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**Date:** November 14, 2005

**To:** Friends of Democracy Corps

**From:** Stan Greenberg  
James Carville

**RE: CHANGE HAS CONSEQUENCES**  
**Democrats need to do better**

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The growing desire for change and anger with Washington and the disengagement from the Republicans and Bush have put the country at the edge of a political upheaval. The change mood has consequences, as Democrats win every argument by significant margins in the races for House and Senate. But the voters are ready for more change than that – enough to change control of the Congress – if the Democrats use every controversy to separate themselves from the Washington mess and define the choice, themselves and their policies. The voters are closing down on the Republicans and desperate for an alternative – as reflected in this survey.<sup>1</sup>

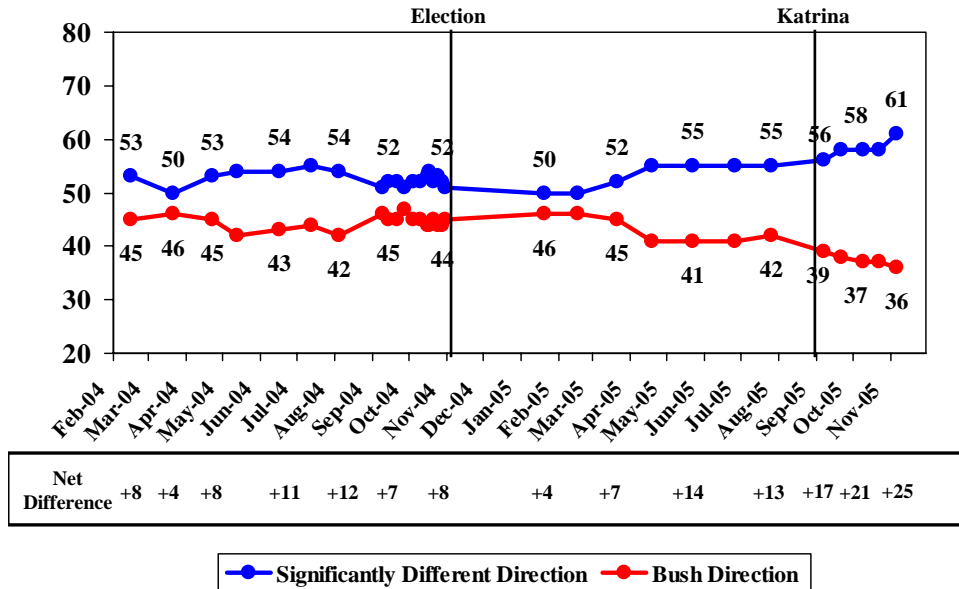
The message of this poll is actually very simple. Voters are deeply discontented on Iraq, the economy, gas prices and health care, with the corruption and the failure to address problems. All this continues to deepen and the change mood is dominating our times. Barely a third want to continue with the country's direction or that of the Bush administration; only a quarter, the direction of the Congress; only a quarter now strongly identify with the president. Bush has lost the country but also his loyalists. The result is that the Democrats right now have twice as many enthusiastic supporters as the Republicans. As we said, change has consequences.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Based on results of Democracy Corps survey of 1,015 likely voters, conducted November 2-6, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Please see the full set of power-point slides to see the changing country in the most graphic way.

**Bush direction vs. Significantly different direction**



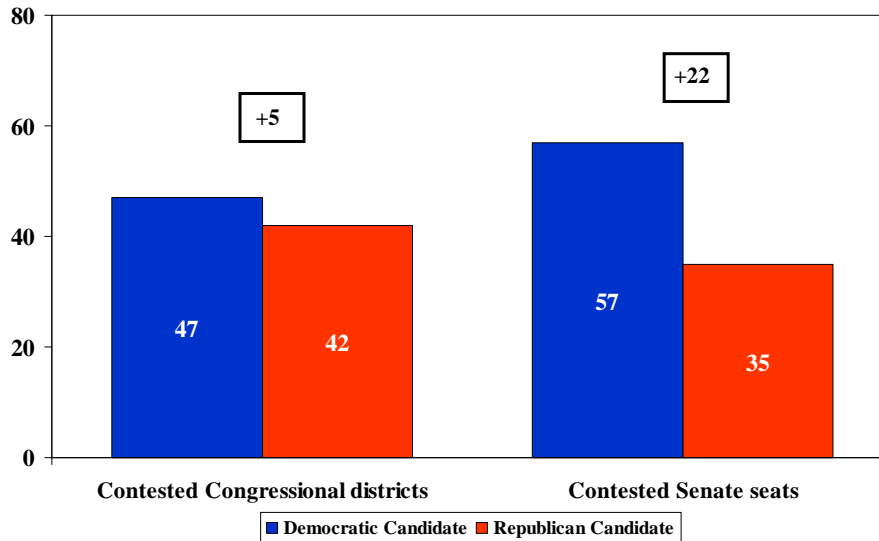
Contributing to the rising discontent on Iraq and the economy is a rising distrust of the administration and Congress on corruption and honesty. Other studies have documented the rising proportion who think the president misled the country on the war. This survey from Democracy Corps shows how the indictment of the Vice President’s chief of staff elevates the sense of wrong doing on fundamental things at the heart of the White House.

**The Position of Democrats**

This survey and the others we have conducted over the last two months together show the Democrats with a very substantial lead in the contested Senate races – using the actual candidate names and looking at 6,000 interviews. In the same exercise, the Democrats have moved into a slight lead in the contested House seats – enough to make gains but not yet enough to take control. But Republican incumbents are only getting 54 percent of the vote on average – suggesting that a lot of their seats could be below 50 percent. If the Democrats take advantage of their opportunities, the playing field in 2006 can be considerable larger.

### Vote in contested House and Senate races

Actual candidates named – 6,000 interviews\*



\*From combined database of 6,047 interviews, conducted September 5<sup>th</sup> – November 6<sup>th</sup> 2005  
Contested Senate races: FL, MD, MI, MN, MO, MT NE, ND, NJ, OH, PA, RI, TN, WA, WV, WY.

The Democrats’ overall image is better than the Republicans, as we saw in our last survey, but that does not mean Democrats have improved their standing. Yet there could be no better moment. Independents are unhinged: 39 percent are voting Democratic but 73 percent want a significant change in the direction of the Congress. There are almost twice as many voters newly winnable for Democrats as winnable for Republicans.

And as this poll shows, every issue is now an opportunity for definition.

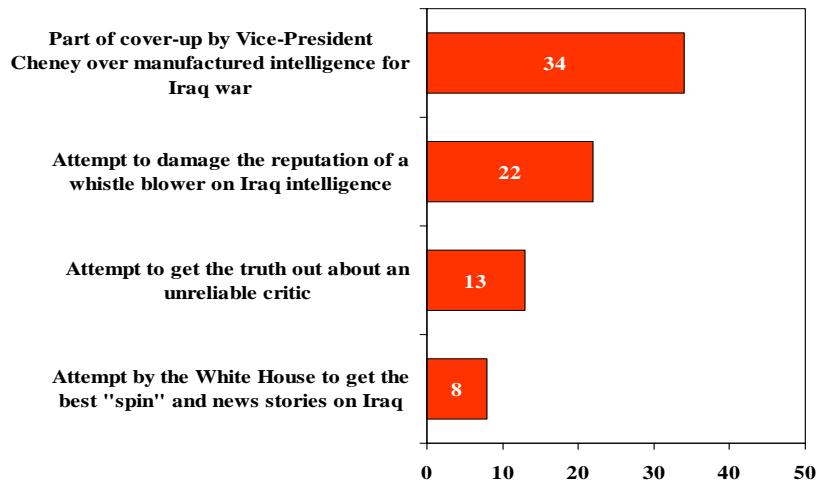
### White House Indictments

The images of Rove and the Vice President continue to worsen. Voters think the Libby indictment represents a serious crime: by 52 to 30 percent, even before we describe the details. When the indictment is described as “obstruction of justice and perjury” about the disclosure of the identity of a CIA agent, 72 percent say this is a serious crime. The details are important – both for the underlying crime and for the link to the effort to mislead the country on the reasons for war.

Voters are much more inclined to elevate than to diminish the significance and scope of this White House scandal, and this issue is an important priority for this period. The dominant interpretation for voters puts Libby’s actions as part of a cover-up by the Vice President over

manufactured intelligence for the Iraq war.<sup>3</sup> The second strongest interpretation puts Libby at the center of an effort to punish a whistleblower on Iraq intelligence. Only a small minority goes to the more charitable interpretations: that this was an attempt to spin a story or to expose an unreliable source. Voters are prepared to elevate this issue.

### Interpretation of Libby matter



*"Which ONE of the following best describes what the Scooter Libby problem is all about?"*

### The Alito Nomination

The Alito nomination landed somewhere between the initial position of Miers and Roberts, though closer to Miers. Only 48 percent say the Congress should confirm him right now. Opposition rises considerably after voters hear of his record, even after the President makes his case.

The January hearings provide a strong opportunity to underscore the greatest doubts about Alito – that he lacks compassion and empathy for the ordinary person, respect for women, and is too willing to invade individual liberties and privacy. These arguments are stronger than ones that emphasize his ideological position or that describe his appointment as a sop to the conservative special interests, like Pat Robertson.

<sup>3</sup> If we assign responsibility for the cover-up to both President Bush and Cheney, that is still the dominant interpretation, though mentioned by 30 percent (as opposed to 34 percent with Cheney alone).

### The Democratic Alternative

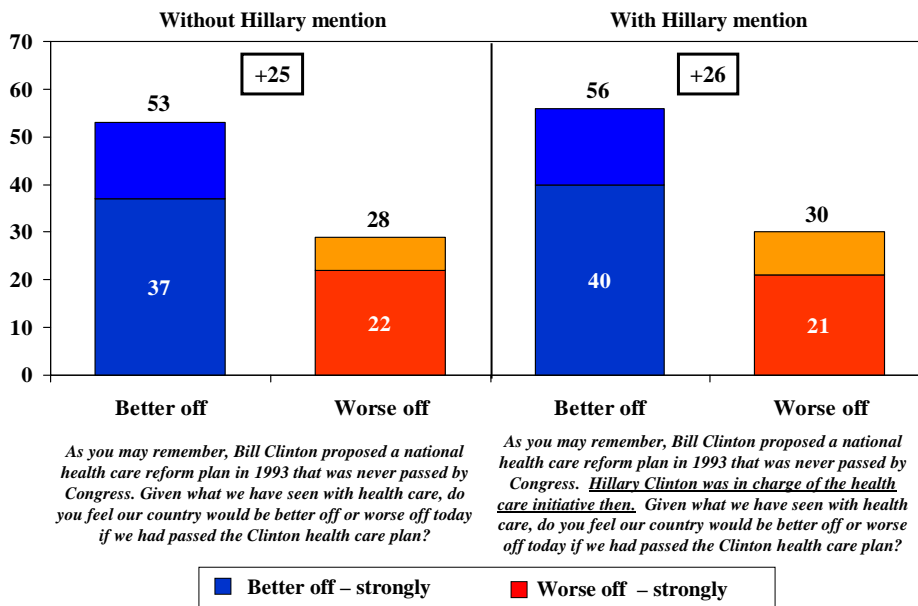
Democrats are dominant on almost every policy choice before the country, as voters are looking for a new direction for the country. This is most evident on health care and energy, but also on the entire narrative related to our priorities and theirs. And for sure, the country is not prepared to listen to the Republicans any time they make the case for progress and continuing their current course.

The starting points are health care and energy.

On health care, we reminded voters that Bill Clinton proposed a national health care reform plan in 1993 that Congress did not enact. We asked whether the country would have been better or worse off had Congress acted then on Clinton’s plan. The verdict was not close: 53 percent better off and only 28 percent worse off. But then, for half the respondents, we noted that Hillary Clinton had been in charge of the plan. That did not change the judgment at all, with the number saying, “much better off” rising to 40 percent.

The country is clearly ready for a new, Democratic approach on health care.

### Clinton health care plan



The country is also ready for a new approach on energy. We tested a broad range of Democratic initiatives, but nothing scored as high as bold initiatives on energy. The strongest emphasized energy independence, with a focus on tax incentives for hybrid cars, stricter fuel efficiency standards, and major investments in American technology for alternative energy. The next strongest initiative offered a windfall profit tax on oil companies, with the funds used to develop more affordable, alternative energy.

An overall battle of message and priorities puts the Democrats ahead of the Republicans by 15 points – almost double the vote in the ballot for Congress. In short, an issue debate increases the Democrats’ standing and puts the party in a stronger position to achieve a real upheaval in 2006.

In this survey, we constructed a working message that attacks the Republicans with failing to address the problems that matter to people (health care costs and dependence on foreign oil), choosing instead to focus on Terri Schiavo, protecting DeLay, and cutting veterans benefits. The Democrats promise a first 100 days centered on passing an increased minimum wage, getting Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices, and imposing a windfall profit tax on oil companies to fund alternative energy. A majority of 52 percent are much more or somewhat more likely to vote for that candidate – 16 points higher than for the Republican message on progress and priorities.

The specifics are less important than the recognition that the playing field is very tilted today. The mood for change in Washington has consequences, and voters are listening to the Democrats when they articulate their plans.

That gives us a three-month period with the chance to challenge the White House cover-up on Iraq, to advance our ideas on energy and health care, to present our plans for change and to expose the Alito’s indifference to people, women’s rights and privacy. Those issues are incendiary at a time when voters want to throw out the current crowd in Washington.