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To: Friends of Democracy Corps

From: Stan Greenberg
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RE: EMERGING DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNITIES
“Confirmed”
Report on a New Survey of the American People

In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, the American people rallied in support of their President and government. But the people were not passive combatants in this new national struggle. As we reported in our earlier memorandum (“Politics After the Attack,” www.democracycorps.com), Americans have begun to underscore certain values and recognize key national challenges which require greater attention to community and government. We suggested that Democrats – unified in their commitment to America’s war on terrorism – were better positioned to give voice to the new national mood.

This past week, Democracy Corps conducted a national survey of the American public to examine these issues. This national survey of 1000 likely voters was conducted December 2-4, 2001, and is available in its entirety from Democracy Corps.

This survey confirms that the politics of this emerging period is one of opportunity for Democrats. At a very fundamental level, Democrats are poised to represent the nation as it meets the great challenges ahead. Democrats are in such a position because they instinctively and proudly helped create the new national unity on security issues. And the war on terrorism continues. At the same time, the country faces rising challenges at home. And here, on issue after issue – from tax cuts and the budget to Social Security and health care – Democrats are more in touch with the American people.

Confirmed: Unity and Trust on Security

Unlike Vietnam, these attacks and the ensuing war have united America, which makes Americans proud. Along with that unity is near universal support for the President – 82 percent approval, unchanged in the last month. No one is interested in hearing attacks on the President, even if there are doubts close to the surface.

This unity encompasses security issues – which therefore lack a partisan character. Democrats, according to the survey, are seen as:

- *Patriotic* (86 percent say this describes the Democrats, including 47 percent who say it describes them “very well”)
- *Trying to make America more secure* (77 percent, 32 percent very well)
- *Supported the President in the war on terrorism* (85 percent, 46 percent very well)
- *Came together to unite the country* (81 percent, 43 percent very well)

While the Republicans score higher on each item, Democrats have crossed well over the threshold on being trusted to keep the nation secure. There is no partisan security issue in this new period – and the country is thankful for it.

Confirmed: Government and Tolerance

This survey, as well as our last, underscores the need for Democrats to support the right kind of tax cuts, avoid pork-barrel spending, and preserve long-term fiscal balance. Nonetheless, there is further confirmation in this survey that the public is thinking more favorably about government. The thermometer rating for “the federal government” is 60.4 degrees (58 percent warm/favorable and only 19 percent cold/negative). The net favorability score is up nine points from surveys prior to September 11th. Two-thirds of the public support government intervening to help people in need.

The nation is at war with an intolerant movement that violently imposes its religious views on others, particularly women. Nearly two out of three Americans agree that “we should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards, even if we think they are wrong.”

Confirmed: Emerging Domestic Issues

There is no let-up in the public's commitment to the war. Nonetheless, the survey emphasizes the re-emergence of domestic concerns and the domestic issues in the context of the Congress.

- While terrorism and security are absolutely top concerns with the public, other issues have begun to re-emerge in the public consciousness. In our earlier poll, 52 percent cited terrorism and security among their top two concerns, but that has fallen to 35 percent in early December.
- The economy and jobs have emerged as the public's top priority (37 percent).
- There has been a significant rise in concern on other domestic issues, particularly health care (up nine points) and education (up seven points).
- By an extraordinary 58 to 18 percent, voters are looking for a member of Congress who focuses mainly on the economy and domestic issues, rather than one who focuses primarily on security and terrorism. In fact, the number looking for a member prioritizing security has dropped seven points in the last month.

Confirmed: Republicans Fundamentally Out of Sync on Budget priorities

The Democracy Corps survey provides a cascade of findings that the American people are thinking very differently from the Republicans in Congress about the budget and the big choices ahead – particularly on tax cuts and spending priorities.

The starting point is the deficit, which people think has re-emerged largely because of the new spending requirements following the attack. A significant number (18 percent) cite last year's budget as the cause, but more important is the sense that the country faces both short and long-term spending needs. The Republicans' intention to pursue both big tax cuts and spending increases in light of these needs is about to crash against the public's strong instincts that these actions would be irresponsible.

First, the public overwhelmingly believes the tax cuts should be delayed or canceled.

- Just 38 percent think the new rounds of tax cuts should happen, compared to 55 percent who say they should be delayed (37 percent) or cancelled (18 percent).

- Only 30 percent support the tax cuts if it means further cuts in domestic programs, while 59 percent would delay or cancel in that event.

Second, the encroachment of the projected budgets on Social Security represents a landmine for the Republicans.

- If the federal budget is forced to draw on the Medicare and Social Security trust funds, the public – by 38 to 18 percent – says this would be caused by the actions of the Republicans.

And third, the public has not forgotten the now-delayed demand for a range of domestic initiatives, including prescription drugs.

- By an astonishing 73 to 22 percent, the public says “this is the time for the government to create a prescription drug benefit for seniors,” despite the budget pressures described earlier. In fact, 61 percent strongly agree that this is the moment for action.
- By 51 to 40 percent, the country thinks this is not the time to partially privatize Social Security.

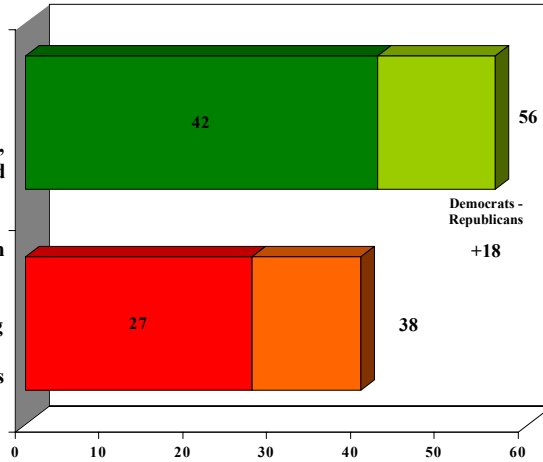
Confirmed: Republicans Out of Touch on Aggressive Tax Cuts

In the survey, voters were given a choice of Congressional candidates’ statements centered on the core tax issue. In the question, it states that the Republican supports an aggressive tax cut approach – maintaining the planned tax cuts and favoring new ones to stimulate the economy. The Republican candidate supports restraining government spending, but also supports meeting our Social Security commitments and increased funding for education and domestic security. The Democratic candidate proposes rolling back the tax cut for the top one percent to restore Social Security and fund domestic initiatives. The Democrat wins handily, 56 to 38 percent.

The Tax Choice

The Democratic candidate says cancel the planned massive tax cut for the top 1 percent, those earning over \$375,000 and use the money to restore the Social Security trust fund and support education, a prescription drug benefit for seniors, and new domestic security measures.

The Republican candidate says, maintain our planned tax cuts and make further tax cuts to stimulate the economy. By restraining federal government spending for domestic programs, we can continue to meet our Social Security commitments and to fund our education and domestic security initiatives.

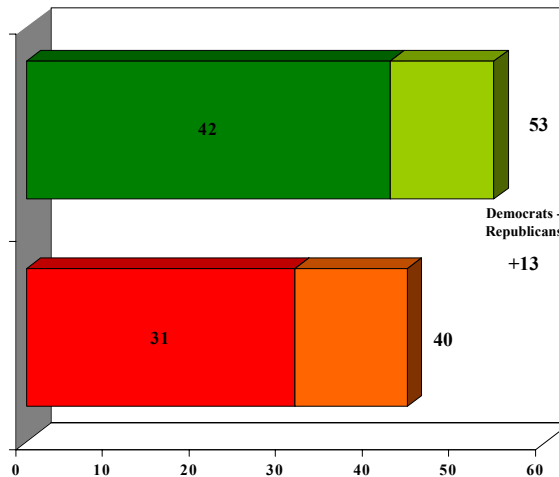


We dressed up these distinct policy directions in the appropriate rhetoric and themes and the results were the same: the Democrat wins 53 to 40 percent.

The Tax Choice With Political Themes

The Democratic candidate says, we have important needs as a country and must renew our economy. We should cancel most of the massive tax cuts scheduled for next year. Almost half of the money goes to those earning over \$375,000 a year, which is irresponsible in these times. By canceling these massive tax cuts for the wealthiest, we can continue to cut middle-class taxes, restore the Social Security trust fund and support other needs, including prescription drugs, education, and improved domestic security.

The Republican candidate says, we need to revitalize our economy, which requires putting money back in the hands of individuals and business investors. We must maintain our planned tax cuts and make further tax cuts that will stimulate the economy and expand investment. To achieve that, we need to restrain and cut federal government spending, while continuing to meet our commitment to Social Security and to fund our education and domestic security initiatives.



Confirmed: President Bush Has No Special Domestic Traction

This is a moment to support the President. Even on domestic issues, Democrats should focus on the Congressional Republicans, who represent a gigantic target.

Nevertheless, there are dramatic results here to suggest that the President does not have special standing on domestic issues. Voters were uncertain of his domestic priorities before September 11th, and that remains true today.

We presented the exact same candidate contrasts as above, but this time, the Democrat was a Democratic candidate for President and the Republican was George W. Bush. The results, frankly, took us by surprise.

- When presented as contrasting policy directions, with Bush championing his aggressive tax cuts, he loses to the Democrat by 53 to 38 percent. His vote is not a point stronger than the generic Republican candidate tested above.
- When we presented contrasting approaches and themes, as above, with the President talking about the importance of returning the money to the people and encouraging investment, the President loses to the Democrat by 53 to 40 percent. Again, the President does no better than the generic Republican candidate for Congress.

Those Republicans who think the President will come to their rescue a year from now should think twice about their current course.

Confirmed: War Profiteering

The public, according to the Democracy Corps focus groups, was bewildered by the range of policies advanced by the Republicans in the House. This new survey confirms the depth of those doubts and the power of attacks centered on them. Voters clearly think elected officials have an obligation to work for all the people, not for special interests seeking to take advantage of the current rush to help.

The strongest attacks are set out below, each of which raises serious doubts for well over two-thirds of the public:

- The candidate rushed to get funds to the airline and insurance industry and to use 75 percent of the economic stimulus for corporate tax breaks. But the candidate did not think it was important to help the ordinary people who lost their jobs after September 11th - three-quarters of whom were ineligible for unemployment insurance. (76 percent serious doubts, including 33 percent very serious).

- The candidate voted to use one hundred and sixty billion dollars from the Social Security trust fund to pay for big tax cuts for the wealthiest. He should be listening less to special interests and more to the rest of us who count on Social Security. (72 percent serious doubts and 35 percent very serious)
- The candidate gave into the lobbyists and supported a permanent tax break of 20 billion dollars that encouraged companies to invest in foreign countries, rather than in the United States during our economic problems. (71 percent serious doubts and 33 percent very serious)
- This is a time when we need leaders who will act for the whole country. But lobbyists for the special interests got in their way. This candidate voted to bail out the airline industry, but not to help laid-off workers. He supported an economic stimulus plan that gave away 75 percent of the money in tax cuts for corporations, including a 15-year retroactive tax break of 1 billion dollars to Ford and 1 and half billion for IBM. This is a time to represent the country, not the special interests. (69 percent serious doubts and 27 percent very serious)

Only An Opportunity

At the present time, the President is immensely popular and feelings about the Republicans are somewhat elevated. Nonetheless, that has not translated into an accompanying Republican advantage on critical issues that are likely to frame the political debate over the next year. In fact, the country is evenly divided on which party to support for Congress and on which party to turn to on the economy and the budget.

Even now, Democrats have a small advantage on which party is addressing the country's domestic problems and which one is "on your side." But the Democrats will make significant gains – not by trying to work these small numbers to their advantage, but by identifying the big opportunities emerging in this period. Democrats need to clearly stake out their ground on the tax and economic battles ahead, and on budget priorities like health care and Social Security. Democrats can and should support the President abroad while standing up for their principles here at home. The country is ready to be called to their side.