To:	Interested Parties
From:	Kristen Soltis Anderson, Echelon Insights
Re:	Polling on ESOPs
Date:	September 14, 2026

Americans remain frustrated by both their present economic situation and their prospects for economic opportunity in the future. They worry that working hard and playing by the rules isn't enough to get ahead anymore. Younger Americans question whether our economic system can work for them. At the same time, there is an opportunity to imagine an economy where people can get ahead, can build their economic future, and can do so through employee ownership.

In polling conducted by Echelon Insights on behalf of Expanding ESOPs, we find that economic pessimism can be countered by proposing an economy where employees are able to share in the value of the company where they work.

Key findings from the survey include:

- **Americans do not have much faith in the economy and the American Dream today.**
    - Americans are down on the state of the economy, with a majority dissatisfied with current economic conditions (71%), their own financial security (58%), and their ability to achieve the American dream (51%).
    - A 49% plurality believes there is less opportunity to get ahead in America today than there was 50 years ago, and a 39% plurality thinks there will be even less opportunity a few years from now.
- **Younger Americans are especially unsure that our economic system provides opportunity, and are consequently looking for a fresh approach.**
    - Americans aged 18-34 are almost twice as likely (60%) as those over age 65 (32%) to say that there is not much opportunity in America these days – that the average person doesn't have a chance to really get ahead.

- Most Americans under age 50 think there is less opportunity for the average American to get ahead these days compared to 50 years ago.
- Americans aged 18-34 are about as likely to think socialism (42%) works at least somewhat well as they are to say the same of capitalism (44%).

- **Most Americans do not initially know much about ESOPs, but after learning more they think ESOPs are positive.**
  - Most do not know much about ESOPs, but about 3 in 4 think they are a good idea after learning more.
  - After hearing a brief description, 83% believe ESOPs would be able to help employees get ahead financially.
- **Most believe that expanding employee ownership would increase opportunities and reignite the American Dream.**
  - 61% say having more companies with ESOPs would lead to more opportunity for the average American to get ahead, and 78% believe it would make the American dream achievable for more Americans.
  - The share of voters thinking the US economic system is working well for Americans like them jumps from 52% to 74% with the prospect of more companies sharing ownership through ESOPs.
- **ESOPs are considered a good idea because they create a win-win for employers and employees alike.**
  - Increased motivation and productivity along with economic benefits for workers are the two most frequently named reasons people give for saying ESOPs are a good idea.
  - While only 46% of employed respondents feel their company cares about their ability to get ahead financially, that rises to 80% who would feel their company cared *if* it offered an ESOP to employees.
  - Seven-in-ten (69%) Americans say that if a political candidate proposed expanding tax breaks to encourage more companies to form ESOPs, it would signal that the candidate cared about how much opportunity average Americans have to get ahead financially.

Methodology

Echelon Insights conducted a survey on behalf of Expanding ESOPs, fielded online from October 11–15, 2025 in English among a sample of N=1,024 registered voters nationwide using nonprobability sampling. The sample was drawn from the Cint sample exchange and matched to the L2 voter file to verify respondents' voter registration status. Measures taken to ensure data quality included measures to prevent duplicate responses, questions designed to disqualify inattentive respondents, and the removal of respondents from the data file who answered more than one-third of the questions they were asked in less than one-third of the median response time per question. The sample was weighted to population benchmarks for registered voters in the United States. Weighting dimensions and benchmark data sources included:

• Weighted on gender, age, region, gender by age, and recent primary participation to benchmarks from the L2 voter file

• Weighted on race/ethnicity, education, education by gender, education by race/ethnicity, gender by race/ethnicity, and race/ethnicity by
age to benchmarks derived from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey data adjusted to Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplement data, with additional adjustments to interactions involving age to reflect age groups in the overall voter population based on L2 voter file data

• Weighted to reflect the margin of difference in party affiliation between Republican/Republican-leaning voters and Democratic/Democratic-leaning voters based on Pew Research Center's National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)

Calculated the way it would be for a random sample and adjusted to incorporate the effect of weighting, the margin of sampling error is ± 3.4 percentage points.