

DEMOCRACY CORPS  
JAMES CARVILLE ♦ STANLEY GREENBERG  
10 G STREET, NE ♦ SUITE 400 ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20002  
202-478-8330 (TEL) ♦ 202-289-8648 (FAX)  
WWW.DEMOCRACYCORPS.COM

**Date:** October 19, 2004

**To:** Friends of Democracy Corps

**From:** Stan Greenberg  
James Carville

**RE: KERRY SMALL LEAD CREATES BIG OPPORTUNITIES**  
**Report on the State of the Race After the Presidential Debates**

---

The close of the debates has moved John Kerry into a small lead in the latest Democracy Corps polls, 50 to 47 percent, which puts him in a strong position to win on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>1</sup> The race is still close and the Democrats still need to win the final battle over mobilization, but they go into this phase with many advantages over the Republicans. Indeed, the race has consolidated after the debates in many ways that make it harder for Bush to catch Kerry in the sprint to the end.

In highlighting Kerry's lead, we do not do so triumphantly. It is important that progressives and Democrats and independent observers know what is real so that they can act with great effectiveness in the few days we have to impact the outcome.

We are obviously aware of the many newspaper polls, which paint more volatility and deep uncertainty about the trends of the race. If they were right, it would produce a wholly different strategy to win. But the race is not volatile and inscrutable. In fact, the average of the public polls has the race dead even, with both Bush and Kerry at 47 percent. Let us underscore some points that will aid in interpreting the chaos of media polls.

- ***Bush's vote is at 47 percent*** in our two post-debate polls; his job approval rating has dropped to 47 percent and his vote in the public polls is at 47 percent. Many polls, like the CBS/*New York Times* and NBC/*Wall Street Journal*, have his approval lower. As the incumbent,

---

<sup>1</sup> Democracy Corps conducted two separate polls of over 1,000 likely voters on October 14-16 and October 17-18, 2004. The margin of error for each of these polls is +/- 3.1 percent.

it is very difficult for him to get a vote on election day higher than 47 percent, unless he can raise his position before then.

- That is mostly true because “undecided” voters are not really undecided and almost always break against the incumbent, particularly if the incumbent is a polarizing figure, like Bush. ***The undecided in this election are populist change voters.*** By 63 to 28 percent, they want to go in a significantly different direction than Bush; they are critical of big corporations; and break two-to-one Democratic at the congressional level.<sup>2</sup>
- ***Independents*** have moved steadily to Kerry, as President Bush has waged his conservative, base-oriented campaign. Today, Kerry has taken a 4 point lead (49 to 45 percent) in the Democracy Corps poll, but that is also true in the CBS/*New York Times* and ABC News polls. For Bush to win, Republicans would have to be more united than Democrats and outnumber Democrats on election day. But the latter is very difficult, since the likely electorate is more Democratic by at least 3 points.<sup>3</sup>
- The ***Democrats have consolidated*** behind Kerry in the post-debate period. While Kerry had not consolidated Democrats before the debates, he has done so with a vengeance afterwards. Kerry is getting 91 percent of Democrats, while Bush is getting 92 percent of Republicans. Kerry and Bush voters now express an equal enthusiasm for their nominees and equally strong intention to vote. Part of that consolidation includes substantial gains with African-American, union, and Hispanic voters.
- The Democracy Corps poll includes an increasing number of ***new registrants***, now at 7 percent of the likely voters – up from 2 percent in July and 6 percent in September and early October. These new voters who could play a decisive role in this election support Kerry by 61 to 36 percent.
- ***Young voters (under 30 years)*** could play a very big role in this election. They will for sure give John Kerry his biggest margin of any age

---

<sup>2</sup>Analysis based on Democracy Corps’ combined database of undecided voters and those who are leaning toward a candidate in four polls conducted in October 2004. Also, the media polls have a somewhat larger undecided, as they are less likely than political polling firms to encourage respondents to express a vote preference.

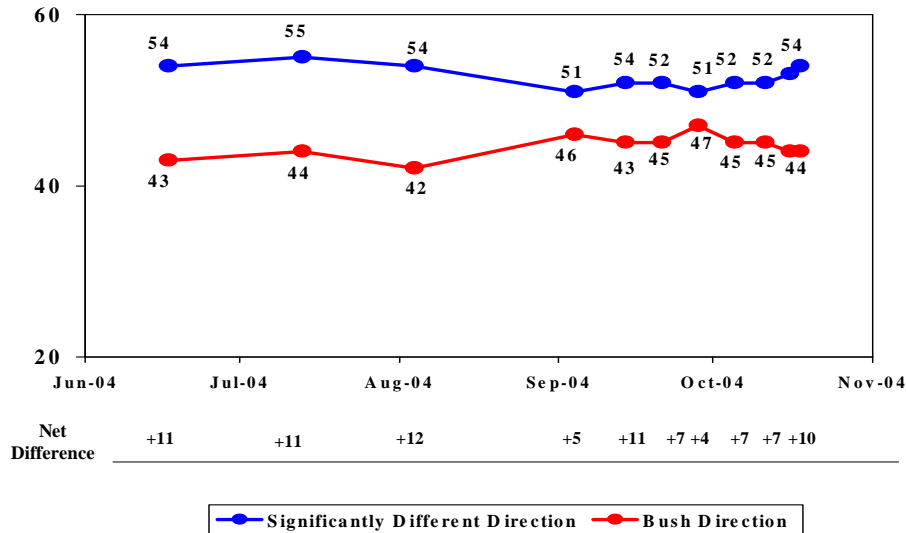
<sup>3</sup> Our last two polls show Democrats with a 3-point edge on partisan identification, slightly below the 4-point advantage Democrats held in the 2000 election according to exit polls.

group, now giving him over 60 percent of the vote. While the sample size is small, this has been true for both post-debate polls and reflects major gains and large majorities now among white as well as minority voters. They are responding to the combination of issues stressed by Kerry: Iraq, the economy, new jobs and energy independence.<sup>4</sup>

**The Growing Mood for Change**

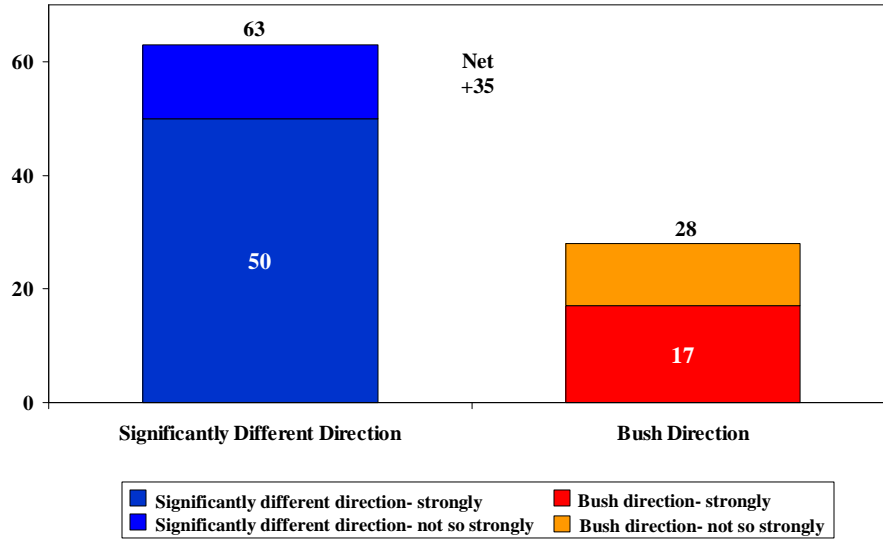
What makes it difficult for George Bush to change the contours of the race is the growing mood for change in the country. This is not an incumbent moment. The number saying the country is headed off on the wrong track jumped to 55 percent in this survey, with only 40 percent saying things are going in the right direction. The CBS/*New York Times* poll reported 57 percent saying things were going wrong. Democracy Corps has an additional question: do you want to continue in Bush’s direction or go in a “significantly different direction.” The desire for change rose to 54 percent, a new high going into this final phase; just 44 percent wanted to continue with Bush’s direction, 3 points under his vote.

**Change: Bush Change Direction**  
2004



<sup>4</sup> Our sample weights young voters to an estimated turnout consistent with the 2000 election. It does not account for a possible rise in the proportion of younger voters’ participation in this election.

### Desire for Change Among Undecideds



*“Now let me ask overall, do you think the country should continue in the direction Bush is headed or go in a significantly different direction?”*

This is a very difficult environment for Bush to campaign for a new mandate, as a large majority of the undecided and the whole electorate want something new, perhaps a “fresh start.”

### The Pressures of a Cultural Election

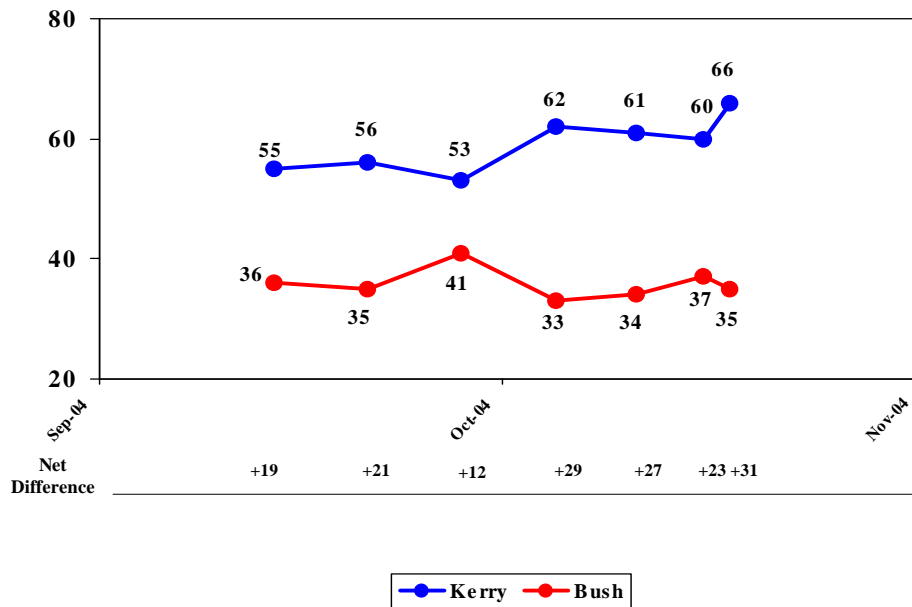
President Bush has waged a full-throated cultural conservative election, attacking Kerry on liberalism and big government and underscoring his pro-life and religious posture. That has produced rising support among self-identified conservatives and with religious voters, particularly Evangelicals. That has made it harder for Kerry and Democrats to break through in rural areas and with many non-college educated women voters.

But they have paid a big price for this choice, which may have limited their opportunities for gains. Conservatives are 42 percent of the electorate, but the majority are moderate and liberal, who have both become increasingly anti-Bush. That may be reflected in the following patterns.

- **Moderates.** They are almost 40 percent of the electorate and among them, Kerry’s vote has risen from 55 percent in mid-September to 66 percent now.

- **Independents.** Kerry has trailed or run even with independents, but now runs ahead by 4 points.
- **White mainline Protestants.** These voters, improbably, given their history, now split evenly between Kerry and Bush.
- **Young voters.** Socially tolerant young voters are breaking strongly for Kerry.
- **White college educated voters.** Kerry and Bush are running even with white college educated voters and those earning over \$75,000. Indeed, Bush is badly under-performing, though still winning, with white college educated married men – normally a base group for Republicans. With improved support among college educated women, Kerry is in a good position to make gains in suburban areas.

### Presidential Vote Among Moderates Since Mid-September



### Kerry's Change Message Defeats Bush's Dark Message

President Bush has put his entire campaign behind his attack on John Kerry as unfit and too liberal to be president in these times. It is important for people to know that this is not working and is not likely to work in the weeks ahead, if the progressive groups continue to make the case for change and the case for Kerry's new direction.

While Bush mounted these attacks in the debates and afterwards, worries about Kerry on flip-flopping, taxes, liberalism and defense have actually fallen. He has gained ground on making America safe, being ready to deal with Iraq, and on the economy.

To test the coming onslaught, we tested the Kerry message, as presented in his advertising and speeches. We also confronted that message with two Bush's messages – one focused on Kerry's liberalism and the other on his weakness on security. The Kerry message, presented below, defeats these messages by 50 to 46 percent, slightly larger than the current margin in the race.<sup>5</sup> Kerry is in position to control the future agenda, despite the strong Bush attacks.

### Kerry Message

**John Kerry says, I will be a president who both defends our country and fights for the middle class. I will track down the terrorists and kill them, wherever they are. And we need a fresh start in Iraq. On the economy, George Bush says things are doing great. Maybe that's true for those at the top, but not for the middle class. We have an opportunity in this election to change our direction and create jobs in America, get incomes up, get health care costs under control and cut middle class taxes. We should invest in the new industries, like renewable energy, that make us independent of Middle East oil. America needs a fresh start.**

---

<sup>5</sup> The Kerry message was presented first and then half were read the liberalism message and half the weak on security message. Respondents were then asked whether this left them inclined to support Kerry or Bush.

**Liberalism**

**George Bush says, John Kerry has been named the most liberal member of the Senate and the most liberal person to ever run for President. He voted to cut our military and to severely cut our intelligence agencies. He voted for higher taxes 350 times, and his 1.5 trillion dollar big government health care plan would put bureaucrats, not doctors, in charge. But now he wants to be our President. We live in a dangerous world that requires strong and steady leadership. John Kerry is a risky choice for America...a risk we cannot take.**

**Weak on Defense**

**George Bush says, John Kerry has proven he can't be trusted to do whatever it takes to protect our country. He betrayed POW's being tortured in Vietnam when he returned to oppose that war. He voted against funding for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, putting politics over our country's security. He says we must pass a global test, seeking permission from other countries before taking action to defend ourselves. And just last week, he called terrorism a nuisance. How can John Kerry protect us when he doesn't even understand the threat?**

Kerry maintains, maybe extends his lead, when he talks about a change in direction on Iraq and the economy, commits to fighting the terrorists and defending the country, and sets out his determination to fight for the middle class, rather than those at the top. Above all, he talks about economic changes that create jobs and higher middle class living standards, health care, and energy independence.

**Targets for the Coming Period**

The race for president has consolidated a great deal in the last week, which changes some of the targets, but there are clearly still opportunities for Kerry to make inroads into some groups or further improve his position with others.

Obviously, the progressive groups will be working to build turnout in its strongest base groups. The post-debate polls show a much stronger position among union households, African Americans, and Hispanic voters, which will multiply the consequences of strong mobilization efforts. Even with that observation, let us offer some further observations.

- **Hispanics.** Hispanic voters have moved to Kerry, and Bush's vote has fallen after the debate, but there is still room for further gains. Kerry's

margin is still short of the Democrats' advantage in party identification. It is important to continue to build support, as well as enthusiasm for voting.

- ***Young voters under 30 years.*** With even white young voters giving Kerry a sizeable majority, there is room for a full mobilization of young voters for this election.
- ***Seniors.*** In the last memo, we highlighted the opportunities here and this remains true, as Bush's support with older men has eroded (though still strong) and as Kerry has moved ahead with white senior women.
- ***Lower-wage women workers and unmarried women.*** There is no group more open to the critiques of George Bush on the economy, health care, and on financial squeeze, and more open to Kerry's plans for jobs, minimum wage and equal pay, health care and education. Kerry is winning these white voters, but there is so much more opportunity for gain and these voters strongly want change. These are by no means certain voters, but they are ready to be engaged.
- ***White older non-college educated women voters.*** These voters are very important in the battleground states and to making headway in rural areas. They are more socially conservative, but deeply concerned about health care, job losses overseas and lower paying jobs, and Social Security. Right now, Kerry is losing these voters, but they are in fact more evenly divided in their party preference.

Obviously, the Bush campaign will not remain idle as they ratchet up their attacks on security and liberalism and perhaps create an environment where those issues matter even more. They are determined on their side to build support with cultural conservatives, particularly white Evangelicals. But we have no reason to be defensive. There are opportunities for Kerry to make further gains with key groups across the electorate.