

### Get ready!

- A. Read the headline of the article below. What do you think it will discuss?

#### Taylor Swift: Person of the Year and Political Influencer

THE CONVERSATION

Matt Harris — December 6, 2023

1 Even before Taylor Swift was named “person of the year” by Time magazine, politicians courted<sup>1</sup> Swiftie voters. Call me a Swiftie, too. Like any millennial pop music fan active on social media, I followed Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour – the surprise songs, the scramble to get tickets, her brief romance with that guy from The 1975 with a history of racist comments.

5 But as a political scientist, I was intrigued by something else: reaction to the tour by government officials. New Jersey renamed the state’s famed Taylor ham, egg and cheese in her honor – it’s now the “Taylor Swift Ham, Egg, and Cheese” official state sandwich.

Pittsburgh’s mayor briefly renamed the city “Swiftsburgh” when her tour hit town.

10 And in my neck of the woods, Swift Street in North Kansas City was temporarily rebranded “Swift Street (Taylor’s Version).”

Local or state governments have lauded Swift in some way at virtually every stop on her tour. While these honors make for great photo opportunities for Swifties, the politics of these moves is worth examining. Do politicians have something to gain in appealing to Swift’s fans?

#### Celebrities can help politicians

15 Unlike many celebrities, Swift does not involve herself much in politics. One particular tool of politicians looking to boost their numbers is to get celebrity endorsements<sup>2</sup>. But Swift’s use of endorsements has been limited, save for backing two Democrats in her adopted home state of Tennessee: Phil Bredesen in his Senate race and U.S. Rep.<sup>3</sup> Jim Cooper in his 2018 reelection campaign. Swift also endorsed Joe Biden in 2020.

20 Bredesen’s peak in Google search interest from 2010 to the present coincided with Swift’s endorsement in October 2018. Cooper saw more Google search traffic with Swift’s endorsement than at any point since his vote for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in March 2010.

25 While the specific impact of Swift’s endorsements is difficult to assess, an Emerson College poll of Tennesseans in 2018 found that 11.7% of those surveyed said Swift’s endorsement would make them more likely to support Bredesen – a number unlikely to make a difference in a race Bredesen lost by nearly 11 points despite Swift’s support. Cooper easily won reelection in his heavily Democratic Nashville-based district.

Although Swift’s endorsements likely did not sway these particular races, celebrity endorsements can matter in close races, particularly when the celebrity making the endorsement is viewed favorably – a likely scenario in Swift’s case. (...)

30 OK, so politicians need publicity, and they can use Taylor Swift’s name to get it. But what about Swifties as a voting bloc?

The idea that Swifties might be a key demographic in future elections is not far-fetched given their location and age. A majority of Swift’s fans live in the suburbs, the swing territory<sup>4</sup> of American politics. Further, most are Gen Zers or Millennials. These groups encompass an increasing share of the electorate with each passing year – up to 31% in 2020. Swift’s favorability among those ages 18 to 29 stands at 72%, and by one poll’s estimate, 21% in that age cohort say they would vote for Swift over Trump and Biden.

1. to court: courtiser 2. endorsement: le soutien 3. Rep. = representative (député, députée) 4. swing territory: territoire où les électeurs peuvent faire basculer l’élection

## When American Artists Get Political

**A.** Before reading the first part of the text (from line 1 to line 13), read the first paragraph only. What do you think this section will be about?

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**B.** Read up to line 13 and find out about the author of the article. Explain why he wrote it.

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**C.** In the first part of the text, find three examples of how, where and why “politicians courted Swifties voters”. Use your own words to answer.

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**D.** Read the second part of the text (from line 14 to line 28). Do politicians have something to gain in appealing to Swift’s fans? Find examples in the text to illustrate your answer.

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**E.** Read the sentence line 29 and 30. Who does it focus on?

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**F.** Concentrate on what characterises them and explain why this is really important.

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Now check your answers and then post your paragraph in « post your work here »