

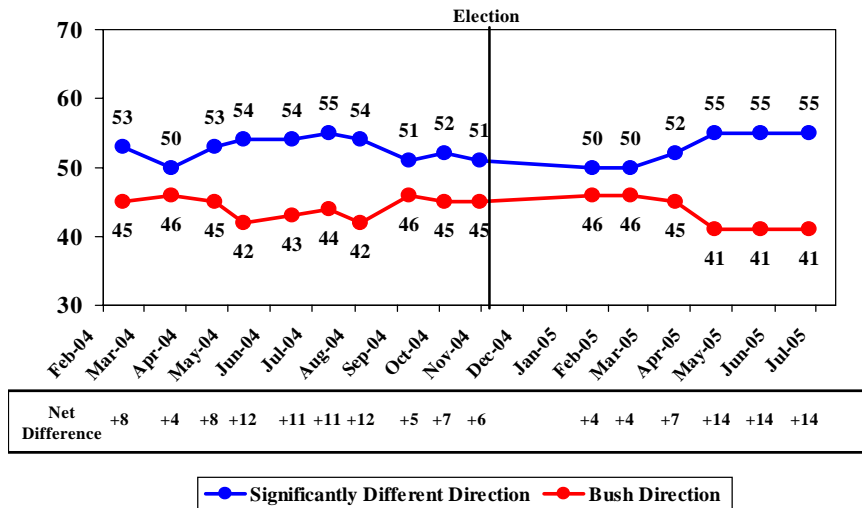
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Date: July 6, 2005
To: Friends of Democracy Corps
From: Stan Greenberg
 James Carville

RE: THE DEMOCRATS' MOMENT TO ENGAGE

The Republican revolution, deeply entrenched in Washington, has lost its hold on the American people who are looking for change. All the moorings have been loosened: Iraq, Bush's frontline in the war on terrorism, is deeply unpopular (56 percent not worth it); Bush's economy, led by tax cuts, is seen to leave most Americans stuck with limited opportunities (58 percent); his supporters' partisanship and religious zealotry, most think, have gone miles too far; and his efforts to "reform" the New Deal welfare state, Social Security privatization, are supported by only a third of the country.¹

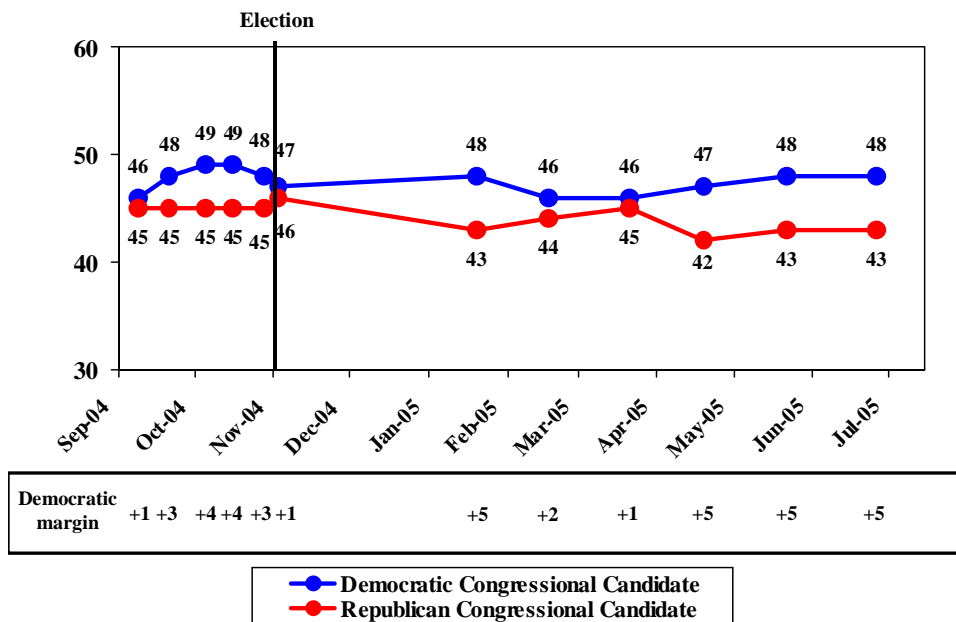
Bush Direction vs. Significantly Different Direction



¹ Democracy Corps survey of 1,078 likely voters, conducted June 20-26, 2005. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 3%. The specific findings are discussed in more detail later in the memorandum.

As a result, this is a country almost settled on the need for change. Over three surveys in three months, Democracy Corps national surveys show 55 percent wanting to go in a different direction than President Bush, with only 41 percent wanting to continue with his course – 10 points below his vote of eight months ago. Other key indicators for the Bush presidency continue to worsen. By a 20-point margin – a near-record for Bush – voters think the country is seriously off on the wrong track (56 to 36 percent). And for the first time in Bush’s second term, disapproval of his performance exceeds approval. That has allowed Democrats to move into a consistent 5-point lead in a hypothetical congressional contest, again, confirmed in the last three surveys.

Congressional Vote



But for all that, Democrats are at risk of making only modest gains in 2006. The Democrats’ gains in the congressional battle have come more from Republican slippage than Democratic gains and, alarmingly, the president’s deep troubles have produced no rise in positive sentiment about the Democrats. Their thermometer ratings are significantly below 2004, with equal numbers offering warm and cool response to the party. The positive ratings (38 percent) are 5 points below that for the Republicans.

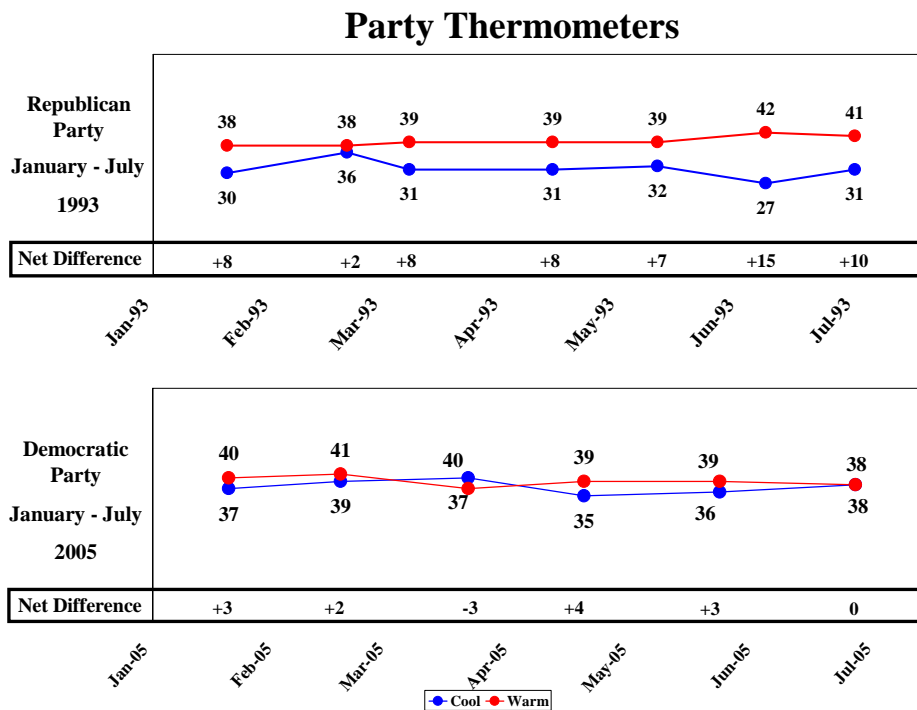
The Democrats can achieve major gains, however, if the party moves decisively to a new stage of engagement. They must poise sharp choices – ones that define the Democrats, not just

the Republicans and ones that, in every battle, make the Democrats the instrument for reforming and changing Washington. This survey shows how Democrats can start to realize those gains.

Learning from 1994

The Republicans were completely obstructionist in the first two years of the Clinton administration, but unlike the Democrats now, improved their favorability and political standing in the comparable period in 1993, leading up to the political upheaval of 1994. The graph below is a road map for victory but shows the importance of engaging with new intensity and in new ways.

In the first half of 1993, the Republicans improved their overall thermometer scores and their net favorability, even as they filibustered the Clinton stimulus bill and voted in a bloc against the Clinton economic plan. At a comparable point in 1993, the Republicans warm ratings exceeded the cool by 15 points (42 percent warm and 27 percent cool).²



² Surveys of likely voters conducted January – July 1993, by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for the Democratic National Committee.

In every battle in 1993 and 1994, the Republicans surely obstructed, but they also defined both combatants. They opposed the stimulus bill's "pork-barrel spending," the "biggest tax increase in history," and the "big-government" health care plan. They championed term limits for an "arrogant" Congress that wanted to take away your guns. Just two years earlier, the party of George Bush, the Republicans became the anti-elitist and anti-Washington party, the party of change.

In the past half year, the Democrats have preserved their unity and stopped and defined the Republicans' initiatives. That was a precondition for the turn against Bush and for the Republicans' fall in the congressional vote. As we understand from 1993, unified opposition does not necessarily limit a party's favorability. Indeed today, voters are looking for the Democrats to balance the partisan Republicans.³ In this survey, the Republicans' weakest choice for the upcoming election is one centered on Democratic obstructionism.⁴

The Democrats have had great difficulty defining themselves now because of the inheritance of two presidential elections (2000 and 2004) and two off-year elections (1998 and 2002) when the Democrats failed to set out a clear choice and definition of their own purpose and values. It has been a long time since the Democrats have run as a party of change.

Democrats have to become the party of change in this period of deepening unrest about the country's direction. As we shall see below, the Democrats can define the Republicans in this election and do moderately well, but they will not gain a decisive advantage unless their battles leave the Democrats defined as a party ready to clean house, empower the middle class over the big corporate interests in Washington, make the economy work for everyone, not just the privileged, and bring wholly new priorities that secure retirement and reverse the health care mess.

Absent that, the Republicans may win back some of their defectors as they center the election on the defense of America and defense of the family, as they did in 2002 and 2004. This survey shows that that those cynical tactics can still be effective, *but not when Democrats give people a real choice.*

³ When asked whether Democrats should work in a bipartisan way with Republicans or provide a balance, 55 percent of likely voters believed that Democrats should provide a balance (Democracy Corps survey of 1,013 likely voters, conducted May 17-23, 2005).

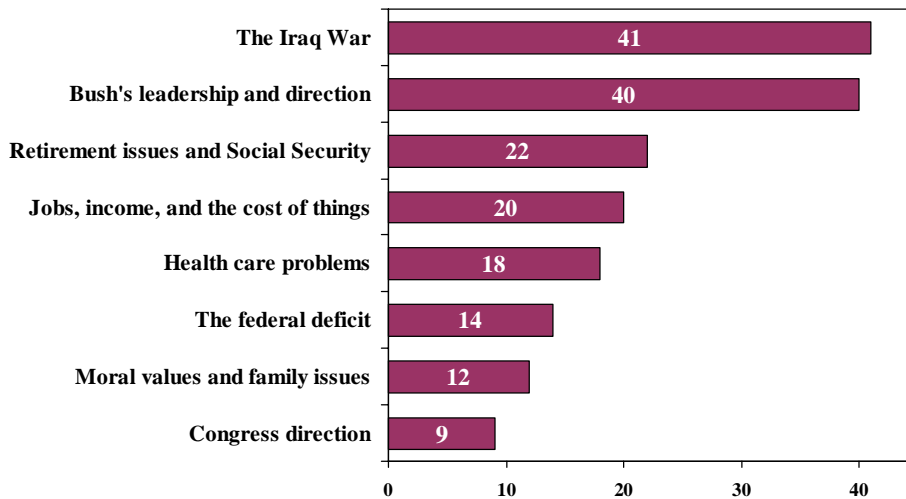
⁴ After hearing the following message – "Democrats have offered no new ideas and are obstructing chances for change. Republicans are offering new ideas and practical solutions to major problems" – only 47 percent said it made them more likely to support a Republican and just 27 percent said it made them much more likely, the lowest results on both intensity and overall potential support.

The Mood for Change: it's everything stupid but don't forget the economy

Only 36 percent of the likely electorate thinks the country is on the right track, with a growing majority saying things are going wrong. When these voters are asked what they are thinking about, they focus on the Iraq war and Bush's leadership and direction above all, followed by Social Security, the economy, and health care.

Reasons for Wrong Direction

The Iraq war and Bush's leadership



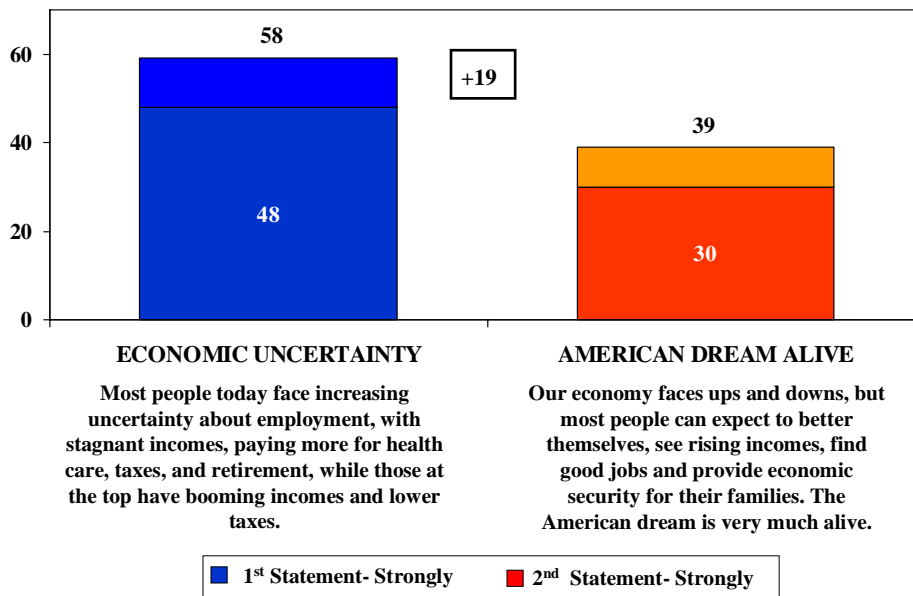
“(IF WRONG TRACK) Why do you say that? Which TWO of the following are you mainly thinking about?”

Iraq will certainly be an issue, but do not underestimate the power of the economy. Structurally, this economy is not producing enough jobs to seriously tighten the labor market or enough income and benefits for people to feel they are making gains. When asked whether this is economy is doing well (creating jobs, rising incomes and home ownership and moving in the right direction) or not doing well (jobs scarce, incomes stagnant and benefits cut), a large majority (60 percent) are very clear that this economy is not performing for people.

The battery of economic indicators shows no let up in the concern with rising health care costs, gasoline prices, employers cutting back benefits, and job losses to India and China. Health care costs is by far the most intense economic worry. (See graph in supplemental email and on Democracy Corps website.)

The growing number of years with most Americans experiencing no income growth is leading voters to sweeping conclusions about what is happening to middle class America, the privileged, and the American dream.

State of the Economy



As we shall see later, the economic contrast – that the Republicans think this is the best economy of our lifetime and the Democrats want an economy that works for everyone, not just the few – produces the best outcome in the congressional elections.

Defining the Election

The Democrats have strong potential definitions for the election, which produce a great deal of receptivity for the Democrats. Unfortunately, their choices are barely stronger at this point than the Republicans’ definitions. When we ask a revote after the battle, they leave the Democrats’ position largely unchanged, though ahead.

In the coming months, Democracy Corps will refine the choices in hopes of getting to a more focused set of recommendations on what 2006 is about.

But we believe the current choices are underperforming because they are firing on only half their cylinders. The choices gain their power at the moment from the anger at the Republi-

cans on the economy, priorities, health care, ethics, and the war. But imagine the power of these choices if we fired on all cylinders – if voters thought the Democrats were passionate about change and represented a new direction on Washington lobbyists and ethics, jobs and living standards, health care costs and retirement security. Our prior surveys and the Democrats’ faltering thermometer scores suggest voters are uncertain of the Democrats’ convictions and skeptical they will do anything very different. Recall, the Democrats’ weakest comparison with the Republicans is on knowing what they believe in.⁵

Nonetheless, the choices assessed here are a starting point and show the potential. The strongest definitions, with the largest number of voters more likely to support the Democrats, center on the economy and health care. After hearing these, about 60 percent are more likely to vote Democratic, more than 10 points above our current vote. Over 40 percent are much more likely to support the Democrats, suggesting the great potential to build energy and turnout in an off-year election.

⁵ Republicans hold a 28-point advantage over Democrats on “Know what they stand for” (Democracy Corps survey of 998 likely voters, conducted January 16-20, 2005).

Defining the Election: Democratic choices		
	Much More Likely to Support %	Total More Likely to Support %
The Republicans think this is the best economy in our lifetime. The Democrats say we need to make our economy work for everyone, not just the few.	44	62
Republicans have done nothing about health care, except help the drug and insurance companies. The Democrats will get health care costs down.	37	58
Republicans have the wrong priorities - further tax cuts for the wealthiest, privatizing Social Security and shielding corporations from lawsuits. Democrats have different priorities -- healthcare, jobs and retirement security.	37	57
Republicans have the wrong priorities - an extreme partisan agenda, including the Terry Schiavo case, stopping stem cell research and getting partisan control of the federal courts. Democrats have different priorities - health care, jobs and retirement security.	39	56
Republicans have let the super-rich and big corporations get whatever they want in Washington. The Democrats will stand up for the middle class.	38	56
Republicans have spent \$200 billion in Iraq and much more coming, while cutting programs at home. The Democrats will prioritize America too.	36	55
Republicans are taking care of themselves in Washington -- vacations and homes paid for by lobbyists, blocking ethics violations, and giving themselves pay raises - while our soldiers fight in Iraq. The Democrats say its time for a change.	37	53

The next strongest contrasts center on priorities. One approach centers on the extreme partisan agenda (from Terry Schiavo to stem cell) and the other, the favoritism to corporate interests. They do equally well. And they score about as well as an election centered on the reign of the super-rich and big-corporate interests in Washington and one centered on the open-ended spending for Iraq and neglect of domestic needs.

The choice centered on ethics scores slightly weaker than the others, but that is likely held down by a presumption that politicians are all the same. To get voters to clean house, they have to think Democrats are going to clean house, particularly with the current reign of corporate and special interest lobbyists.

The Republicans Define the Election: toward security

With the Democrats 5 points ahead in the congressional contest, it is not surprising that the Republicans’ definitions of the election score a few points weaker, though many of them have a great deal of intensity. Their strength is sadly predictable: scoring best on security and keeping the country safe, hitting the Democrats for cutting intelligence and defense. Their second strongest definition centers on the defense of marriage, followed by a defense of our troops in Iraq.

Defining the Election: Republican choices		
	Much More Likely to Support %	Total More Likely to Support %
Democrats cut funding for intelligence and are not strong on defense. Republicans are committed to a strong national defense and keeping America secure.	38	57
Democrats support legalizing gay marriage and blocked Congress from protecting the family. Republicans will defend the sanctity of marriage.	41	55
The Democrats are now calling for a retreat and withdrawal of our troops from Iraq. The Republicans say we can not leave without finishing the job.	37	55
Democrats push the agenda of the ACLU and trial lawyers, rather than doing everything to protect our country. Republicans created the department of homeland security, implemented the Patriot Act and took the offensive against terrorism to keep our country safe.	36	55
Democrats support higher taxes and bigger government. Republicans want people to keep more of their own money and have cut taxes every year in order to spur economic growth.	37	54

Their attempts to define the election around education, energy, health care and prescription drugs and ideas get nowhere. The Republicans, frankly, dare not center the election on domestic priorities or anything related to people’s economic welfare. They need security and the culture war, as we have seen in the last two elections.

The Simulated Wars

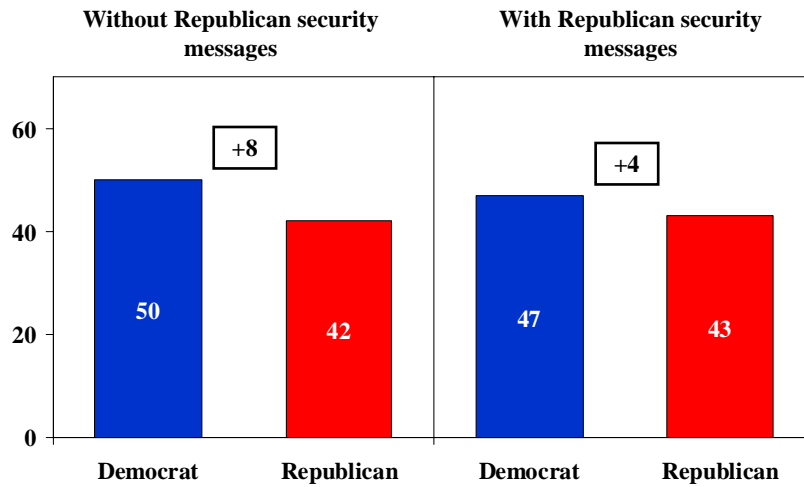
In 2002, the Republicans changed the subject by turning to Iraq and the resolution to authorize the use of force and turning homeland security into a domestic partisan battle. They were successful. That is why we simulated a comparable strategy in the lead up to the 2006 election. Here, we tested (for half the sample) the president deploring the Democrats’ limiting his ability to track domestic terrorists and the president asking the public to give him a Congress that will support his actions against insurgent-support areas in Syria to support our troops.

The Security Simulation	
	Total More Likely to Support%
Republicans have been unwavering in their opposition to the terrorists. They created the department of homeland security over the opposition of the Democrats and now the Democrats are trying to stop the government from monitoring and detaining potential terrorists. President Bush needs a Congress that will support his commitment to keep America safe.	55
Today, foreign fighters are supporting the insurgents attacking U.S. troops in Iraq. Despite repeated warnings, Syria continues to allow the insurgents to be supplied and have safe haven. Imagine the president asks for a resolution to authorize the use of force to bomb these support areas in Syria. The Democrats are divided as usual, but the Republicans say it is important that we support our troops and do what is necessary to keep our country safe.	55

A majority of the voters (55 percent) say they are more likely to vote Republican in this simulation, though less than half say they are much more or somewhat more likely to support the Republican.⁶ However, shifting to a security-dominated debate has consequences. For the half of the respondents exposed to this simulated election, the re-ballot on the congressional contest marginally diminishes the Democrats’ lead to 4 points (47 to 43 percent). However, for the half sample that only heard the party’s competing definitions of the election (without the security simulation), the Democrats’ lead rose to 8 points (50 to 42 percent). That is large enough to produce an electoral upheaval.

⁶ The wording on these messages differs slightly from the wording in the message batteries on defining the election. After hearing these messages, voters were asked whether it made them much more likely, somewhat more likely, a little more likely, no more likely, or less likely to support a Republican candidate. The “Total more likely” percentage in the table includes the “a little more likely” responses.

Post Simulation Vote



But we have to assume the Republicans will go very far to hold on to power, including bold steps to elevate gay marriage and the security threats in the lead up to 2006.

All the more reason why Democrats have to engage their own battles in new ways that create a wave for change that sweeps Washington and that leaves the incumbent power holders weakened and less able to create its own waves. The country does not want to repeat 2002. It wants to vote for change.