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**To:** Friends of Democracy Corps  
**From:** Stan Greenberg  
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**RE: Democratic Targets: 2006**

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Democrats have made strong gains since 2004 and currently enjoy an 8-point lead in the vote for Congress over the past two months, but with the party's support at 50 percent, Democrats can clearly do better. Many more voters have been dislodged from the Republicans than have moved to the Democrats. Democrats need to reach 54 or 55 percent to match the swing that the Republicans achieved in their landslide win in 1994. That is achievable.

To determine the voter targets for the Democrats, we combined our four 2006 surveys and looked at four key target audiences:

1. ***Undecided voters.*** These are the voters dislodged from the Republicans that Democrats need to win, as well as keeping them from going back to the Democrats.
2. ***Winnable voters.*** These are the voters, not currently supporting the Democrats, but most open to doing so.
3. ***Change voters.*** These are voters who want to see significant change from Bush's direction yet who are not now voting Democratic for Congress.
4. ***Swing voters.*** These are the voters that have shifted the most since 2004 and who we need to consolidate to make sure they do not switch back.

Our analysis of those target groups leads us to the following priority target audiences for the 2006 election. Some of these have been dislodged from the Republican camp, some are swing groups and some involve consolidation of Democratic base groups. Gains in each of these areas can take the Democrats to a higher level.

### From the Republican Base and Republican-Leaning Groups

1. ***White rural voters (19 percent of electorate)***. These voters have already pulled back strongly from Republicans since 2004, but there is still room for Democratic growth here. White rural voters make up nearly a quarter of both undecideds and Democratic winnable voters, and even after their shift, their desire for change still far exceeds their support for the party. These voters are just as frustrated with the direction of the country as voters overall, and the percentage supporting Democrats trails the percentage who reject Bush's policy direction by a 8-point margin.

When it comes to Iraq, these voters no longer believe that the war was worth the cost, but continue to reject the idea of reducing troop levels, opposing it by an 11-point margin. Their conservative stances on issues such as abortion and guns do pose obstacles to Democrats, but these should be more than offset by their receptiveness to initiatives that reduce our dependence on foreign oil and their support for replacing the current prescription drug plan with a new, simpler one.

2. ***White older non-college [including older blue collar] voters (26 percent)***. Because they make up over a quarter of the electorate, no group's swing towards Democrats has been more responsible for Democratic gains than these non-college voters. In 2004, white non-college voters over 50 favored Republican Congressional candidates by an 18-point margin (58 to 40 percent), but now, just sixteen months later, that Republican advantage has disappeared, with the GOP now clinging to a 2-point lead. Iraq has certainly played a role, but rising health care costs and concern over retirement security have also had a significant impact.

There is a real possibility that Democrats could continue to improve with these voters and actually prevail with them next November, but the party's main focus should be on consolidating the gains they have already made with these voters. These blue collar voters make up about a third of the party's weak supporters, and Democrats must therefore be vigilant in preventing them from sliding back towards the Republicans.

A proposal to replace the current prescription drug benefit could go a long way towards solidifying this support, as these voters are very receptive to an alternative plan. However, that support is dependent on their continued opposition to the current plan and recently, their hostility towards the benefit has begun to subside. Democrats must therefore do a better job of highlighting how this confusing plan was written by lobbyists and therefore benefits drug companies while barring Medicare from negotiating lower drug prices. If Democrats are to retain the gains they have made among these voters, they can not allow Republicans to use the prescription drug plan to their benefit.

3. ***White college men (18 percent)***. These voters still give Republicans a 6-point edge in the vote for Congress, but this is less than one-third of the margin the party enjoyed in

2004. Although their pull back from Republicans is not quite as large as the one among white older non-college voters, it is significant and important for Democrats to preserve.

Republican's reckless spending has alienated these fiscally conservative voters and helped drive them towards Democrats, but the lack of body armor for troops and the lobbyist influence on the prescription drug bill raises additional concerns. Since these voters overwhelmingly support any attempt to balance the budget, their hostility towards the prescription drug plan is likely to only increase once they learn more about its hefty price tag.

In addition to seeking greater fiscal responsibility in Washington, these voters also recognize the importance of reducing our dependence on foreign oil and strongly favor a Democratic initiative dedicated to that goal.

### **From the Contested and Swing Bloc**

4. ***Generation X voters (18 percent)***. These voters, classified as those aged 26 to 37, are an important target for Democrats due to the fact that they make up 22 percent of all undecided voters and are 24 percent of the Democratic winnables. They overwhelmingly believe the country is off track and just 42 percent want to continue in the direction Bush is headed, yet they are evenly divided in their vote for Congress. Clearly, these voters want change but that has not translated into a preference for Democrats in the vote for Congress.

What could help Democrats change this is a plan to promote alternative energy sources or a strong Democratic stance against the cuts in student loan funding, both of which were well received by Gen X-ers. Critiques on homeland security, Katrina, and failure to provide our troops with sufficient body armor also resonated powerfully with these voters and provide Democrats with tools to further erode Republican support.

Culturally these voters are similar to the electorate overall: ambivalent on pro-life groups and the NRA but hostile to gay marriage. They are slightly less opposed to the decision to go to war in Iraq than the rest of the electorate, but are similarly divided on whether to reduce troop levels or not.

### **From the Democratic Base and Loyalist Groups**

5. ***White unmarried women (15 percent)***. These women frequently struggle with low incomes (44 percent have a household income of under 30,000 dollars) and the negative impact of Bush's policies, along with the decision to go to war with Iraq, have driven these voters away from Republicans and opened the door for Democratic inroads. These factors have allowed Democrats to expand their advantage here to 24 points – double the margin from 2004 – but the potential exists for an even stronger

Democratic performance, as these women constitute approximately one-fifth of all undecided and Democratic winnable voters.

To help shift more of these voters from the undecided and winnable columns into the Democratic one, the party can make Medicare and the prescription drug plan a major component of their outreach to these voters, two-thirds of whom are over 50. They strongly support replacing the new prescription drug plan with a simpler one that allows the government to negotiate lower prices and they are very concerned over Republican attempts to cut Medicare funding.

Critiques of the decision to go to war and the Administration's handling of it should also prove effective with these voters as nearly two-thirds believe the war was not worth the cost. They also solidly support reducing troop levels in Iraq, preferring that to staying the current course by a 10-point margin.

In addition to persuasion, it is imperative that Democrats also focus on mobilizing these voters, as they give a sizeable advantage to Democrats already and are one of the more under represented voting blocs in the electorate. Unmarried white women make up nearly 20 percent of all registered voters, but constitute just 15 percent of the electorate. Their size and potential to shift more forcefully to Democrats makes this a critical group for the party to target in 2006.

6. ***Union households (20 percent).*** Democrats currently hold the same 24-point advantage with these voters that they enjoyed in 2004, but despite their strong standing, these voters also offer the party a chance to improve. Voters in union households constitute a quarter of Democratic winnables and 24 percent of the voters who want change but are not voting for a Democrat.

Although these voters are more culturally conservative than most base democratic groups and are no more opposed to the war in Iraq than the electorate overall, their frustration over the economic policies of the current administration leaves the door open for Democrats. They are particularly supportive of a Democratic proposal to close tax loopholes that encourage outsourcing and also favor a Democratic alternative to the new prescription drug plan. These voters are also angered by the ports deal, with just under half saying that it raises very serious doubts about Republicans in Washington, suggesting openings for Democrats on homeland security.