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Student loan forgiveness could lure nearly half of Americans in key battleground states to vote in November, survey says

Ayelet Sheffey Mar 31, 2022, 11:25 AM



President Joe Biden delivers a speech on voting rights at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia on July 13, 2021. AP Photo/Evan Vucci

- **Data for Progress and Rise surveyed Americans in key battleground states on student-debt relief.**

- **It found 45% of respondents would be more likely to vote if Biden cancels \$10,000 in student debt.**
- **Biden has yet to comment on further debt relief, and payments are still set to resume on May 1.**

A new poll suggests student-loan relief might help voter turnout in November's midterm elections.

Data for Progress, in collaboration with Rise — a higher education advocacy group — conducted a survey obtained exclusively by Insider of 2,066 likely voters in the battleground states Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, all of which flipped from former President Donald Trump to President Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election.

Respondents were polled on how likely they would be to vote in the November general election should Biden implement a range of policy measures related to student debt, and it found that 45% of them would be somewhat or much more likely to vote if Biden cancels \$10,000 in student debt for every federal borrower, which he pledged to do on the campaign trail.

Additionally, 46% of respondents also said they would be likelier to go to the polls if Biden were to cancel \$50,000 in student debt for every federal borrower — an amount many progressives lawmakers have been pushing for. Over one-third of respondents said another motivating factor to vote would come from a further extension of the pause on student-loan payments through the end of the year.

Student-loan payments have been paused for over two years, with waived interest, and they're set to resume in one month, on May 1. While Republican lawmakers have been urging Biden against another extension of that pause, Democrats have argued that federal borrowers need continued relief, and the president should either extend the pause a fourth time, or cancel some amount of student debt before borrowers have to resume repayment.

Chair of the Senate education committee Patty Murray, for example, recommended that Biden extend the pause on student-loan payments through at least 2023 to give him time to "permanently fix" flaws in the student-loan industry, like broken loan-forgiveness programs. 43 Democratic lawmakers recently said both borrowers and the Education Department are "unprepared" to resume in payments in May.

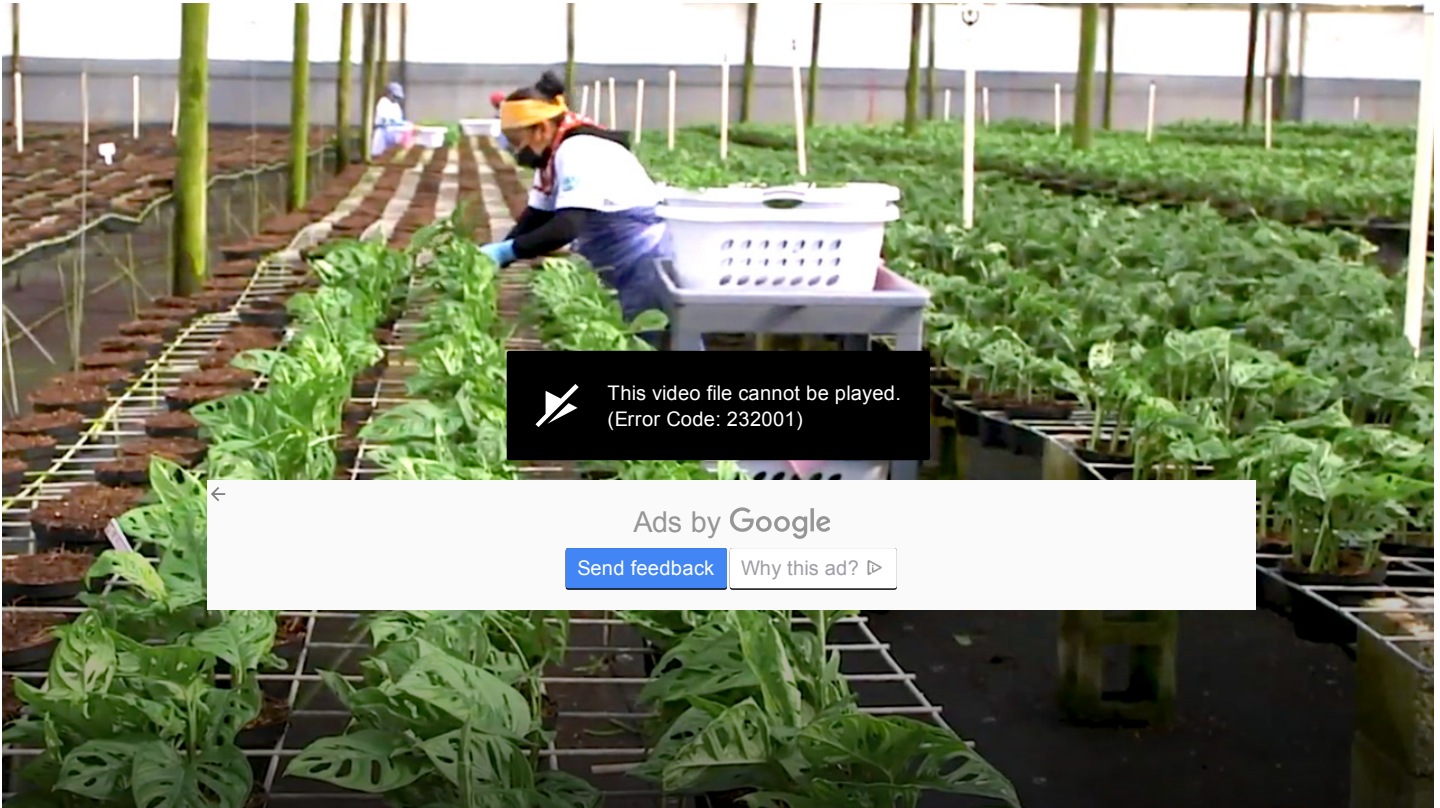
"Millions of borrowers have benefitted from the pause in payments," the lawmakers wrote in a letter to Biden. "Although progress has been made, we believe it is vital to ensure that we continue to work to alleviate the continued impact the pandemic is having on families across the country."

According to the survey, 55% of respondents said they trust the Democratic Party more to provide student debt relief, but lawmakers in that party have expressed concerns with voter turnout should they fail to deliver on progressive priorities. New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said in December it would be "actually delusional" to think Democrats could win elections if they fail to follow through on voter priorities. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren said in January that canceling student debt "would persuade a lot of young people that this president is in the fight for

them."

Borrowers are still waiting to hear from the president on any student-debt forgiveness plans with the payment resumption just a month away as pressure continues to mount for Biden to take decisive action on the issue.

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