

DEMOCRACY CORPS
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Date: November 15, 2006
To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner
From: Stan Greenberg and Ana Iparraguirre
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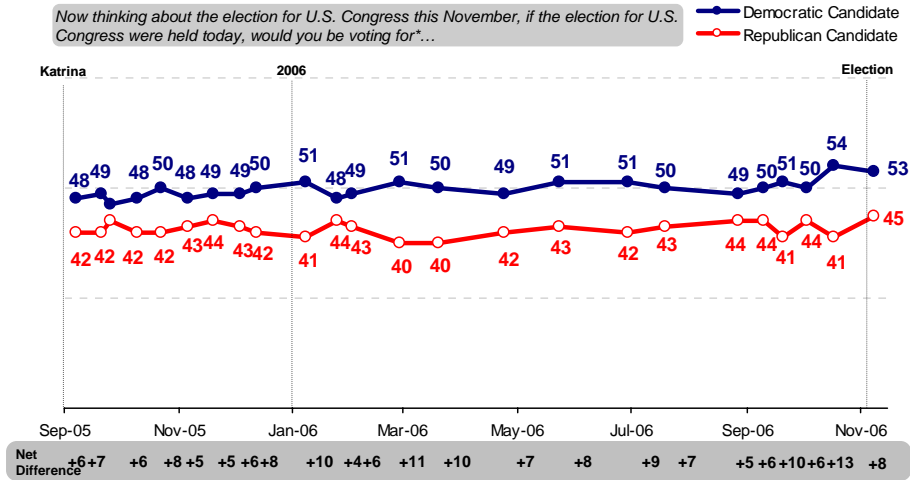
RE: THE BATTLE TO MAKE 2006 A MELTDOWN ELECTION
Second Report on the 2006 Post-Election Surveys

The 2006 election took Democrats into the majority in both Houses of the Congress, most state legislative chambers and governors' mansions, and took the Republicans to their lowest vote since 1982. This was an election about the war and the corporate special interests that crowded out the common good and the financially pressed middle class. This election brought an end to the Gingrich-Bush political model that polarized the country.

The structure of this election became very clear in the months following Katrina. At that point, large portions of the country drew fundamental conclusions about the failure of the Bush administration to act, to protect the vulnerable, make responsible decisions and act effectively for the country. Democrats assumed an 8-point lead in the named congressional ballot and that was the result on November 7th. While Republicans made some headway post-9/11, around October 1st, voters concluded the war was not being won and moved sharply away from the Republicans. That put the Democrats in a position to win the U.S. nationally and make dramatic gains in the House.

The two congressional party committees did remarkable work to win these majorities, supported by a large number of progressive groups, including MoveOn, EMILY's List, the labor movement and others. When the historic scale of Republican vulnerability became evident, the RNC and swift boat-type 527s rushed to shore up their weakest candidates; Democrats lacked the resources to do the same, at least in the House. That left Republicans with at least 10 seats they will protect next time as incumbents, rather than seats that form part of the new Democratic majority created in the 'Meltdown Election' of 2006.

The post-Katrina election: national vote for Congress

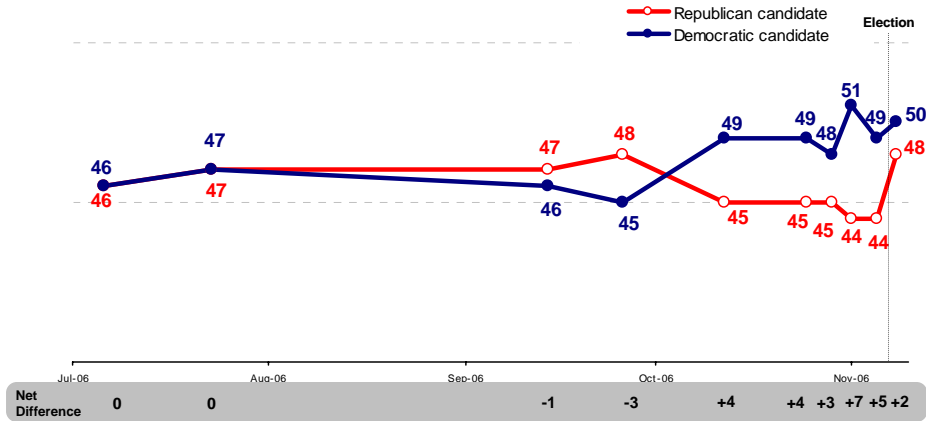


Note*: Actual names of candidates and incumbents inserted into question

Prior to this election, Democracy Corps conducted polls in the 50 most competitive Republican seats, starting in the summer. That the Democratic challengers were running even with the Republicans in these seats was already a stunning result and wake up call. But in early October, Democrats moved into the lead in these seats, which they held on Election Day.

The 50-Republican seat battleground districts: named ballot

And let me ask you again about the election in November, though with the actual candidates. If the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for...



Note*: Actual names of candidates and incumbents inserted into question

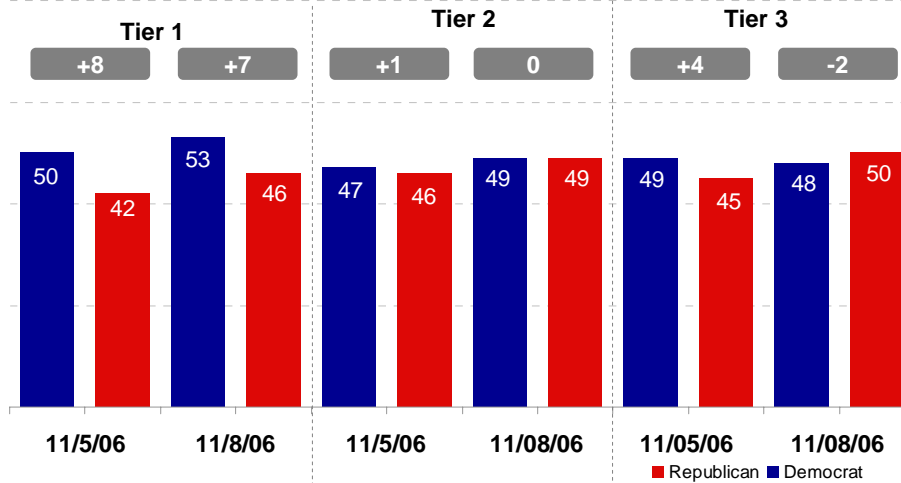
More stunning, however, was the scope of Republican vulnerability: for more than a month before the election, Democrats were running nearly as strongly in the bottom tier of least competitive seats as they were in the top tier of most competitive. The DCCC had to battle in the top races, mostly tiers 1 and 2, where Republicans had massed their resources over the year – and it was right. In the end, many were close, though the Democrats won three-quarters of the races. In the bottom tiers, the Democrats won just under half the seats, but Republicans were able to win many of them by just a few points.

In the top two tiers, consisting of 33 House seats, the last Democracy Corps poll conducted over the final weekend reflected the actual vote within a point¹. But in tier 3, where Republicans and outside groups protected the incumbents, Republicans shifted the margin by 6 points in the last days. Even with that, the Democrats only lost this difficult Republican territory by 2 points, 48 to 50 percent. As we saw with the 2nd district in Kansas, there were seats to be won beyond the 50 most competitive, as new territory opened up to the Democrats.

¹ Democracy Corps competitive GOP district survey conducted November 2-5, 2006 of 1,201 likely voters

Final poll and actual vote: Republicans soften impact in tier 3

Now let me ask you about the election for Congress held Nov. 7 in the district where you reside. Did you vote for...



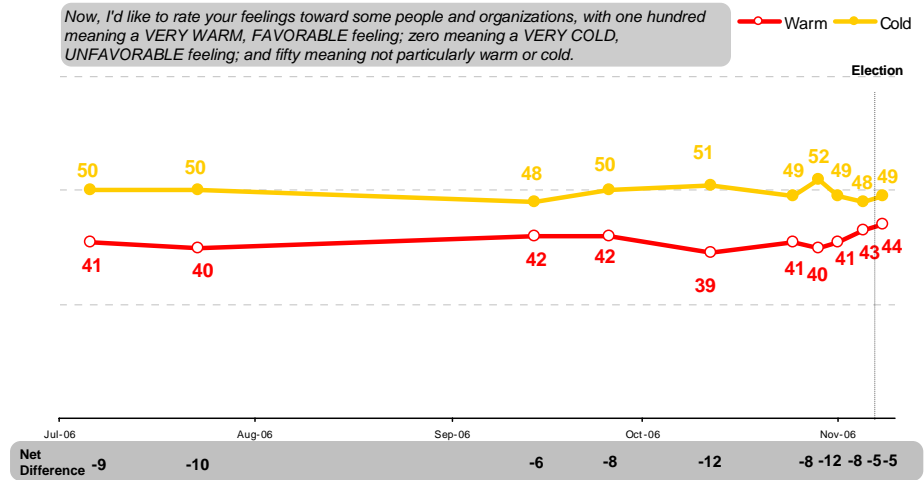
Note*: Actual names of candidates inserted into each question. Last Democracy Swing District survey conducted November 2-5, 2006 of 1,201 likely voters

Rove Strategy and 72-hour Plan

Nationally, the Republican framing of the election and high profile role of the president did not help Republicans very much; indeed, the president’s popularity fell further and brought even more intense opponents into the electorate. His late role may have helped Senate Democratic candidates in the blue states.

But the Republicans were not trying to win the country; they were trying to close Senate races in red states on the verge of being lost, and stop imminent Democratic gains in the competitive Republican seats. In both cases, those efforts likely shifted the electorate a couple of points more Republican and moved the undecided to the Republicans, particularly in the Republican-held seats. On Election Day, the Republican candidates picked up 4 points from the undecided and small parties, while the Democrats gained only 1 point. In the competitive Republican-held U.S. Senate seats, the Republicans closed the election to just a 2-point margin for the Democrats, after the Democrats had substantial leads earlier in the month.

Bush's favorability gains slightly in GOP districts

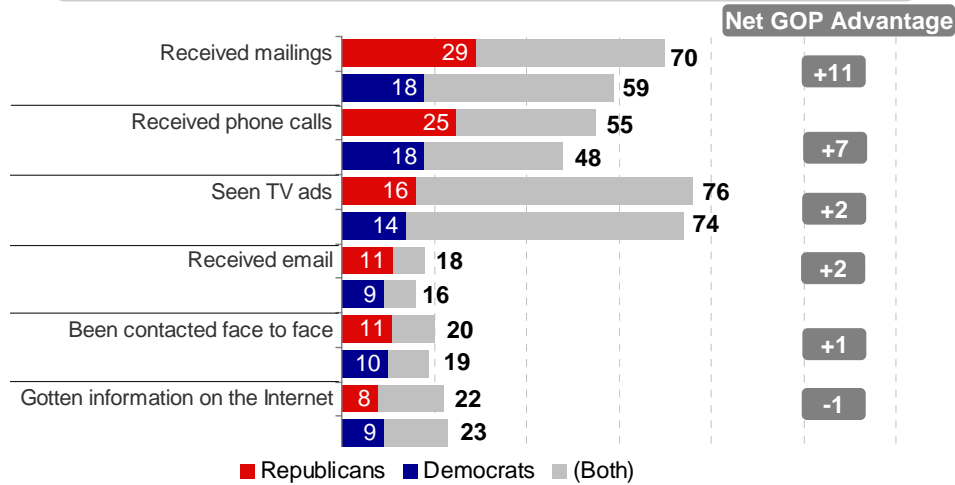


In this battle for the 50 Republican seats, Democrats made major gains despite Republicans committing massive resources to holding on to these seats. It is difficult to know who won the television war, as 60 percent simply report seeing ads from both sides. But the Republicans dominated on the amount of mail and phone calls, with many more voters reporting intensive efforts on behalf of the Republicans. We were surprised that this advantage was maintained even in the top tier of most competitive races, suggesting Democrats were right not to let up even here.

The Democrats and Republicans operated at parity on email and Internet and on face-to-face campaigning.

Campaign activity in the GOP districts

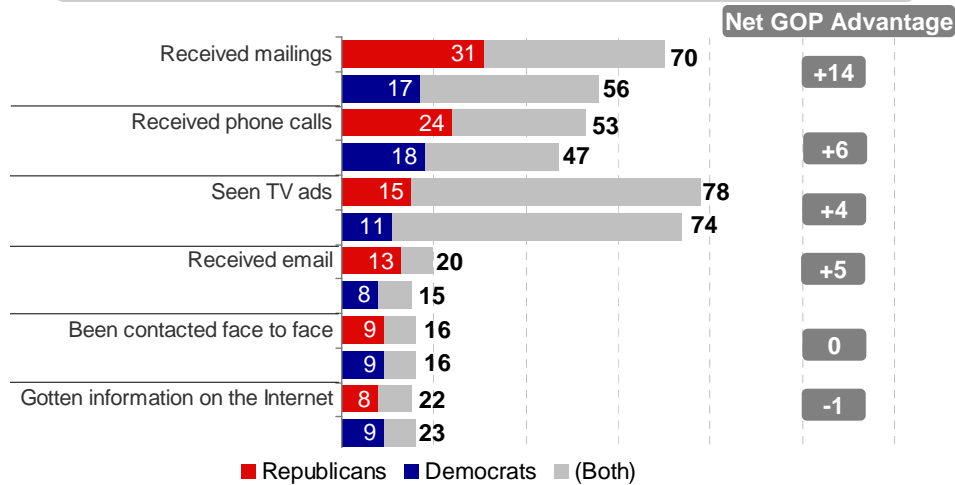
Over the course of the campaign, have you (insert item) more from those who want you to vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate? Would you say you have (insert item) a lot by the candidate's supporters or a little?



Note*: Actual candidate names inserted into question. This question asked only in GOP Swing districts

Campaign activity in the GOP districts – Tier 1 districts

Over the course of the campaign, have you (insert item) more from those who want you to vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate? Would you say you have (insert item) a lot by the candidate's supporters or a little?



Note*: Actual candidate names inserted into question. This question asked only in GOP Swing districts

Republican efforts made the contest for the U.S. Senate closer and likely enabled the Republicans to hold at least 10 seats in the House, given the difficulties of Democrats to bring new resources into play in the final month.

The problem with the Rove strategy is that it focuses on the trench warfare while missing what is going on in the war. The base strategy, focused on Iraq, won back base voters in the final weeks but fell short of 2004 and 2002; it was more than counter-balanced by gains in the Democratic base and above all, by the massive swing of independents, likely locked in by these efforts. The polarizing Republican close to the 2006 campaign reinforced the meaning of this 'Meltdown Election' that took Democrats into unheard of territory and gave them control of Congress. The battle for Congress in 2008 and the presidency will take place on an expanded battleground.