

DEMOCRACY CORPS
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Date: April 12, 2007
To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner
From: Stan Greenberg, James Carville and Ana Iparraguirre

**RE: The New Partisan Landscape
Republicans Versus the Rest of America**

The latest Democracy Corps survey and a close examination of the three months of surveys this year reveal a new partisan landscape in the country. Its contours were evident after Katrina and confirmed last November, but the public's preference for Democrats has widened even further since then, pervading almost every area of political combat. Many commentators noted the different levels of enthusiasm of Democratic and Republican voters for their respective presidential candidates; others commented on the growing Democratic advantage in party identification and most recently in fundraising.

This memo notes those things and more – even more evident when one gets to issues and values, to party images and competing narratives about the country's future and priorities. With this landscape, many more voters – in fact, by almost 10 points (34 to 25 percent) – are paying attention to the Democrats and say they plan to participate in their primary. And perhaps most important, the polarized views of primary voters on both sides are likely to further marginalize the Republicans and identify the Democrats as relevant for these times.¹

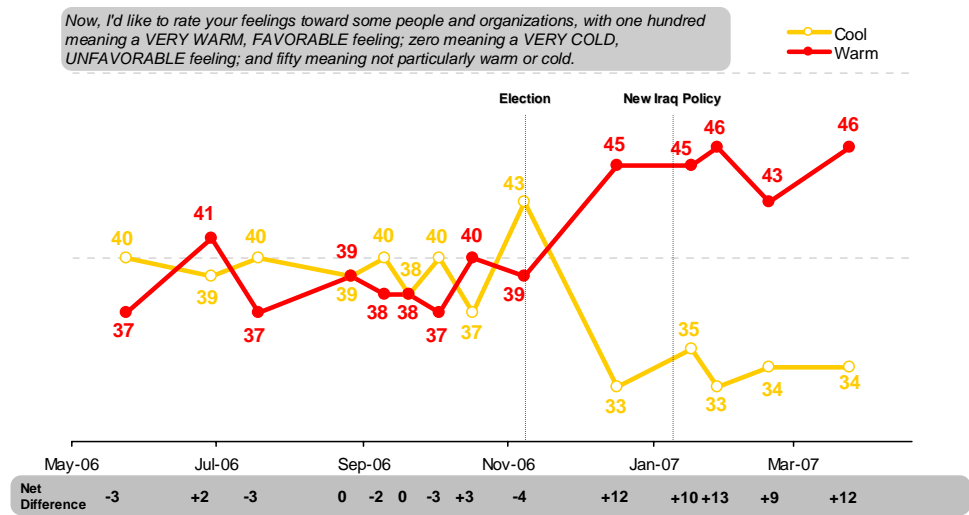
The starting point is the deepening feelings about direction of the country - with satisfaction reaching its lowest point yet. Less than a quarter of all likely voters – and less than two-in-ten independents – say the country is heading in the right direction. A large majority of the country (56 percent) – by a stunning margin of 23 points – want to vote for someone who 'mainly opposes President Bush's policies' in 2008.

¹ Democracy Corps national survey of 1,526 likely voters conducted March 20-25, 2007.

It is important to note that this was not true following the election of 1994 that brought Republicans into control of the Congress. The Republicans made no further gains in party identification or party favorability after the election.

After the 2006 election, the Democrats' favorability rose sharply and consolidated with the new Iraq debate. Gains have come with independents but the biggest gains are with Democrats, newly energized about their own party. Democrats' gains are masked by the polarized judgments of Republicans who view the Democrats more negatively.

Democratic party favorability



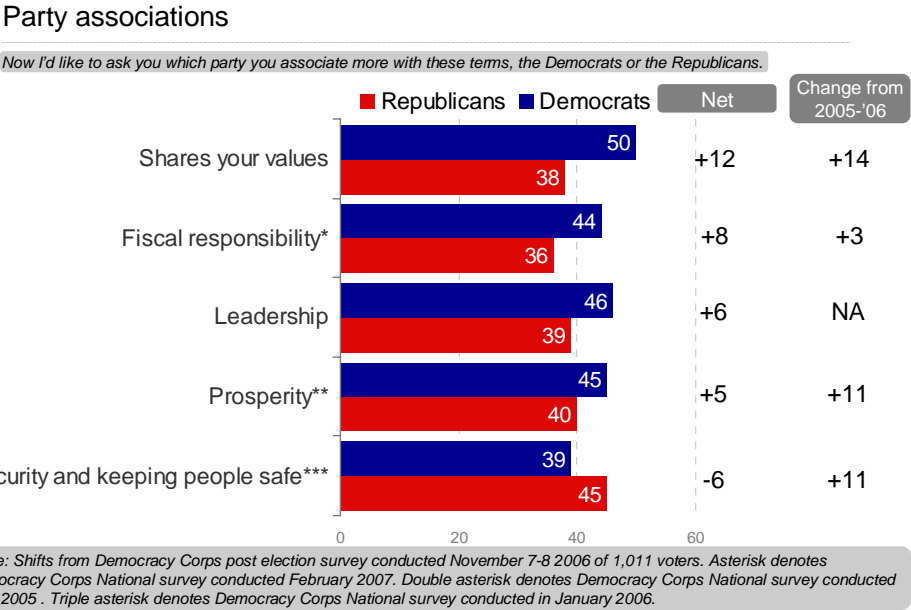
Deepening advantage in party identification. The Democratic advantage in party identification has reached 8.0 points, reflected in our 4,500 interviews conducted from December to March. That compares to 3.5 in the month leading up to the 2006 election upheaval – and compares to an average Democratic advantage of only 2.0 points at the beginning of the last election cycle. This is a new period with a wholly new landscape. Further, independents now break consistently for the Democrats by about 3 points, giving the Democrats an overall 11-point lead in party alignment – the overall disposition of the country.

At the same time, Democrats are feeling intensely about their identification as 31 percent identify as ‘strong’ Democrats, compared to only 21 percent ‘strong’ Republican partisans.

The new party alignment is producing fairly remarkable results, both presidentially and congressionally.

- **Presidential vote.** When we last asked the generic presidential race, the Democratic candidate won by 16 points (53 to 37 percent)²
- **Real congressional vote.** In the midst of the House debate on Iraq, the Democratic margin in the congressional vote (with named incumbent), grew to 15 points. In the last quarter, the Democrats have an average lead of 12 points. In the new districts won by Democrats, the incumbent is ahead by 35 points. Across all districts, Democratic incumbents are polling 66 percent of the vote, while Republicans are only at 54 percent – suggesting another tough election ahead. Support for the generic Democrat in Republican-held districts reaches 40 percent against the named incumbent, 7 points above their reported vote in 2006.

Growing advantages on attributes, values and security. The Democrats now have breathtaking advantages on a range of attributes and issues, as you can see below. Even on ‘security and keeping America safe’, the sole attribute where Democrats still trail Republicans, Democrats have made significant gains by narrowing the gap nearly two-thirds, down to a 6-point disadvantage from a 17-point deficit.



² Democracy Corps national survey of 1002 likely conducted January 24 –28, 2007

The biggest advantage yet – narrative. The competing narratives of the parties will evolve over the election cycle, though in some sense, it is the most important new Democratic advantage. This is about vision and direction, and here, voters want to be more Democratic than the current indicators allow. In short, there is room for growth as Democrats crystallize the choice before the country.

The narrative presented below, as example, contrasts a Republican message about a low tax economy, family values, addressing health care with more choice and national security with a Democratic message centered on making America a middle class country. The Democrat says, of course that means keeping the country safe, but by also addressing college, health care costs, energy and American jobs, the Democratic narrative wins by 20 points.

Support for Democratic narrative

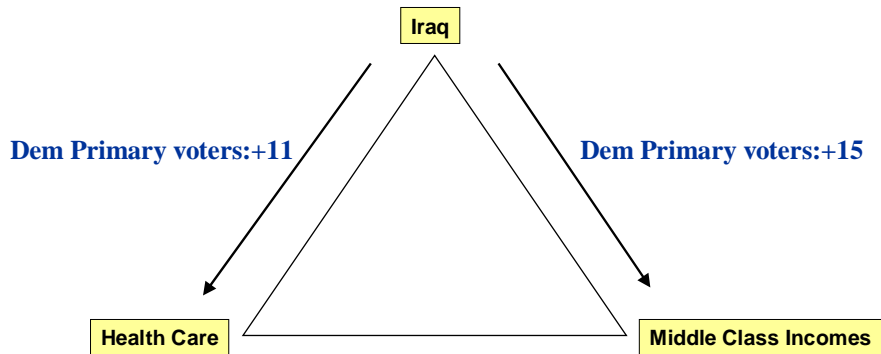
| <i>Now I am going to read your some things that a Democratic candidate running for president is saying. After I read these descriptions, please tell me which one you would support.</i> | Strong Prefer | Total Prefer | Net |
|--|---------------|--------------|-----|
| The Democratic candidate says, Americans are working hard but their incomes do not keep up with the costs of health care, energy and outsourcing and competition that threaten all our jobs. My main mission is to make sure America remains a middle class country. That means keeping America safe from terrorism, but it also means tax relief for the middle class, particularly for college tuition, getting drug and health care costs down, and investing in energy independence to create American jobs. | 47 | 57 | +20 |
| The Republican candidate says, we need to get back to basic values that make our country strong. That means cutting taxes so individuals, families and businesses can prosper and our economy can grow. There is no substitute for families that teach right and wrong. I will address health care and education by giving more choice and trusting people. And I will never forget my first responsibility – a strong military and keeping America safe from the terrorists. | 31 | 37 | |

The Impact of the Primaries on the Country

As a starting point, 40 percent of the country says they are considering voting in the Democratic primary and 30 percent in the Republican. When we screen more tightly for likely primary voters, 34 percent are looking to participate on the Democratic side and 25 percent on the Republican – almost a 10-point advantage in actual engagement, a new and perhaps enduring feature of this landscape.

Iraq. Iraq is the first issue for Democratic primary voters – an initial filter before getting to everything else. We asked voters to respond to a series of binary choices on what is important to their vote. Iraq dominates all the issues that we paired with it – such as health care or middle class incomes, as illustrated below.

Iraq top concern to Democratic primary voters

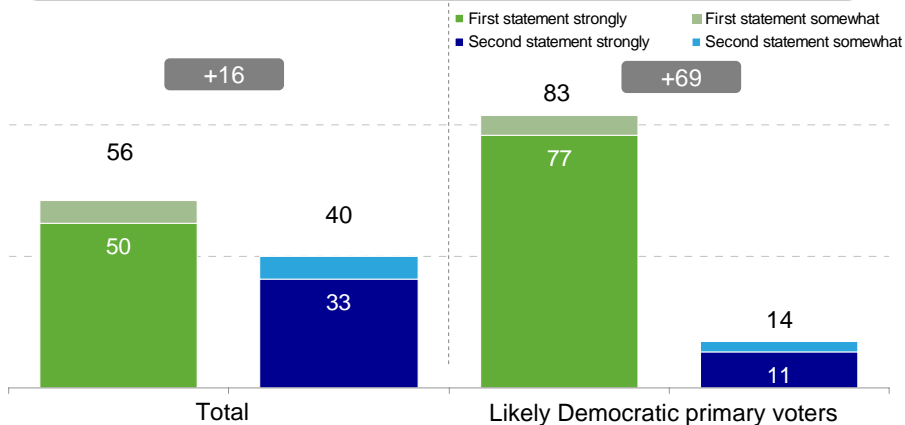


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Democratic primary voters are deeply opposed to the war in Iraq: over three-quarters say we should start reducing troop levels and not wait until the situation is more stable; in fact, three-quarters strongly support reducing troop levels, compared to 50 percent of voters overall.

Primary voters polarized about Bush's current course in Iraq

Now I'm going to read you some statements. Please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right:
 The current course cannot bring stability and we need to start reducing the number of U.S. troops in Iraq
 OR
 We must stay the course to achieve stability and finish the job in Iraq



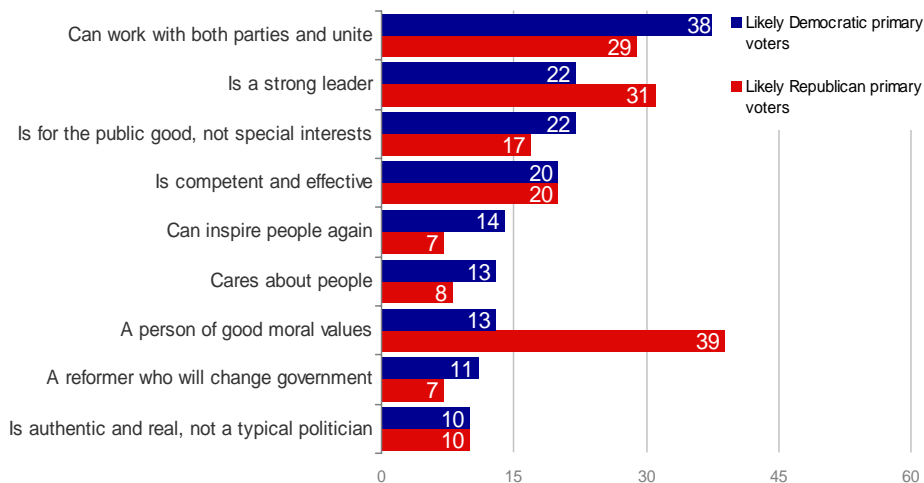
The polarization on the war creates an immense problem for Republicans, as their primary voters are unified behind the president on Iraq: three-quarters of Republican primary voters worry more that Democrats will leave Iraq too quickly than that Republicans will take too long.

Similarly, three-quarters favor Bush’s current plan in Iraq and a majority want their member of Congress to vote ‘against measures that could undermine the President’s policies in Iraq. In this preference, Republican primary voters are diametrically opposed to the preferences of independents and the rest of the country. The primary process is likely to deepen the new alignment.

Type of candidate. On the Democratic side, Democrats above all else are looking for a candidate who will rise above partisanship and unify the country, as well as for a candidate who is strong and will stand up for the public good. Republicans are looking above all for a candidate of ‘good moral values’; ‘strong leader’ is also important.

Bi-partisanship most important among Democratic primary voters; morals among Republican

Thinking about the next president, which TWO of the following qualities are most important for the next president to have?



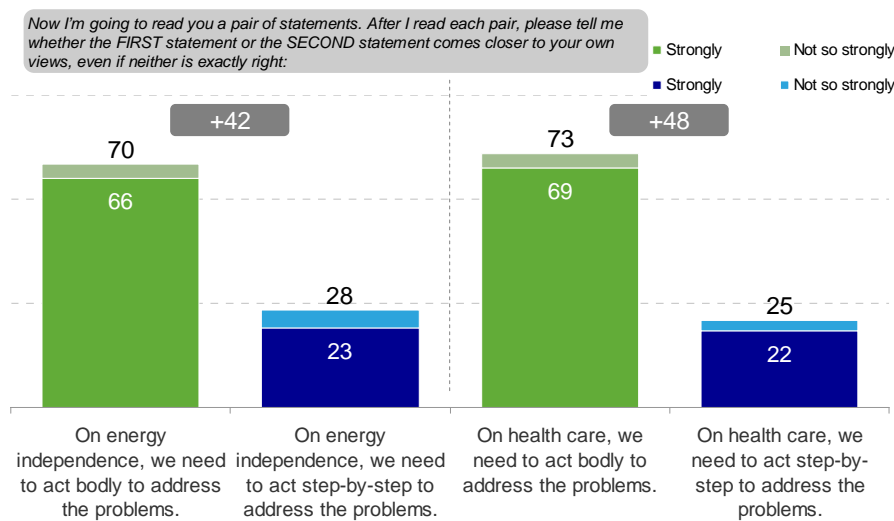
Democratic primaries are likely to be dominated by the health care issue. Health care is a huge priority for the Democratic primary voters. For example, in the binary choice exercise, it dominates over energy independence by a stunning 65 to 26 percent. On health care, Democratic primary voters reflect the preferences of the electorate as a whole.

Boldness. The Democratic primary voters are looking for a change agenda and a boldness that is reflective of the country, outside the Republican primary electorate. The preference for boldness is clear in general terms, but especially true when addressing health care and energy. Nearly two-thirds of the Democratic primary electorate say the country faces big problems and a solid majority want to move boldly to change the direction of the country. The intensity of support for bold actions among primary voters is striking, as half of these primary voters strongly

agree with taking bold actions as opposed to step-by-step policies. Support for bold actions is even stronger when presented in the context of health care and energy reform. At least two-thirds of likely primary voters strongly support bold actions on health care and energy.

Most illustrative of the orientation to boldness among primary voters is the response to health care reform: three-quarters support enacting a program for universal health care over a more targeted approach to reform, reducing costs of prescription drugs and providing health coverage for all children.

Likely Democratic primary voters prefer bold actions

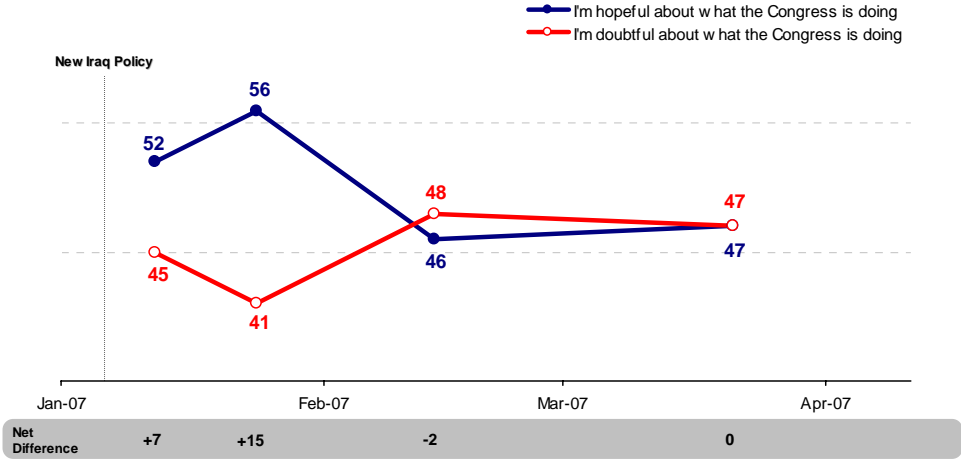


The Conflict between the Congress and the White House

While the country has drawn more toward the Democrats in the post-election period, the country does look on the battle between the President and the Congress with considerable reserve. The fierce battles prior to the Senate action on the Iraq Supplemental Appropriations Bill have generated some ambivalence about the Congress. Indeed, favorable feelings toward the ‘Congress’ and the ‘Democratic Congress’ are down by 3 net points. This debate has certainly taken a toll on the public’s hopefulness about what the Congress is doing, which dropped 9 points since the ‘First 100 Hours’. While voters want a change in Iraq policy, the country is still divided on whether Republicans will take too long or Democrats will move too fast in removing troops.

Hope about new Congress eroding

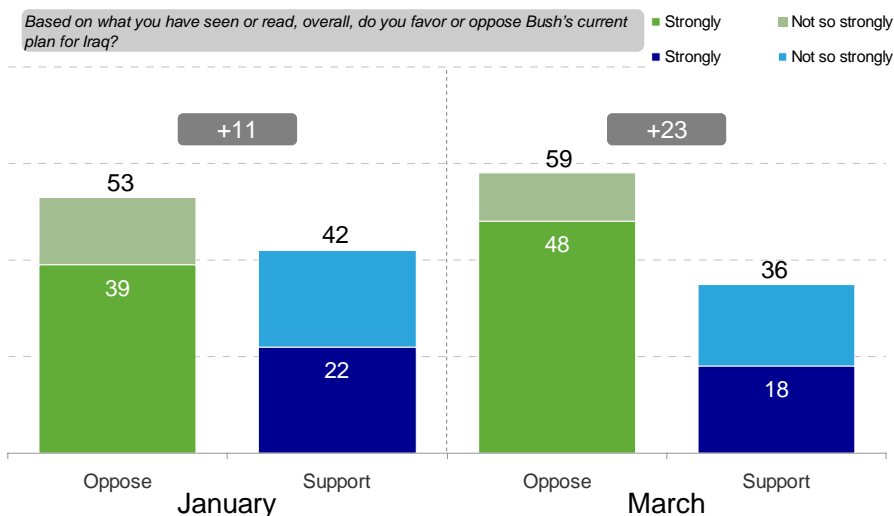
Now I'm going to read you some statements. Please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right:



Despite the public’s bitterness with the partisan fight over Iraq, voters are clearly aligning with Democrats. Divisiveness is increasingly seen as Bush’s fault, with voters saying that President Bush is being divisive and partisan rather than Democrats in Congress by a 7-point margin and those saying so strongly up 5 points since last month.

Opposition to Bush’s policies continues to grow as voters desperately call for a new direction in Iraq. A solid majority of voters want to vote for someone who will oppose the President’s policies next year and nearly six-in-ten oppose Bush’s current plan in Iraq. The intensity of opposition to his plan has grown particularly strong in the past month, from 39 to 48 percent in opposition strongly.

Opposition to Bush's Iraq plan has grown



Perhaps most importantly, even after the House passed the Iraq Supplemental Spending Bill, voters by a 10-point margin want their member of Congress to vote ‘for measures that will force the President to change policies and reduce troop levels in Iraq’ rather than ‘against measures that could undermine the President’s policies in Iraq’.

All the responses – whether to the war or health care or the primaries – are being formed in the new landscape where the country is aligning with the Democrats in new ways. The turn to the Democrats is pervasive, shaping responses in the short-term to events and long-term on the choice of leader and vision for the future. The process itself, while creating possibilities for gridlock and overreach, is full of dangers for Republicans as the president rallies his base voters. And Democrats do face the genuine challenge of how to pursue change, when the country wants more unity in addressing problems and is genuinely conflicted about the potential for more disorder in Iraq. The engagement between the Congress and the President is just beginning, which will shape the landscape too, though likely viewed through the filter of the new alignment. That is already evident in the growing preference for Democrats in the voting choices and the millions of personal decisions to fund and participate in the primaries, re-enforcing the contours in this new landscape.