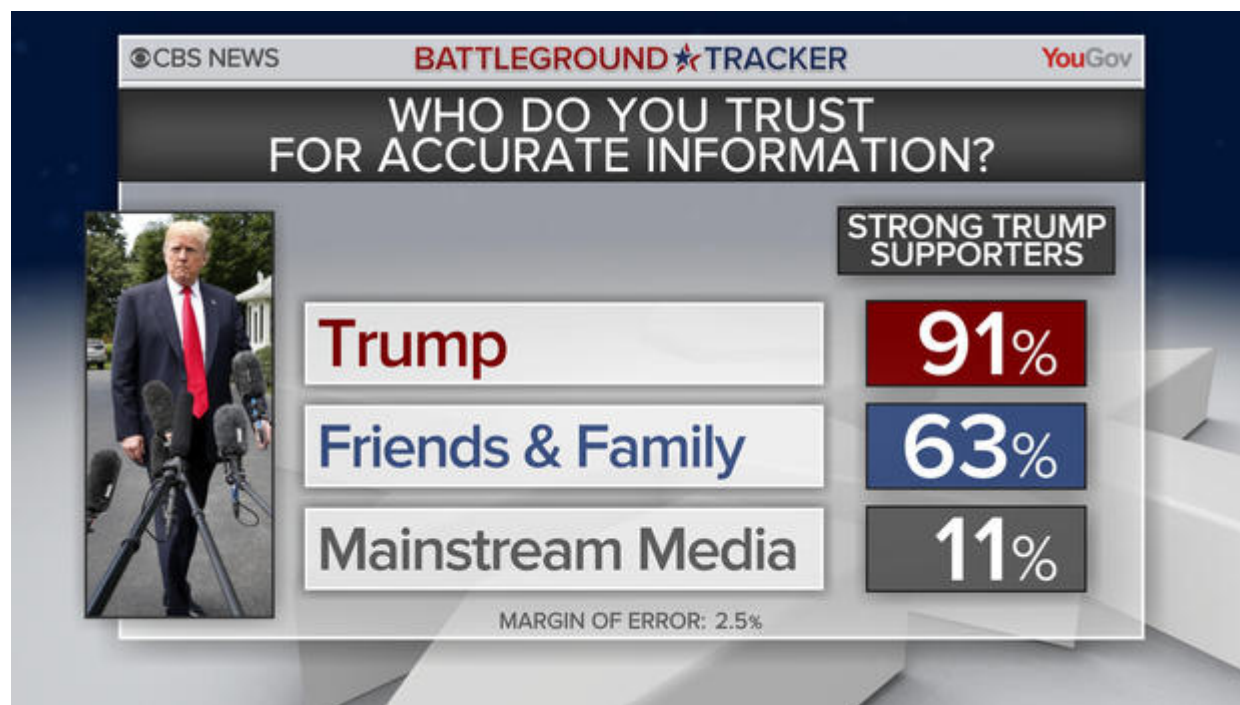


# Shut Down the Government, Build a Wall, Say Hello to Speaker Pelosi



So our impulsive president is threatening to shut down the government right before the midterm elections if he doesn't get money for his border wall. If he's trying to turn the House over to Nancy Pelosi, he's doing a pretty good job.

Here's what the president tweeted on the subject: "I would be willing to 'shut down' government if the Democrats do not give us the votes for Border Security, which includes the wall."

Who knows if he really means it or if he's just flexing his muscles? Who knows if he'll tweet out something that contradicts his previous tweet 10 minutes from now?

But if President Trump thinks he can help his party in the midterms with chatter about border walls and government shutdowns, if he thinks he can hold the House for the GOP by telling his most loyal supporters what they want to hear, he's

wrong.

The base may love tough talk from their macho leader, but what Donald Trump still hasn't seemed to grasp is that his base is not like the rest of America and that their support isn't enough to help him or his party win elections.

The rest of America doesn't want a government shutdown. Most Americans don't even want a wall. And while voters may, in theory, blame "both sides" for a shutdown, they know which party controls Congress and the White House. And they know which president put out the tweet about shutting down the government. So there's a good chance it's the GOP that will pay the price if the government actually is shut down – for a wall no less that one poll has said only 37 percent of Americans want.

Like his base, Mr. Trump is no fan of polls – unless, of course, they reflect news the president likes. And so, a recent CBS News poll must have put a smile on the president's face. Here's the question that was asked of "strong Trump supporters":

"Who do you trust for accurate information?"

Ninety-one percent said they trust President Trump. Only 63 percent said they trust family and friends. Eleven percent trusts the mainstream news media.

This is quite remarkable. The president's most passionate base trust him more – a lot more – than they trust their own friends and family, their own wives and husbands and children and friends.

Can you say cult following?

This is just one more piece of evidence proving that Donald Trump has the power to mesmerize his most loyal followers. They're not with him because of his cogent, reasoned

arguments, or even because of a deeply held conservative philosophy.

They support him because he has tapped into something: their alienation. Once he gave the middle finger to the political establishment and the cultural elites, once he told them he was fed up with illegal aliens sneaking into the country, once he said we're going to build a wall to keep them out, once he said the United States wasn't going to be pushed around anymore and he was going to make America great again, they had found their messiah. The idea that they would ever vote for someone like Jeb Bush or John Kasich was laughable.

And there's one more "villain" Donald Trump has trashed to the joy of his base: the national news media.

Let's get the easy stuff out of the way: They've done a lot on their own to diminish their credibility. Too many journalists have let their hatred of this president infect their work. Their biases aren't nuanced anymore. They're right out there in the open. So, there's a reason a measly 11 percent of Americans in that CBS News poll believe what the mainstream media tell them. Frankly, I'm surprised the number is that high, since the question was asked of "strong Trump supporters."

But Donald Trump has also done a lot to delegitimize the press for his own cynical reasons. Call the media "fake news" enough and his mesmerized followers believe journalists flat out make things up just to hurt the president. It doesn't matter that that's not how it works. Trump loyalists don't care.

Which brings me to a conversation I had nine days before the presidential election in 2008, when I interviewed Pat Caddell for my book, *A Slobbering Love Affair*, which was about how the mainstream media fell madly in love with Barack Obama.

In 1972 when I was a young producer at CBS News covering the

presidential campaign of George McGovern, Pat Caddell was doing McGovern's polling. Pat was a Democrat but over the years became the kind of Democrat, conservative Republicans respected. He was a regular contributor on Fox. Liberal critics called him a "Fox News Democrat." Pat had principles.

Here's what I wrote about that conversation in my book:

"Caddell worries that some day a demagogue is going to come along, somebody who makes Huey Long look like a shut-in. Somebody, Caddell told me, 'who gets up at the start of his campaign and says, **'I want you to see the press. They are the enemy of the American people. They will do everything they can to stop me because they want to stop you.'** And the American people will believe it.(Caddell told me) ... Nobody will care what the press says."

Remember, this conversation took place in 2008, right before Barack Obama was elected president. Caddell's wasn't talking about Donald Trump. Not knowingly, anyway.