

MIDDLE AMERICA PROJECT

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

It is not too much of an overstatement to say that America is as divided now as it has been at any time since the end of the Civil War. According to numerous sources, including a piece by [Axios](#) and research by [Pew Research Center](#), most Americans see little room to agree on any major issues. They do agree, however, that Democrats and Republicans **disagree on even basic facts**.

However, to move the country forward, extreme views will get us nowhere. In fact, great stretches of prosperity in peace, throughout our history, have come when the country has chosen a middle ground.

There is a large, and painfully underrepresented, moderate American middle who want to see sensible policies enacted on issues such as trade, healthcare, taxation, and the environment. The Middle America Project (MAP) is a collection of thinkers and doers, who want to amplify the voices of moderate Americans and help move the nation to taking meaningful, substantive, and measured steps to tackle these issues.

But we can't do that if the only thing American's hear or read is partisan bickering with no substance. That's where we come in.



WHAT WE DO

MAP aims to help turn the policy conversation back to one filled with facts, information, and rational discussion. MAP regularly engages with policymakers, think tanks, and academics to identify moderate ideas and policy solutions and elevate thoughtful, nuanced policy options.

OUR ISSUES

The Middle America Project (MAP) is focused on the issues that we know concern most Americans, and have inspired some of the most heated rhetoric. Specifically, we want to encourage rational dialogue and effective action on:

- The Changing American Workplace and Workforce
- Access to, and Affordability of, Healthcare
- Ensuring Trade Helps American Businesses and Workers
- Fair and Effective Tax Policies
- Encouraging American Innovation
- Improving America's Infrastructure
- Encouraging American Technology
- Combating Climate Change

AMERICANS AND THE NEWS

A 2018 **Pew Research Center** survey found that “two-thirds (68%) of Americans report that they get at least some of their news on social media – with two-in-ten doing so often.”¹ Compared to 2016, higher percentages of nonwhite, older, and less educated Americans were getting news from social media. 43% of all Americans, not just Facebook users, got at least some of their news on Facebook last year.

Conversely, Americans’ consumption of cable news has declined across all three major cable news channels (CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC) in data analyzed by **Pew Research Center**. Viewership for all three networks combined has declined 12%.²

¹ Pew Research Center, September, 2018, “News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2018”

² Pew Research Center, July 25, 2018, “Cable News Fact Sheet”



This increase in the use of social media as a news source, along with those sites' lack of editorial control, and decline in cable news viewership, has made social media ripe for the dissemination of inflammatory and often inaccurate stories. This, in turn, has made the prospects for moderate and rational debate harder and harder to facilitate.

³ Reuters Institute,
2018, "Digital News
Report 2018"

The **Reuters Digital News Report for 2018** found, globally, 54% of respondents among the general population are "very or extremely concerned about what is real and 'fake' on the internet." The United States is among the most worried countries, with 64% feeling concerned.³

MAP works to counter this by promoting through social media and other resources fact-checked and edited news stories that offer moderate analysis and proposals on the issues that matter most to most Americans. Last year, we posted over 1,000 tweets and reached almost nine million people.

Social media is a powerful tool and it is critical that it is used correctly. We at MAP are striving to ensure that more and more Americans see news that accurately showcases effective solutions to today's problems.



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THE NEWS IN 2018

Any reporter, editor, or news "junkie" will tell you that 2018 was almost unprecedented in the amount, importance, and volatility of news. It is hard to remember another time when there were so many head-turning, mind-boggling, and occasionally inexplicable stories reported.

MAP's mission is to promote moderate positions and arguments on a variety of stories. To do this, we work to amplify the coverage of these positions. Here are some of the stories we promoted in 2018:

- **Vitamin D supplements don't improve bone health, major study finds**
(CNN, 10/05/18)



- **The Economic Case for Immigration**

(U.S. News & World Report, 02/06/18)

- **Will 2018 Be the Year of Protectionism? Trump Alone Will Decide**

(New York Times, 01/03/18)

CONCLUSION

The Middle America Project enjoyed a number of successes in 2018. We reached over eight million people online with our message of rational, moderate, and responsible education. We engaged with Americans on issues ranging from rural broadband to Census measurement to tax reform.

Overwhelmingly, the American people are dissatisfied with their government and the media. We believe that is due in large part to the polarization of the voices in both of these American institutions. MAP is fighting to help our leaders reach agreements that can satisfy both sides of the argument.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MAP?

We learned a lot this year, and are excited for what 2019 holds for us, including a push into more issues, creation of original explainer materials that can help guide users through complex policy issues, and push into what the 2020 election looks like.

