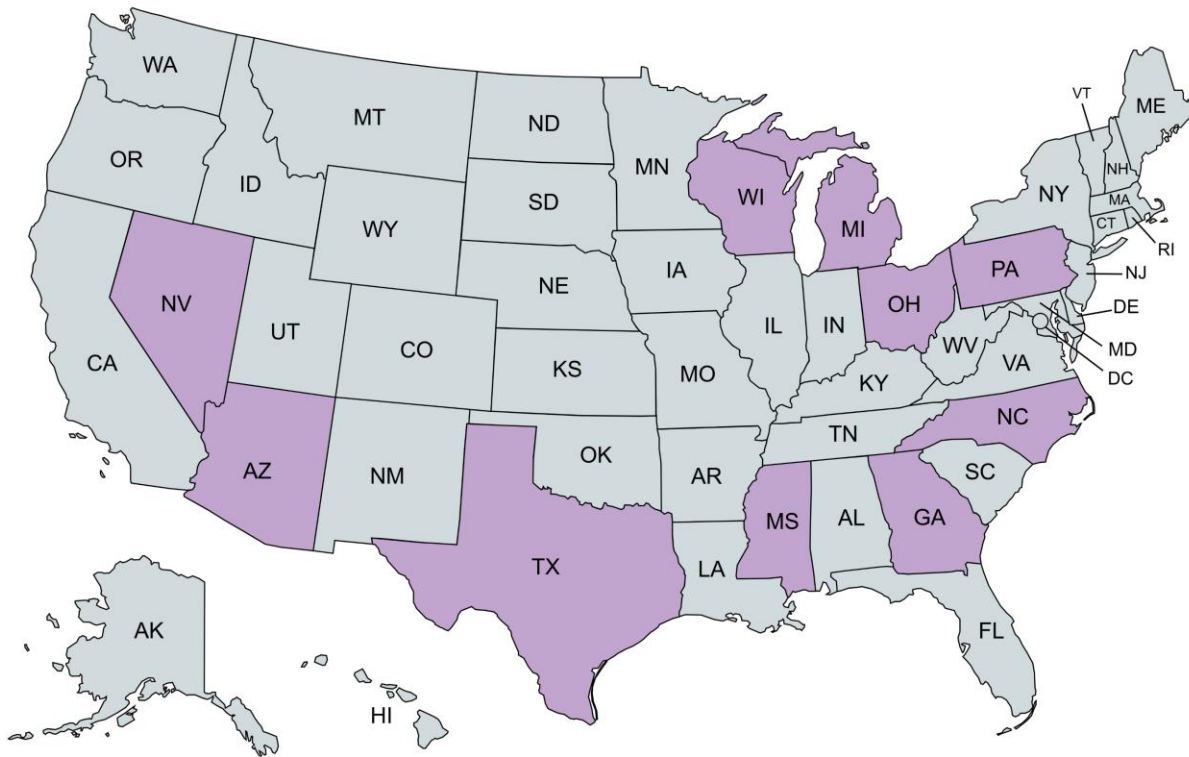
Thursday, July 2, 2026

Americans on the Flag



Methodology

On June 2-3, 2026, GBAO conducted four online focus groups in battleground Senate states* with white Christian swing voters to whom religion is an important part of their identity, Black and Hispanic voters, veterans, and first- and second-generation American swing voters.



- ❖ Group 1: Christian white swing voters who say faith is important to their identity (mix of gender, age, education)
- ❖ Group 2: Black and Latino voters (mix of gender/age/education)
- ❖ Group 3: Veterans (mix of race/ethnicity/age/gender/ education)
- ❖ Group 4: First- and second-generation American swing voters (mix of race/country of origin/education/gender)

*AZ, GA, MI, MS, NC, NV, OH, PA, TX, WI

Key Takeaways

- The flag represents freedom, pride in America, and power, but also America's failures to live up to its ideals
- Some view the flag and Pledge of Allegiance as aspirations of American values
- While some see Christianity as inextricably linked to the flag and Pledge of Allegiance, others see separation of religion and patriotic symbols as a core American value

To Many, The Flag Represents Freedom, Pride, And Power

Moderator: Thinking about the American flag – what does it symbolize to you?

“Red for the bloodshed, white for the purity, and the blue for fidelity. So that all together represents **freedom and it always will**. No matter what iteration of the flag they want to use, it always represents freedom and those that fought for it.” – GA man, white veteran independent lean Republican

“It just symbolizes for me **pride, freedom, privilege**....Privilege to be born in a country that accepted me...gave me the opportunity to grow.” – TX woman, Hispanic strong Republican

“I think it's a symbol of pride, of **national pride**. It's a symbol of patriotism. And I think it's a symbol of sacrifice, of what it took to keep us free from other nations.” – PA man, second-generation American weak Republican

“**Freedom. Also, a symbol of power**. You would show the picture of the flag of the United States, anybody in the world, I think, would recognize it versus showing a random flag from somewhere and it's indistinguishable.” – NV man, first-generation American independent

“Everyone in the world knows the American flag. The only thing is I do not like the use of [the] American flag in various objects, especially on [the] 4th of July people are wearing, maybe, swim trunks with [the] American flag or undergarments with [the] American flag and all that. It kind of makes it a meme rather than a **symbol of power** in one nation.” – MI woman, first-generation American independent lean Republican

“[The flag] always invokes a feeling of pride. It's in my **belief that we are the greatest country**. It was like taking the oath when we all enlisted. It's like it didn't all go as we planned, but you would do it again.” – TX woman, white veteran weak Republican

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The Pledge Of Allegiance Symbolizes Loyalty And Respect To Some, Empty Words To Others

Moderator: What does the Pledge of Allegiance mean to you?

"When I think of [the] Pledge of Allegiance, to me, it's an **expression of loyalty** to the United States. I loved saying that in school and it just makes my heart feel proud when I hear it." – MS woman, white Christian weak Democrat

"**We are free, but our allegiance still lies with the great American....**I love to do the Pledge of Allegiance every time I can." – MI woman, first-generation American independent lean Republican

"I'm not opposed to [the Pledge of Allegiance]. I'm not really for it. I don't know. It's just something we always did in school, but I have **no opinion** on it." – PA man, second-generation American weak Republican

"You're trying to **ingrain in your children a love of country** and a reminder to them. So they listen to it, understand it, and let it ingrain in them that this is that experiment that we're all on right now to make a better amazing country." – TX man, white veteran strong Republican

"We were repeating the Pledge of Allegiance because it's what we've learned and what we knew because we were taught it, but **did any of us actually really understand it?** I feel like it was just something we repeated every day but didn't really truly understand what it was that we were saying every morning." – NV woman, second-generation American weak Republican

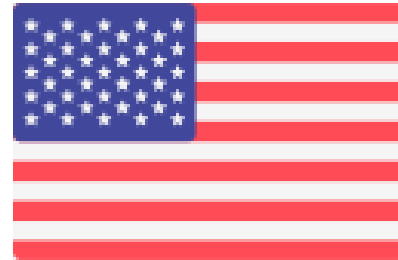
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To Some Veterans And First/Second-Generation Americans, Patriotic Symbols Are Reminders Of America's Aspirations

"For me, the flag is tied up in **what we want to be**. And I think that Americans want to be kind. We want to be generous. We want to be neighborly. We want to get along with each other and we want a fair shake at providing for ourselves and our families." – MI man, white veteran strong Democrat

"The flag to me really just, it's a **representation of this wonderful experiment** that is now 250 years old. So when I see that, I think of what this country can be, the best of it. I think that the **best is yet to come**....We are still the last great bastion of hope on the earth. And I pass it and I smile, usually get goosebumps and salute it." – TX man, white veteran strong Republican

"I think the Pledge of Allegiance is **something that we strive for**. This country's only 250 years old....So we have a lot of growing pains. We have a lot of issues that have not been dealt with that need to come out and need to be talked about and faced....I know it's an aspiration, but I'd like to have hope and I try to instill that in my children and grandchildren." – PA man, Black veteran strong Democrat



"Basically just I think of the flag and [it] reminds me of **that we are supposed to be the land of the free**, it's what the flag means to me." – NV woman, second-generation American weak Republican

"It is a reinforcement of the American values on an everyday basis... It just **reinforces the value of [us] being one** as a whole community rather than just people." – MI woman, first-generation American independent lean Republican

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Some Feel The Flag Represents A Country That Is Not Living Up To Its Values—or Never Did

“I don't put up a flag because I feel like if I can't display a gay pride flag at my house because I'll be targeted, then I shouldn't put up an American flag....I don't feel that putting up the flag is fair to me.” – TX man, Hispanic strong Democrat

“I'm not really into a personal display for me. And especially now. I'm not super proud of America at this point, so I'm not going extra with the displaying of my pride.” – NC woman, white Christian independent

“I understand what [the flag] is supposed to stand for. When we say the red, white, and blue, and we talk about freedom...it just hits differently with me....**The way African Americans were treated and still are treated, it's hard for me to look at something and say there's freedom or there's pride...**especially when you see people wrap that flag around them with such anger and vitriols towards...not even just African-Americans but people of color.” – GA woman, Black veteran strong Democrat

“I have no disrespect for the flag, but I just don't have any allegiance for it because it **doesn't represent my people** like it should....It's just representing...white people.” – GA man, Black strong Democrat

“I think of the flag and [it] reminds me that we are supposed to be the land of the free. However, I don't know, I feel like more and more people are wanting to move out of this country.” – NV woman, second-generation American weak Republican

“How could you pledge allegiance to a flag that doesn't even protect you? I mean, how could you have allegiance to a country or anything like that, that doesn't even fully look at you as a full citizen?” – GA man, Black strong Democrat

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White Christians Revile The Idea Of Burning The Flag, But Disagree On Whether It Should Be Protected Speech

Moderator: Should burning the US flag be protected under the first amendment as freedom of speech?

"I don't like [burning the flag], but again, **it's freedom of speech**. I won't be part of it, but it's one of those things like if you like freedom [of] speech, they're allowed to do it." – PA man, white Christian weak Democrat

"As a vet, I'd say [it should be protected], **because I stood up for the freedoms. That's one of our freedoms**. I don't agree with it. I would never do it, [but] I don't think it should be a crime. It's a freedom of speech." – MI man, white Christian independent

"I think **it should be a crime**. Because burning the flag has crossed the line. You're basically telling every single person, no matter what nationality...that you are against everything that America stands for." – AZ man, white Christian weak Republican

"I loathe the idea with every fiber of my being of burning the flag. I hate it....That said, I believe a core value, **the First Amendment of being an American is the right to free speech** and that includes incredibly offensive speech." – TX man, white Christian independent lean Republican



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Some Feel The Flag And Pledge Of Allegiance Should Be Tied To Christian Values

Image of American flag with Bible on top was shown to participants

"At the end of the Allegiance, it says... 'one nation under God.' **We're far from being under God.** We are far from God. So that needs to be revised." – MS man, Black strong Republican

"I think it's a **good photo**. Like what other people have said, **the country was founded on Christianity and God**. I think we have a lot of different religions now in the United States, which is awesome, but I still like the photo. It's a good fit." – GA woman, white Christian independent

"I think this is what the Founding Fathers **based our country on, Christian values**, and up until a couple of decades ago, that seemed to be the major thing, and it has switched." – NC woman, second-generation American independent lean Republican

"As far as the Pledge of Allegiance, it truly **bothered me when people try to want to omit under God** from it because the country was founded [on] a concept of religious liberty....If you don't want to say it and say nothing, I'm okay with that. That's your right under free speech. But please don't force me to remove 'under God' from it." – OH man, white Christian independent

"I actually like this picture [of a Bible on the flag] because I **still feel that America itself was built upon Christian values**, and while anyone is free to practice their own religion...think we should try and stay close to Christian values in the way we make our laws and conduct ourselves as a country." – PA man, second-generation American weak Republican



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First-Generation Immigrants In Particular Emphasize The Need For Separation Between The Flag And Christianity

Image of American flag with Bible on top was shown to participants

"I like to **separate religion from the state**. So having them two together, it's not offensive, but I just think it should be two separate entities." – NV man, first-generation American independent

"The flag and the Star of David or the Holy Bible, [I] never saw those together because **there's so many religions in this country, and that's what this country's about**. So if you're going to have the Holy Bible, you might as well have everything else in there." – TX man, second-generation American independent lean Democrat

"I **thought we were a separation of church and state** and putting those two together violates separation of church and state." – TX man, Hispanic strong Democrat

"I see that image, something that comes to my mind is part of the Pledge of Allegiance when it says with liberty and justice for all, so we have the liberty to believe. Even though I'm Catholic and I love the Holy Bible, I **respect the difference and the freedom that every person living in this nation has**." – GA woman, first-generation American independent

"For me, it comes down more to separation of church and state. That's what I believe in. I mean, I'm not offended, but I still think that having a **separation of church and state is an important aspect to keep**." – TX man, first-generation American weak Democrat



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About Navigator

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigator is a project led by pollsters from Global Strategy Group and GBAO.

About the Study

On June 2-3, 2026, GBAO conducted four online focus groups in battleground Senate states* with white Christian swing voters to whom religion is an important part of their identity, Black and Hispanic voters, veterans, and first- and second-generation American swing voters.

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