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Date: August 4, 2005
To: Friends of Democracy Corps
From: Stan Greenberg
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RE: CREATING A CHANGE ELECTION
The Target Audiences for 2006

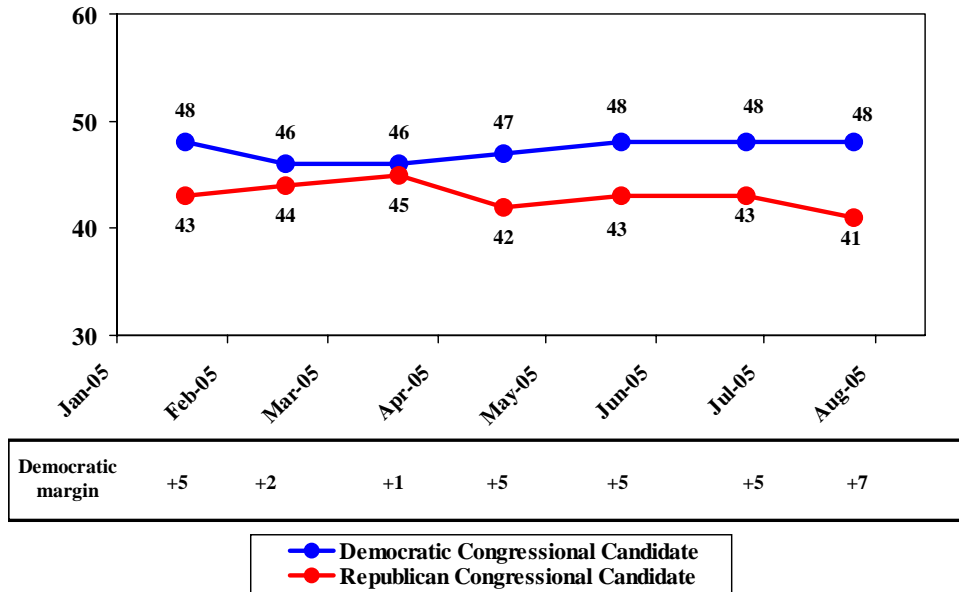
There is every reason to believe America is ready for a change election in 2006 – already evident in the Democrats’ remarkable performance this past Tuesday in the contest for Ohio-2, one of the most Republican congressional seats in the country. Voters were diverted from voting for change in 2004, but the sentiment now is much stronger, with only 41 percent consistently saying they want to continue in Bush’s direction. Only 37 percent of all voters think the country is headed in the right direction, falling to 29 percent among independents.

The Democrats are 7 points ahead in the race for Congress and, indeed, have led by an average of 6 points over the last 4 months. This is the biggest sustained lead we have seen since 1994. Everything Republican is losing attraction, from the party, to the president, to the Republican Congress. Indeed, the desire for change is greatest when focused on the Republican Congress. By 58 to 31 percent, voters say they want to go in a significantly different direction than the current Congress.

But for all that, the Democrats need to do much more to turn this into a tidal wave. Their own image has not improved and most of the gain in congressional vote margin has come from the Republicans’ decline. That has created a lot of dislodged voters not yet enamored with the Democrats and a lot of protest and change voters that the Democrats can still pick up. Democrats are still at 48 percent but need to push over 50 percent. Fortunately, over one in ten voters are “winnable” for the Democrats – ready to switch their vote and hostile to the Republicans, but not yet voting Democratic.

That landscape creates some priority targets as Democrats look across the country.

Congressional Vote



This targeting memo is based on Democracy Corps’ interviews of 5,979 likely voters, conducted over the past 4 months, where the congressional race has been largely stable.¹ This database allows a unique window into the targets for 2006.

We will focus on two broad strategic tasks: first, consolidating the voters that have defected from the Republicans since 2004 and consolidating those voters most uncertain of their Democratic votes (“the vulnerable”); second, reaching out for those voters most receptive to the Democrats (“the winnable”) and those angry voters wanting change but not yet supporting the Democrats. These are the voters that can make this a very big election.

That will lead us to focus on the following audiences critical to 2006:

¹ Based on Democracy Corps database of 5,979 likely voters, from surveys conducted April 13, 2005 – July 25, 2005. November election period data based on surveys of 5,557 likely and reported voters conducted October 24 – November 3, 2004.

Consolidating gains: the crumbling Republican vote (greatest slippage since 2004)

- White rural voters
- White mainline Protestants
- White post graduates

Winning the “winnable” and change-protest voters (want change but not yet voting Democratic)

- Midwestern voters
- White older non-college
- White seniors
- Devout white Catholics
- Unmarried women

Consolidating the Republican Losses: The Republican Defectors

The current Democratic lead in the congressional race has been produced in large part by the defection of voters who either supported the Republicans or were closely contested in last year’s presidential and congressional elections. To climb back, the Republicans must win back the confidence of these voters, which will make them the main battleground. These are the voters that have put the Democrats ahead by 7 points in the congressional contest.

SHIFT TOWARDS DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESSIONAL VOTE				
	Share of Electorate	2004 Election Vote Margin	April – July 2005 Vote Margin	Net Shift Towards Democrats
White Rural Voters	19%	-22	-9	+13
White Mainline Protestants	22%	-4	+8	+12
White Post-graduates	14%	+5	+14	+9

The most important erosion of Republican support has come among *white rural voters*. They make it possible for Democrats to be competitive in many congressional and Senate elections. As we shall see, the economy, health care and Iraq in particular matter to these voters. These voters did not support Bush enthusiastically in November, and now their growing dis-

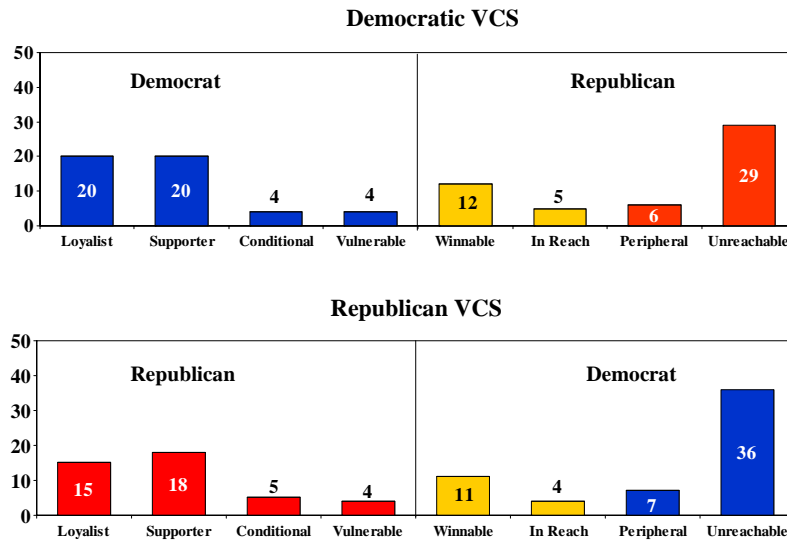
Creating a Change Election: Target Audiences

pleasure with him has spread to his party as well. The Republicans' 22-point advantage last November has shrunk to 9 points now.

The extreme conservative agenda and the war are also taking a toll on more secular and moderate voters, as reflected in the Republican losses among *white mainline Protestants* and the best educated, the *post-graduate voters*, both men and women. Both groups were closely divided in their partisan leanings in November, but now give the Democrats a solid advantage in a generic congressional contest – with shifts of 12 and 9 points respectively since November.

The defection of mainline Protestants – perhaps a reaction to the extreme evangelical politics of the Republicans in Washington – is making more and more of these voters open to Democrats. They have pulled back from the Republicans, as we indicated above, but they are also among the larger groups represented in the “winnable” bloc for Democrats. Democrats can make more gains here.

Voter Choice Scale



Winning the Change and Protest Voters

The Democrats are stuck at 48 percent of the vote, but 56 percent say the country is headed in the wrong direction and 58 percent want a new direction in the Congress. That is why

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there is such a large bloc of “winnable” voters in the graph above – voters open to supporting the Democrats but not yet supporting them. That is where the Democrats can make new gains.

PROTEST VOTERS <i>April – July 2005</i>				
	Share of Electorate	Sig. Different Direction - Continue Bush Direction	Congressional Vote Margin	Direction Margin – Vote Margin
White Older Non-College	26%	+13	-3	-16
Midwestern Voters	22%	+20	+7	-13
Unmarried women	21%	+40	+28	-12
White Seniors	19%	+11	-3	-14
Devout White Catholics	9%	+4	-11	-15

The protest voters are dominated by *older blue collar voters* and *seniors*, as well as *practicing Catholics*. These are precisely the voters that Kerry lost the most ground with last year and that are currently available to the Democrats to build a larger majority.

It also includes the *unmarried women*, who are already voting Democratic but who have the potential for an even bigger vote for change: 67 percent want to see a significant change in direction from Bush.

No region in the country has grown more disgruntled with Bush and the Republicans over the past nine months than the *Midwest* – the more industrial eastern north central states.² Although this has not yet translated into an increase in support for Democrats, our data shows that these voters are disproportionately represented among the “winnables” for the Democrats.

² This definition includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

The Target Audiences: Emerging Attitudes

The following groups emerged as key if Democrats are to consolidate the defecting voters and if they are to win over the large bloc of protest voters.

White Rural Voters (19 percent). No group of voters have moved towards Democrats since November more than these voters, who now favor Republicans by just 9 points in a generic congressional contest after giving them a 22-point advantage in November.

This shift is not due to a significantly improved view of Democrats but rather because of white rural voters' views of Republicans and the President cooling significantly over the past nine months. They now favor going in a significantly different direction from the one Bush is headed in by a 3-point margin (a 23-point swing from the election) and the percentage viewing Republicans favorably is now at just 48 percent, 10 points below their rating of the party in November.

This decline is due largely to their more critical views of Bush's policies, specifically the war in Iraq, which they now believe was not worth it by an 10-point margin after supporting it in the days leading up to the election. However, despite just 38 percent of these voters believing the economy is doing well and only 42 percent believing the war in Iraq was worth the cost, they still give Republicans a 9-point advantage in the congressional vote. With such a high level of dissatisfaction, there is ample opportunity for Democrats to not only consolidate their gains here but also continue to make inroads with these voters.

White Mainline Protestants (22 percent of electorate). Since the election, these voters have shifted towards Democrats by a 12-point margin, primarily due to their dissatisfaction with the leadership of Republicans and the President, whose direction for the country they now oppose by 21 points.

Like white rural voters, white mainline Protestants also offer Democrats the potential for future gains. They have a disproportionate share of "winnable" voters within their ranks and their support for Democrats is still well below what their dissatisfaction with Bush's policies would suggest.

The opposition to Bush's policies can be seen in the 57 percent who believe the war in Iraq was not worth the cost and the nearly two-thirds who give the economy negative ratings. White Mainline Protestants are also much more moderate on social issues than their Evangelical brethren and their strong support for issues such as stem cell research (63 percent favorable) and negative views of pro-life groups (just 26 percent favorable) puts them at odds with Bush's cultural agenda.

White Post-Graduates (14 percent). Democrats significantly improved on their 2002 performance with white post-graduate voters last November, and these voters' increasing dissatisfaction with Bush's policies and the Republican emphasis on the culture war has helped the party to expand on these gains. Democrats won this voting bloc by just 5 points in 2004 but now hold a 14-point advantage among them in the congressional vote.

Among these highly educated voters, 56 percent believe the war was not worth the cost and 57 percent reject Bush's characterization that the economy is doing well. In addition to their negative views on the economy and Iraq, the culture war has also contributed to their shift away from Bush and the Republicans over the past two years. White post-graduates' strong support for stem cell research, disdain for pro-life groups and only tepid opposition to gay marriage help explain why these voters retreated from Bush and the Republicans. It's now up to Democrats to make sure they do not move back.

White Older non-college voters (25 percent). With one in four voters falling within this group, these voters represent a potential treasure trove for Democrats. Currently these white, older non-college voters give Republicans a 3-point edge in a generic congressional contest, but the contested nature of this vote belies their strong dissatisfaction with the current direction of the country. They oppose continuing in the direction Bush is headed by a 13-point margin and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) reject the notion that the economy is improving.

These older non-college voters are also very critical of the war in Iraq, with 57 percent believing that it was not worth the cost. A sharp Democratic critique of the war in Iraq could be particularly effective at winning over the women within this voting bloc, as over 60 percent of these women believe the war was not worth it, with 55 percent believing it strongly.

Although opposition to the war in Iraq is sharper among the women, the hostility towards Bush's Social Security proposal is equally strong among both genders. These voters reject Bush's Social Security proposal by a 37-point margin, providing Democrats with another arrow to target these voters.

White Seniors (19 percent). With Social Security poised to be a focal issue in the 2006 elections, seniors' stalwart opposition to the President's proposal is an encouraging sign for Democrats and an ominous one for any Republican who has endorsed Bush's plan. Still, despite opposing the President's plan by a 35-point margin, these voters give Republicans a 3-point edge in the vote.

The Republican advantage among these voters is even more startling given their views on the economy and Iraq. An equally solid majority (57 percent) rejects both the idea that the economy is doing well and that war in Iraq was worth the cost. Bush's attempt to win over these vot-

ers with the prescription drug benefit has also failed, as less than a third of these voters have a favorable view of the program.

Despite white seniors' rejection of the Bush agenda, Democrats have failed to make any headway with these voters, as their current standing is lower than at any other time since Bush took office. Social Security, Iraq and the economy have all contributed to white seniors reversal on wanting to continue in Bush's direction and have also dimmed their view of Republicans. However, despite these shifts, both Bush and his party are still viewed much more favorably than Democrats.

With such strong opposition to the war in Iraq, Bush's Social Security proposal and his characterization of the economy, there is ample opportunity for Democrats to improve their standing, erase the Republicans' advantage and win over a majority of white seniors.

Devout White Catholics (9 percent). Republicans have succeeded in making progress with these voters in recent years, but with support for a Democratic candidate at just 38 percent, Democratic standing is still well below where it should be. This level of support in the vote is 7 points below the percentage who voted for a Democratic congressional candidate in November and 5 points below the percentage who identify themselves as Democrats.

In addition to underperforming based on partisanship and past voting history, the mood of this group is also out of line with their Democratic support. Devout white Catholics give Republicans an 11-point edge in the congressional contest but are divided on whether to continue in Bush's direction. They believe the war in Iraq was not worth the cost by an 11-point margin and reject the notion that the economy is doing well by 18 points. They are also much more favorable to a progressive view of government than most Republican-leaning voting blocs, as they prefer a government that promotes community and expands opportunity over one that emphasizes self-reliance and limited government by a 10-point margin.

Although these voters are quite conservative in their views on some social issues, their partisan leanings and views on Iraq, the economy and the role of government leave the door open for Democratic gains.³

Unmarried Women (21 percent). Despite these women's already negative views on Iraq and the economy growing even harsher over the past few months, their support for Democrats has remained unchanged since the election. Although the party still enjoys strong backing with these voters (60 percent support it in a congressional contest), their support for Democrats falls well behind their desire for change. Three-quarters now give the economy a negative rating and 71 percent believe Iraq was not worth the cost, leading to over two-thirds now opposing continu-

³ For more analysis on the white Catholic vote, visit www.democracycorps.com to read our April 2005 survey and analysis of the white Catholic electorate.

ing in Bush's direction. Democrats should capitalize on these sentiments to not only increase their support among these women but also to drive turnout among this chronically underrepresented voting bloc.

Midwestern Voters (22 percent). The Midwest is the region that offers the greatest potential for Democratic gains, with 26 percent of the parties' "winnable" voters hailing from this part of the country. The Midwest also offers strong opportunities for Democrats to gain protest voters, as two thirds give the economy negative ratings, 58 percent believe the war was not worth it and 57 percent believe the country is on the wrong track.

Their rising dissatisfaction with the current direction of the country has taken its toll on both parties, but Bush's standing has suffered most, as just 38 percent want to continue in his direction, a 9-point decline since the election. This decline for Bush is closely linked to their growing frustration with the war in Iraq, which they now believe was not worth the cost by a 20-point margin.

On cultural issues, they are no more conservative than voters overall, as their views mirror those of the national electorate. They are strongly opposed to gay marriage, but very supportive of stem cell research, and are evenly divided on the NRA and pro-life groups.

All these groups are united in their dissatisfaction with the current direction of the country, both at home and abroad, yet they remain unconvinced that the Democrats are capable of improving the situation. Democrats currently hold a solid advantage in a generic congressional contest, but if they are to make significant gains in 2006, they must tap into the frustrations of these groups and work to convince them that the Democrats are their best option to bring about the changes America needs.