

DEMOCRACY CORPS
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To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner
From: Stan Greenberg and Amy Gershkoff
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RE: 1994

Report on the Final Survey in the 50 Competitive Republican Districts

It is very hard to look at the most recent Democracy Corps survey in the 50 most competitive Republican-held districts finished last night and not conclude that we are headed toward a 1994 election – with the Democratic majority approaching that of the ‘Gingrich Congress’. The named Democratic vote for Congress has moved up from a 3-point lead to 7-point margin since Sunday, with the named Democrat for the first time moving over 50 percent (51 to 44 percent). For the first time, the Democratic candidate is ahead on average in the bottom tier of least competitive races.

The generic congressional ballot has moved up to 11 points – up 3 points from Sunday and another 3 points from the week before.

The gap in interest in the election (those ranking their interest as “10” on 1-to-10 point scale) between Democratic and Republican voters has grown from 7 to 14 this week.

The trend in the final week on most factors, as we will elaborate below, favors the Democrats, including independents’ support, enthusiasm, and handling key issues, including taxes, and above all, the Iraq war. The 2006 election is rapidly moving toward being a referendum on Iraq.

We do want to underscore in this last survey conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps some reasons why you should believe this is real:

- This survey, unlike any other public survey, asks the congressional vote using the actual names of each candidate, meaning this survey fully reflects any advantages for incumbency. We also ask the generic ballot for a read of overall partisan sentiment, but named vote is more likely to tell us what happens.

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- This survey is based on a 1,200 sample of likely voters conducted over three nights in the real battleground districts and will likely provide a more reliable read on the state of the race in the battleground.
 - This survey was not conducted on Halloween, which is a notoriously inaccurate night for polling.
 - The survey asks job approval and the thermometer rating for the incumbent by name, which produces a very disturbing result for the Republicans. Both measures are net negative, despite the power of incumbency. Incumbent approval is only 43 percent, with more disapproving, and indeed only at 44 percent in the tier 3 races.
 - While the survey shows a shift to the Democrats in the congressional ballot (named and generic) this week, the respondents have not shifted a point on party affiliation or recall of their 2004 vote. That should emphasize that this is a real, rather than a too-Democratic, sample. These voters identify with the Republicans by 2 points, but in the generic, want to vote Democratic for Congress by 11 points.
 - We conducted 400 interviews last night after two news cycles of Kerry stories. While the story clearly broke through – over 20 percent of respondents in an open-ended question on what is happening in the campaign mentioned him – the story has not helped Republicans, and the calling on the last night was no different than the results from the first two nights. It is the highest recall for the partisans, those identifying as Democrats or Republicans, yet independents show no interest in it.
 - The shifts in this final week are almost entirely among independents who are giving the Democratic candidates landslide margins.

Why?

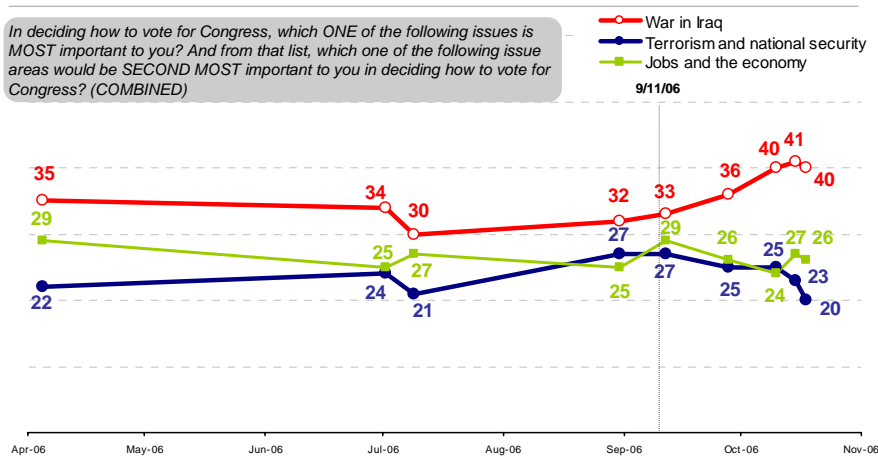
Iraq. Despite the increased titters about Senator Kerry, there is every reason to believe that this week has further contributed to making this election a referendum on Iraq. First, it keeps Bush on center-stage, and he is not popular in these Republican-held districts (45 percent strongly disapprove and only 24 percent strongly approve). It is hard to have a base strategy without a base. Second, the president is telling the American people to vote next Tuesday on who you trust on Iraq. And third, it has crowded out any other issue, including national security and terrorism and the economy and taxes.

The trends on Iraq promise disaster for the Republicans, as we can see in the results below:

- The president's approval on Iraq is only 39 percent in these Republican districts, unchanged from last week, with no evidence of growing confidence as they define the election on Iraq.

- Iraq rose in the last two weeks to be the dominant issue in people’s congressional vote (40 percent 1st or 2nd most important issue), while national security and terrorism have decline to 20 percent – after being at almost parity at the time of 9/11 commemoration. Terrorism has dropped to the 4th most important voting issue.
- Almost 70 percent of Iraq voters are voting Democratic in the named ballot.
- Most important is the new majority of 53 percent in the two polls over the last week for reducing troop levels, with only 43 percent for staying the course for stability – a break with years of being evenly divided. That 10-point margin for reduced troop is greater than the margin in the congressional vote – suggesting this debate helps Democrats in these Republican districts.

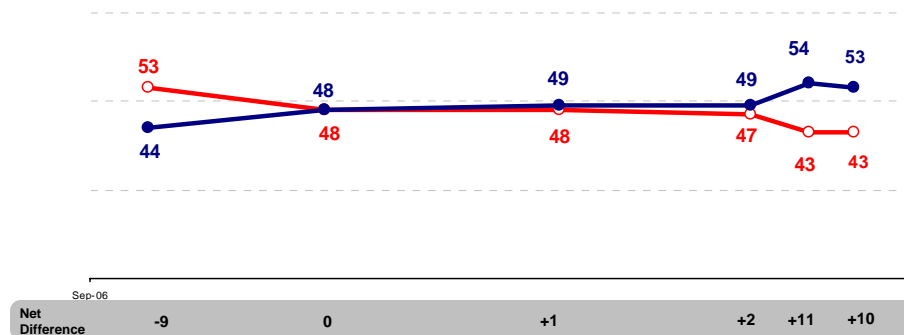
Iraq holds as main concern in GOP districts



Sudden majority for reducing troop levels

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold.

- We must stay the course to achieve stability and finish the job in Iraq
- The current course cannot bring stability and we need to start reducing the number of U.S. troops in Iraq

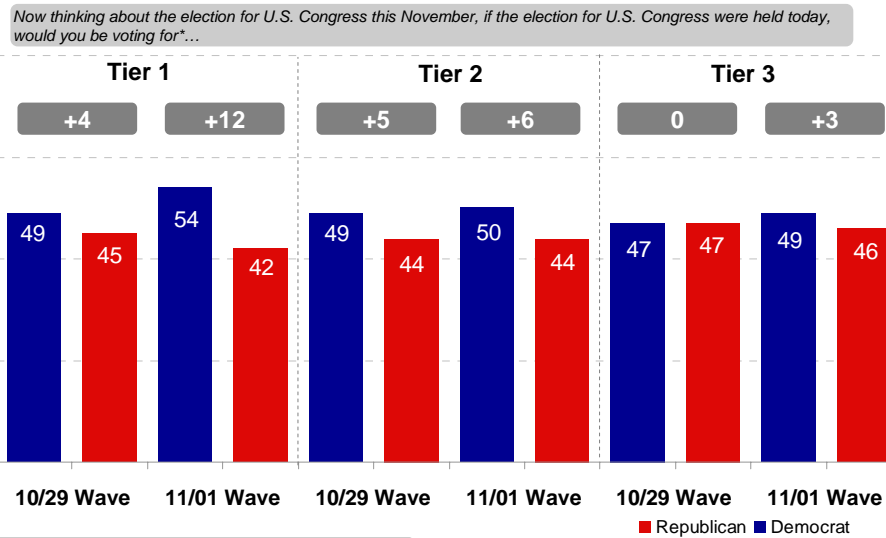


While Iraq is the dominant voting issue, we should not neglect what is happening in these Republican districts on other issues. The Democrats have settled into a 9-point lead on handling the economy and have moved into a 5-point lead on taxes, even as the Republican candidates press hard on that attack. One of the opportunity costs of the president's nationalizing of the Iraq issue is the failure to make taxes matter for the Republicans.

The Vote

The vote is trending Democratic in this last week, and importantly, Democrats have moved into a clear lead in tier one races in the last few days and now have a 3-point lead in the least competitive tier. The incumbent Republicans are only polling at 40 percent in tier one and 46 percent on average in tier three, a difficult place to be for an incumbent.

Democrats lead in all tiers in congressional vote



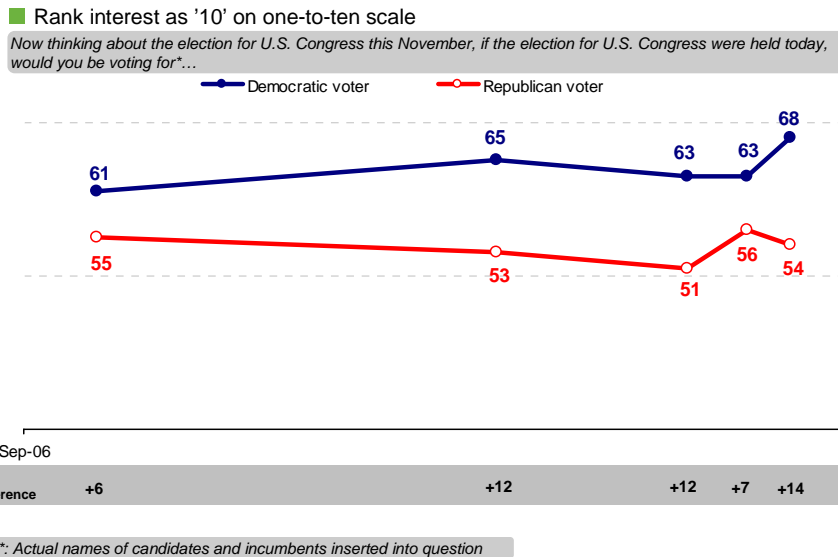
The Democrats are ahead by 23 points (56 to 33 percent) with independents in the named congressional ballot. They are winning unmarried women by 22 points, but are also breaking even with married women.

Engagement and Turnout

We know that in 2004 the increased Republican energy and perhaps organization shifted the playing field from a 3-point lead in Democratic party identification to even in the final week of the 2004 election, which was evident in our poll conducted at this time. This would be a big election in 2006, even if there is such a shift, but that is hard to imagine. This election is on Iraq, not national security; one-in-five Bush voters are not voting Republican; and the trend of this week is moving in the opposite direction.

- 85 percent of those voting Democratic say they are “absolutely certain” to vote, compared to 83 percent of Republicans.
- 68 percent of Democratic voters score “10” very interested in the election, compared to 54 percent of Republican voters.
- 66 percent of Democratic voters say they are “more enthusiastic” than usual, compared to 49 percent of those voting Republican

Democratic voters lead in interest



It is very hard to see how these numbers and trends translate into a deep new Republican engagement in the last few days of the election.

With five days to go to the election, these Republican-held seats, already in jeopardy before this week, are moving to the Democrats. Virtually all the underlying trends on significant indicators have made it more likely this is a wave election that we see only once in a decade. With 1994 as our backdrop, we see this Republican battleground deeply upset about the direction of the country and the Republican Congress and increasingly prepared to vote for a sweeping change in Washington.