

**DEMOCRACY CORPS**  
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**To:** Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner  
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**RE: DO YOU WANT A BIG ELECTION?**  
**Report on the Latest Survey in 50 Republican-Held Competitive Seats**

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This latest survey of the 50 Republican competitive congressional seats confirms the stability of the Democrats' lead in these races, but there are important changes that could impact the size of the majority in the House and the prospect of winning the Senate. This survey of 1,200 likely voters conducted over the last three days shows the Democrats actually extending or solidifying their lead in the top two tiers of most competitive races, but losing ground in the third, most Republican tier where incumbents are improving their job approval and the mood is slightly less negative. In sum, this poll shows an increased likelihood of Democrats winning the House, but Republicans perhaps putting some limits on the damage in the most Republican districts and states.

In the top tier of the most competitive 16 seats, the Democrats have increased their lead to 8 points, 52 to 44 percent; in the second tier of 17 seats, the Democrats have kept their lead of exactly 6 points (50 to 44 percent). In both cases, the named Republican candidate is only getting 44 percent of the vote. In the bottom tier of 17 seats, Republicans have shifted the margin by 5 points and are ahead, 48 to 45 percent. While Republicans are making headway here, with the incumbent below 50 percent, they could still lose some seats.

Whether Democrats capture a good majority of those top two tiers and do better than expected in the bottom tier – and thus, have a big election – depends on their listening to voters, particularly independents, who are caught in the line of fire. This poll shows that Democrats can solidify the top tiers and realize gains in the third if they close this campaign positive, say they are done with the attacks and partisan bickering, and say they will work with both parties to get things done – on achieving a new direction in Iraq, raising the minimum wage, reducing health care costs and moving America toward energy independence. As you will see below, candidates (asked by name) of both parties are being viewed as running negative, not positive campaigns; and independents who strongly

favor Democrats in virtually all polls also are significantly less interested in this election.

It is hard to underestimate the power of a Democrat changing course and running self-consciously positive at the end of this election. A strong Democratic “choice” message defeats a strong Republican “choice” message by 6 points at the end of the poll, but a positive new direction message defeats the same Republican message by a striking 18 points. It is stronger by a lot in all three tiers, but particularly in the third. As attacks and tit-for-tat ads have rapidly diminishing returns, only a shift to a positive close gets Democrats the big election the environment allows.

### **The Campaign’s Close**

When the Democratic candidate ran this tough choice message (or ad), it won over the Republican’s, also posing a hard choice message by 6 points. That reflects the vote overall and does not change where the race now stands – after these districts have been flooded with negative ads.

#### **Republican “Choice” Message**

(The named Republican candidate) says, we have a clear choice. My opponent raised taxes and wants to repeal the tax cuts for families and small businesses. Well, our economy can't afford that. My opponent wants to 'cut and run' in Iraq - which will help the terrorists and put our security at risk. I will go to Washington independent-minded and thinking about your family - how to keep taxes low, the economy growing and our country safe.

#### **Democratic “Choice” Message**

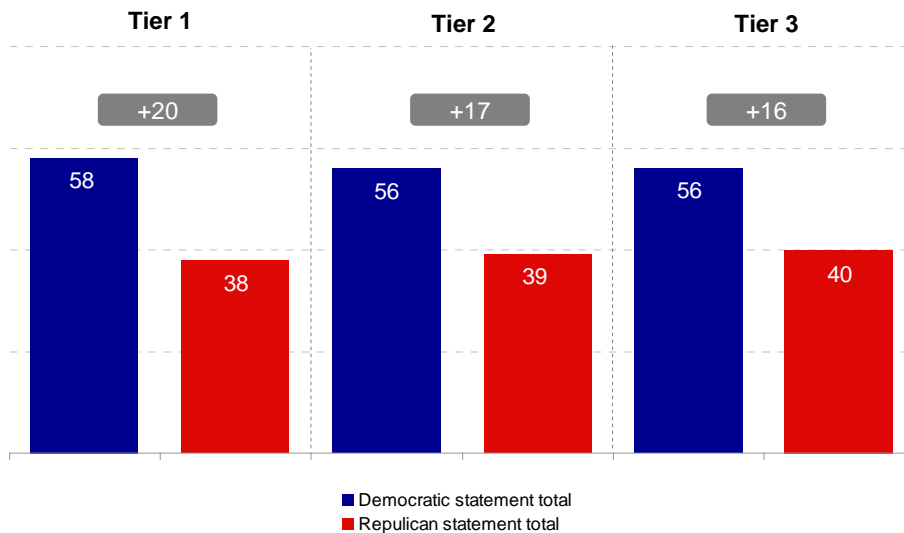
(The named Democratic candidate) says, we have a clear choice. My opponent supported the drug companies rather than seniors on lowering drug costs, gave members of Congress six pay raises, and supports President Bush in just staying the course in Iraq. Well, I want to change things in Washington. We should negotiate lower drug prices for seniors, increase the minimum wage and move to a new direction in Iraq and energy independence.

But the non-partisan positive message below, against the same tough Republican ad, wins by 18 points. It takes the election into all tiers and turns the election among independents into a landslide.

### The Democratic Non-partisan Positive Message

(The named Democratic candidate) says, the attacks taking place in this campaign are exactly what's wrong with Congress. I'm not going to be part of it. Instead, I'm going to work with both Democrats and Republicans to get things done. We must put the public ahead of parties so we can achieve a new direction in Iraq, raise the minimum wage, reduce health care and gas prices, and move America toward energy independence.

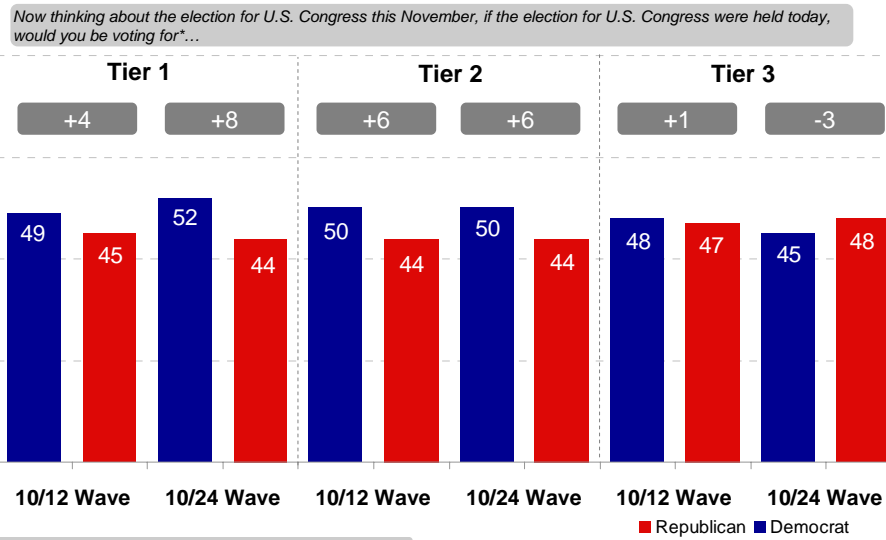
Anti-partisanship message stronger against GOP message



### The State of the Race

It is hard not to be impressed with how the Democrats are doing in the first and second tier Republican seats, where the Democrats have extended the lead in the top tier and held the lead in the second. Unless there is a very skewed distribution across these races, that would translate into the Democrats winning the great majority of these 33 seats.

Democrats lead in congressional vote



In the third tier, the bottom 17 seats, there is evidence of the Republicans getting their act together: right direction up from 34 to 37 percent, named-incumbent approval up 6 points to 48 percent; positive feelings on Republican Congress up 6 points (to 39 percent); and 8-point net improvement on Republican handling the economy (44 percent for Republicans and 38 percent Democrats). That suggests the White House does have a strategy. It is not helping them in the most competitive districts, but may be limiting damage in the most Republican areas and states. Even with these gains, however, their incumbents are not particularly strong or the mood very positive.

If the race is frozen in time, the Democrats will do well enough but there are some things potentially impacting the race, suggesting that Democrats should not just coast. Democratic interest in the race (“10” on 1-to-10 scale) has dropped marginally (2 points), after rising over the last couple of months; at the same time Republican interest is up marginally (3 points) after declining earlier.

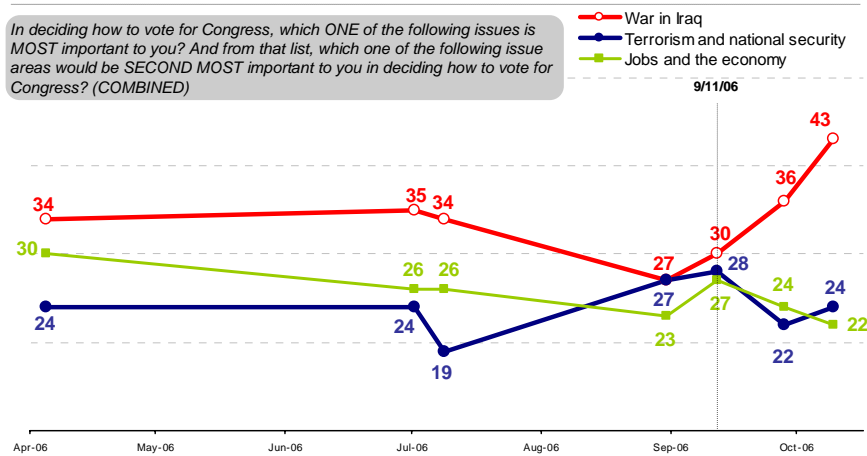
It is worth noting that while only 14 percent of the electorate thinks the vote will not be counted accurately, one-quarter of Democratic voters agree. We do not know whether that is motivating or de-motivating.

It is also worth noting that a large majority of voters (54 to 32 percent) believe the Democrats will win control of the U.S. House of Representatives. Not many are very certain, but we believe this is probably motivating for Democrats – almost 80 percent expect a Democratic win. A majority of Republican voters expect the Republicans to win, but over 40 percent are unsure or expect a Democratic House after November.

**The Issues: Iraq**

Iraq continues to grow as the voting issue for this election, particularly in tier one and tier two. Indeed, in tier one, 43 percent say it is the issue their voting on – up 7 points from last week. It is now 19 points ahead of national security. In tier two, 40 percent say Iraq is their voting issue, up 4 points. It is even up in tier three, and this election is moving toward being a referendum on Iraq.

War in Iraq as concern in Tier 1



**The Campaign on the Ground**

In this poll, we took a check of how much voters are hearing from each campaign. It is very difficult to tell about television, as they report lots of ads from both. It appears that Republicans have a significant 13-point advantage on mail (62 percent received equal or more amounts from Republicans and 49 percent received equal or more amounts from Democrats), while the Democrats have a visible 5-point advantage on face-to-face canvassing (16 to 11 percent). The two are at parity on phone and Internet, though only one in five report any Internet campaign contact.

Democrats hold lead on face to face contact, parity on Internet

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?

