

DEMOCRACY CORPS
GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

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Date: October 19, 2006
To: Friends of Democracy Corps
From: Stan Greenberg and Amy Gershkoff
James Carville

RE: MELTDOWN II
Report on Democracy Corps' Latest National Survey

When we wrote the “Meltdown” memo last week based on the poll of 49-Republican congressional seats, we never thought there would be a “Meltdown II.” But the latest Democracy Corps survey of likely voters conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner shows a further surge that takes the Democrats to unimagined levels just a few weeks ago.¹ This poll is absolutely identical to the NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll on almost every indicator, giving us great confidence in the reality.

Democrats now lead the named-congressional horserace by 13 points, a surge in support that takes the Democrats up to 54 percent of the vote and doubles their lead from two weeks ago. For the first time, the Democrats’ lead in the named-ballot is above the generic lead, suggesting the candidates are adding to the Democratic trend.

In the U.S. Senate, the Democrats have also made gains in the Senate races, noting that in the competitive Republican-held Senate seats, the named-Democrats are up by 10 points (52 to 42 percent).

There will be a wave on November 7th, with the Iraq issue critical to its strength. Strategically, we think Democrats need to assume this is inevitable and then focus on the few things that take the election into more and more districts and states. The Democrats need to talk about the change they will bring, starting with major efforts to achieve energy independence.

Iraq is the main driver of the meltdown for the Republicans, underscoring Tom Friedman’s commentary yesterday that we may be witnessing “the jihadist

¹ Democracy Corps conducted a national survey of 1,000 likely voters October 15-17, 2006.

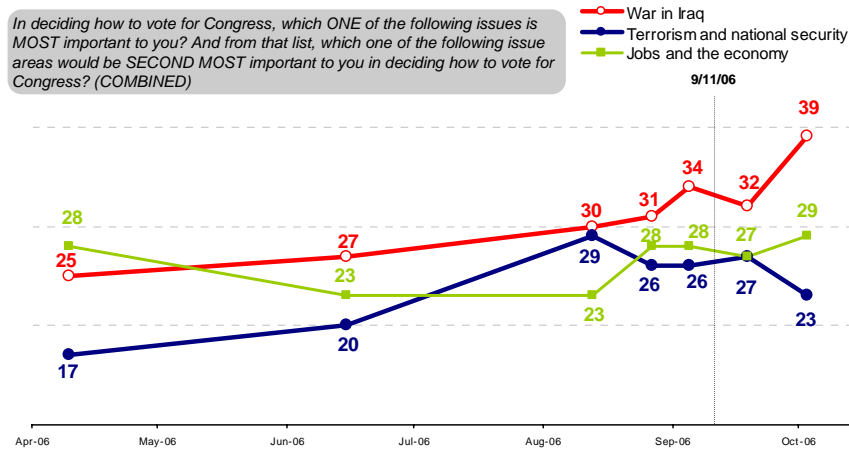
equivalent of the Tet offensive.” The electoral crash has been accompanied by a surge in anger over Iraq, reaching epic proportions: only a quarter of likely voters now have positive feelings about the war.

Discontent with Iraq war reaches epic proportions



In the month since the 9/11 anniversary, there has been a surge in voters saying Iraq is the issue that will be most important in their congressional vote: 39 percent name it as the first or second most important issue, up 7 points in two weeks, even as voting on the war on terrorism and national security declined as a voting issue: for independents, even more - 41 percent - say Iraq will decide their vote. Republican attempts to nationalize the election around the war on terrorism have nationalized the election around the war in Iraq instead.

War in Iraq dramatically increases in importance



The rising role of the Iraq issue is driving up the Democrats margin multiple ways:

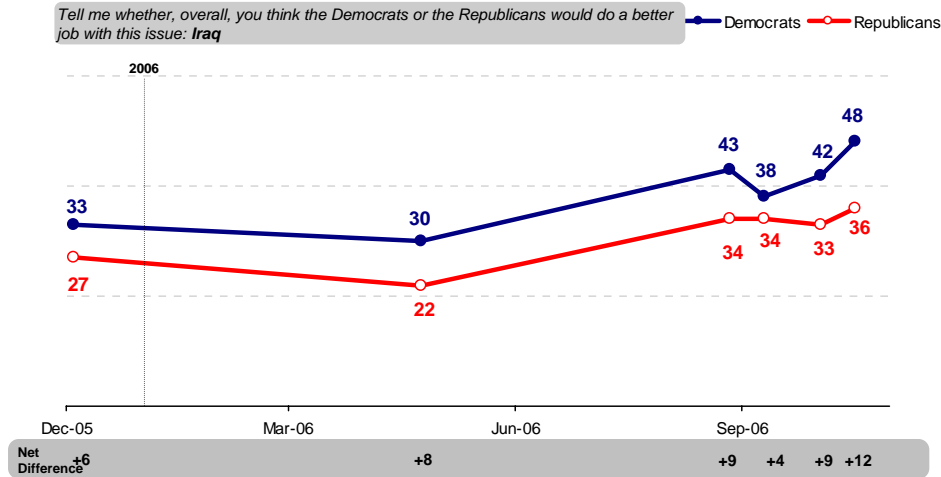
- Those who say Iraq is the single most important issue in their vote give over 80 percent of their votes to the named Democratic candidate for the House and the Senate. By contrast, the smaller number of terrorism/national security voters give the Republicans 71 percent of their votes in the House races.
- Those who say Iraq is the single most important issue are much more likely to vote in this election: 67 percent choose the highest interest level (10 on a 10-point scale), compared to 58 percent of all voters. They also say they are more enthusiastic about this election (compared to 46 percent of all voters and 41 percent of Republican voters).

In open-ended questions about why the country is off track, what they wish the candidates would be saying or doing, why they are supporting candidates, and why they are more enthusiastic to vote, nearly half the electorate mentioned getting out of Iraq in response to one or more of the questions, far outpacing mentions of any other issue.

Nearly three-quarters of likely voters nationwide report knowing someone personally serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. Among white rural voters that number swells to 80 percent, which may explain why this formerly Republican base group – who gave Republicans a 17-point edge in 2004 – now give *Democrats* a 14-point advantage.

An important change in October is the growing number of voters (48 to 36 percent) who now say the Democrats will do a better job on Iraq. That is allowing the rising anger to find an outlet in support for Democrats. The 12-point margin grows to 15 points with independents.

Overwhelming belief Democrats do better job in Iraq



The Issues and Framework for the Close

Iraq is the main driver and no doubt drawing sharp contrasts on the issue is the most important thing to accomplish.

We also think it is critical that voters at the end hear that Democrats want to change things, overcome the partisan bickering, and get important things done; above all else, address energy independence.

With this major shift in the electorate, many voters find themselves about to vote for the Democrat, but do not know a lot about him or her. Indeed, while the Republican image has crashed to historic lows, the Democrats’ image has only modestly improved, just barely a net positive. Nonetheless, people are voting for change, an important theme in the open-ended questions; they are voting to end partisan bickering and having a government that works for people, not special interests that will stop fighting and get the real business done.

While Iraq is driving the change right now, the open-end comments in the survey reveal a lot of frustration with the economy, a middle class squeezed by prices (health care and gas) that are rising and wages falling, jobs that don’t pay as much and are leaving the country. As many voters mention this collection of economic issues as mention Iraq. Indeed, some of the frustration with Iraq is the belief that Iraq keeps the country, the Republican Congress and the president from addressing, or even thinking about, the squeezed middle class. In the survey, a large majority said they wanted this election to be about the financial pressures on people, rather than security and terrorism (55 to 39 percent). Democrats now have a 14-point advantage on handling the economy.

Our research shows that a candidate that says he or she will go to Washington and change things there, and will work together with both parties to do major things to move the country toward energy independence has a powerful impact on the vote. It is the one issue that gives people hope we can be more secure, get beyond Iraq, and also have a stronger economy that creates American jobs. Focusing on this issue at the end gives voters a window into the kind of change Democrats will bring.

As we wrote last week, Democrats should expand the playing field, and begin to think about the 2006 election as a chance to not only take back both houses of Congress, but also to win a sizeable enough majority and mandate to be able to enact their agenda for a new direction for America.