

DEMOCRACY CORPS
GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

Founders
James Carville
Stanley Greenberg
Robert Shrum

Executive Director
Jim Gerstein

Senior Advisor
Karl Agne

Research Conducted by:
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

Date: October 24, 2006
To: Friends of Democracy Corps
From: Stan Greenberg, James Carville and Ana Iparraguirre

RE: SENIORS ALERT
Report on a Special Panel Survey of Senior Voters

As you all appreciate, there is no group more important than seniors in this year's election, because they form such a large portion of the electorate in an off-year. The 2006 election is no different. But seniors are also important because they have been volatile over the last three elections – in 2004, Kerry lost them by 5 points and Democrats lost them by 6 after Gore broke even in 2000. In 2004, seniors broke against the Democrats in the last week.

A month ago, Democrats held a 6-point edge with seniors, which is critical to maintain or expand. That is why Democracy Corps conducted this special panel survey two weeks before the election – re-interviewing the seniors we had surveyed in our special seniors' survey one month ago. The goal was to see if seniors are breaking or leaning toward either party at the critical close.

In this panel survey just completed, Democrats are maintaining a 5-point lead (49 to 44 percent). On most questions, they are tilting in neither direction, except for they are right now breaking against the president and, above all, against the Iraq war. The biggest change in the poll is the near 10 percent jump in people citing Iraq as the main issue in their vote. While there is no movement in overall judgments about the parties, they remain extremely negative about the Republican Congress.

While the vote has not yet shifted, attitudes toward Bush and the war have changed, making a further shift possible as seniors focus more on Iraq as a voting issue.¹

- **Almost every measure in the survey remained stable in this survey since we last polled seniors in mid-September.**
- **But Bush's job approval became more negative.** Disapproval of the president's job increased 3 points while strong disapproval is up 4 points, with 51 percent of seniors now strongly disapproving of how Bush is doing his job.
- **The war in Iraq drives seniors' growing dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs.** As the war in Iraq rises as the most important issue in seniors' minds and favorability toward the war drops sharply, it is important to keep Republican candidates associated with 'staying the course' in order to increase Democrats' support among seniors in the final week.
 - The war in Iraq has risen as the most important issue in seniors' minds as 44 percent mention it as their first or second most important voting issue -- up 9 points since September. This makes Iraq the top voting issue, 17 points ahead of the next most important issue in people's congressional vote.
 - Net favorability toward the war in Iraq dropped 10 points in one month, with just over a quarter of seniors reporting favorable feelings toward the war.
 - Democrats are well-positioned to take advantage of seniors' growing dissatisfaction with the war as they hold an 11-point edge over Republicans on handling the situation in Iraq, up from an 8-point edge a month ago.
 - Seniors are desperate for a different direction in Iraq, with 61 percent favoring a proposal to get Iraqis to take responsibility, rebuild our alliances and make America energy independent over the Republican 'cut and run' attack – with support up 8 points from September.
- **Medicare and the privatization of Social Security is the second set of issues that will capture seniors' interest in the last week.** For those voters who say 'Medicare and Social Security' are the main issues in their congressional vote, the new prescription drug plan is extremely unpopular: almost two to one negative, with 35 percent strongly negative. (Among all voters, the prescription drug program is modestly but not decisively more negative.) For those seniors voting Social Security and Medicare, the Democrats' opposition to privatization is the best reason to support a Democrat.

¹ Panel-back of likely voters over the age of 64 conducted by Democracy Corps. The first wave of the panel was conducted among 1,200 likely voters over the age of 64 in September 7-12, 2006 and the second wave was conducted among 418 likely voters over the age of 64 on October 17-22, 2006.

- **Immigration remains an important issue for seniors** A strong stand on immigration helps Democrats with seniors, and it remains one of the issues that also helps Republicans. Democrats are actually preferred on handling this issue and it is cited as an important reassurance.
 - Democrats have a strong stance on immigration and the ability to deliver a powerful message which can give candidates an edge over their Republican opponents. Indeed, seniors favor Democrats over Republicans on immigration and a Democratic message can beat a Republican attack when it highlights support for a stronger, more effective security along our borders.²

As the campaign comes to an end, Democrats have the opportunity to open their lead with senior voters by presenting a clear contrast on the issues that are most important to seniors – Iraq, Medicare and Social Security and immigration. Democrats are well-positioned to hold their lead in November and win the support of this high turnout bloc of voters.

² Democracy Corps national survey of 1000 likely voters, conducted October 1-3, 2006.