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**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** Democracy Corps

**RE: EDWARDS / CHENEY DEBATE SURVEY**

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Voters viewing Tuesday night's debate gave Dick Cheney a slight edge over John Edwards with 40 percent saying Cheney won the debate to 37 percent for Edwards. However, key swing audiences – including undecided voters, independent voters and voters in the battleground states – saw Edwards as the winner. As a result, the presidential race - which was tied before the debate – remained even after the debate. Edward's performance resulted in minor gains for the Kerry/Edwards ticket on most issue comparisons with the Bush/Cheney ticket, while Cheney registered gains on a number of personal attributes.

This analysis is based on the only same-night nationally representative sample of 1,000 likely voters who watched Tuesday's debate. Data was collected by Knowledge Networks, a survey research firm that maintains the only nationally representative web-based survey platform.

While Cheney was viewed as the winner of the debate overall, there was a large gender gap in perceptions of the victor. Men saw Cheney as the winner by 47 to 31 percent (-16 points), while women viewed Edwards as the winner by 43 to 34 percent (+9 points). Seniors gave the debate to Cheney by a large margin (33 to 45 percent).

Among other key groups, however, Edwards was seen as the winner:

- Among independents, Edwards won by 37 to 34 percent;
- Among undecided voters<sup>1</sup>, Edwards won by 43 to 25 percent;

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<sup>1</sup> There were only 60 undecided voters in the sample, so a small sample size caution is in order. However, these results closely track a larger survey of undecided voters conducted by CBS News that showed Edwards winning the debate by 41 to 28 percent.

- In the battleground states, Edwards led by had 40 to 38 percent.

In the end, the debate shifted the Bush/Cheney ticket’s share of the vote by just one point (from 48 to 49 percent), while the Kerry/Edwards ticket went up 2 points (from 47 to 49 percent). Cheney enjoyed an 8-point increase in his favorability rating (from 38 to 46 percent favorable). Perhaps more importantly, he registered a 10-point jump in the number of voters who described him as likeable (from 45 percent describes well to 55 percent).

Edwards did not record significant gains in his favorable or personal ratings, but his performance resulted in a number of gains for the Kerry/Edwards ticket on issue comparisons against the Bush/Cheney tandem.

<b>SHIFT ON BETTER JOB ON THE ISSUES</b>			
<i>Net comparison Kerry/Edwards better job or Bush/Cheney better job</i>			
	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Net Shift</b>
	<b>Kerry - Bush</b>	<b>Kerry - Bush</b>	
Homeland security	-11	-5	+6
Being on your side	5	10	+5
Has clear plans on what he wants to achieve	-2	2	+4
Taxes	-2	2	+4
The war on terrorism	-10	-7	+3
Offers a hopeful vision	5	8	+3
Raising middle class standards	12	14	+2
Iraq	-4	-3	+1
The economy	8	8	0
Healthcare	18	15	-3

Edwards was most successful on homeland security, where he cut a solid Bush/Cheney advantage (38 to 49 percent) to just 5 points (42 to 37 percent). Indeed by the end of the survey, 48 percent thought the phrase “has good plans for Iraq” described John Kerry well (+4) and a majority (51 percent) said Kerry would make America safer and more secure (+2).

**The Vote**

As noted above, there was little overall movement in the vote. Both candidates maintained solid partisan support, while Kerry/Edwards made some inroads among independents:

<b>Pre and Post Debate Vote: KERRY VS. BUSH</b>			
<i>Percent responding</i>			
	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Independents</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<b>Pre Debate</b>			
Kerry	88	45	5
Bush	8	43	94
<i>Net</i>	<i>+80</i>	<i>+1</i>	<i>-89</i>
<b>Post Debate</b>			
Kerry	90	49	5
Bush	9	45	94
<i>Net</i>	<i>+81</i>	<i>+5</i>	<i>-89</i>
<b><i>Net Shift</i></b>	<b><i>+1</i></b>	<b><i>+4</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>

Perhaps more importantly, Edwards performance resulted in undecided voters breaking towards the Kerry/Edwards ticket. After the debate, 45 percent backed Kerry, to just 31 percent for Bush. White union households also moved towards Kerry, increasing his margin from +3 (48 to 45 percent) to +9 (54 to 44 percent).

### Perceptions of the Candidates

Cheney began the evening with a small majority of voters (51 percent) giving him unfavorable ratings. His performance appealed to many voters, as the percentage giving him favorable ratings jumped from 38 to 46 percent. White non-college women were most responsive (+11, from 34 to 45 percent favorable). Neither favorable nor unfavorable perceptions of Edwards changed in any significant way.

<b>CANDIDATE FAVORABILITY: EDWARDS VS. CHENEY</b>		
<i>Percent responding</i>		
	<b>Edwards</b>	<b>Cheney</b>
<b>Pre Debate</b>		
Favorable	42	38
Unfavorable	40	51
<i>Net</i>	<i>+2</i>	<i>-13</i>
<b>Post Debate</b>		
Favorable	44	46
Unfavorable	42	45
<i>Net</i>	<i>+2</i>	<i>+1</i>
<b><i>Net Shift</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>+14</i></b>

Cheney also scored some gains on personal attributes. As noted above, the percentage describing him as “likeable” jumped from 45 to 55 percent. He also made smaller gains on a number of other key attributes:

- making America safe and secure (+5, from 50 to 55 percent)
- shares your values (+4, from 43 to 47 percent)
- honest and trustworthy (+4, from 47 to 51 percent)

Edwards’ attacks against Cheney did not do much to increase the already high negative assessments of the Vice President. For example, the percentage saying he “misled the country on many important issues” remained unchanged, as did the percentage saying Cheney was “Doing the work of Halliburton.” Cheney, however, was unable to reverse many of these perceptions, resulting in a majority of voters continuing to have doubts about Cheney’s corporate connections and willingness to go to war.

<b>SHIFT ON CHENEY ATTRIBUTES</b>			
<i>Percent saying it describes Cheney well</i>			
	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Shift</b>
Supports big corporate interests rather than the public interest	61	59	-2
Too ready to go to war	60	57	-3
Vice President for the oil companies	58	56	-2
Doing the work of Halliburton	53	54	+1
Misled the country on many important issues	50	51	+1

Cheney was more successful in his attacks against Edwards as a flip-flopper and – to a lesser extent – Edwards’ experience. By the end of the debate, 47 percent said the phrase “Flip-flops on important issues” described Edwards either very well or well (+11 from 36 percent before the debate). Voters were also split on whether or not Edwards has what it takes to be President. While a small majority (52 percent) agreed with the phrase before the debate, that dropped to 49 percent by the end of the debate. Almost all of the movement here was among non-college men, who rejected the phrase by -9 points at the outset (45 percent describes well to 54 percent not well) to -22 points by the end (39 percent well to 61 percent not well).

Voters did not register strong movement one way or the other on Edwards’ positive attributes. He maintained overwhelmingly positive scores on being honest and trustworthy (60 percent describes well, -4 from the pre-debate) and fighting for the middle class (65 percent describes well, +4 points from the pre-debate). There was smaller movement on other attributes, but majorities felt that most phrases tested continued to describe Edwards well.

<b>SHIFT ON EDWARDS ATTRIBUTES</b>			
<i>Percent saying it describes Edwards well</i>			
	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Shift</b>
Fights for the middle class	61	65	+4
Honest and trustworthy	64	60	-4
Shares your values	53	55	+2
Strong leader	57	54	-3
Will make America safer and more secure	51	51	0
Has what it takes to be President	52	49	-3