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To: Friends of Democracy Corps, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, and Public Campaign Action Fund

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Revolt Against Washington and Corrupted Politics

New battleground survey shows how members championing change on money in politics gain an edge in anti-incumbent time

Amid the intensely partisan context of the government shutdown, money in politics is one of a few issues with the power to break through the otherwise divisive national discourse and the presumption of dysfunction in Washington. This survey, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps and Public Campaign Action Fund in the 49 most competitive Republican districts and 31 most competitive Democratic districts, finds that voters from both parties and all demographic groups are angered by the influence of big money that puts even greater distance between their members and people at home—and are willing to change it.¹

These are the districts where outside groups and party committees will spend the most money defending and contesting incumbents next year. This survey, however, shows that voters in both Democratic and Republican-held seats embrace efforts to reduce money in politics and its influence: two thirds of voters in these districts support a plan to overhaul campaign spending by getting rid of big donations—half support such a plan strongly.

Because no party has a starting advantage on ‘cleaning up Washington,’ this is one of the few areas where incumbents who embrace bold reform can strike out on an independent, effective course that separates them from the pack. Democratic incumbents, who are not immune to the anti-Washington public revolt, can embrace bold changes that align with an existing presumption that Democrats are more willing to limit the role of money. But the opportunity may be even greater for Republican incumbents who are less trusted on the role of money and hurt by perceptions of the Republican Congress.

¹ This memo is based on a unique survey of 1,250 likely 2014 voters in the most competitive Democratic and Republican Congressional districts in the country. This survey was conducted from October 19-24, 2013 using a list of 2006 voters, 2010 voters, and new registrants. Some questions were asked only in Democratic-held or Republican-held seats. For questions asked of all respondents, the margin of error = +/- 2.77% at 95% confidence. For questions asked just in Republican districts, the margin of error = +/- 3.58% at 95% confidence. For questions asked in just Democratic districts, the margin of error = +/- 4.38% at 95% confidence.



These are vulnerable incumbents in the most unpopular of partisan institutions, and their outside challengers will surely see the opportunity to confront them as part of the special interest money politics that is indifferent to the needs of people at home. Embracing reform and transparency may be a way for incumbents to be different from the pack.

Key Findings:

- **This is an intensely anti-Washington period.** Voters' optimism about the country direction and about their leaders in Washington has plummeted amid the backdrop of almost total dysfunction. Voters are angry with the Congress at the center of the storm.
- **Incumbent approval, in both Democratic and Republican seats, has taken a hit, even as the Republican Congress has taken the biggest hit.** In Republican and Democratic battleground districts, incumbents are now viewed more negatively than even 4 months ago and more voters disapprove of their job performance. These are tough times for all.
- **The biggest drop in the poll is for the 'Republican Congress,' viewed negatively by over 60 percent.** John Boehner now has a net -30 rating in these Republican seats. In seats held by Republicans, 60 percent rate the Republican Party negatively. The Democratic Party enjoys a net 10-point favorability advantage over the Republican Party *in these Republican seats*.
- **Voters do not believe that either party is capable of cleaning up the mess in Washington.** When asked which party would do a better job "cleaning up the mess in Washington," one in three battleground voters (28 percent) say neither—a striking number for a volunteered answer (an option not offered to respondents). This creates a clear opening for those willing to run against the current system.
- **This is an opportunity for Democrats, whom voters believe are better than Republicans at "putting the people's interests ahead of big moneyed interests."**
- **But this is a much bigger opportunity for Republicans – the public is open because no party has a presumed advantage on cleaning up Washington.** They are hurt by the image of the Republican Congress and presumption that the GOP is more linked to money. By embracing reform, which is very popular in these districts, they have the chance to set themselves apart.
- **This presents opportunities for Republicans to differentiate themselves from a party and Congressional leadership that are intensely unpopular.** Making money in politics central to their appeal allows Republicans to set themselves apart from the Washington gridlock that is the dominant conversation. Republicans should embrace this strategy.
- **There is no downside for either party to grab onto this issue and make it central to their campaigns.** Voters register almost no negative response to reform efforts—even those that would require significant public contributions to political campaigns.



- **And they strongly support serious and bold reforms.** A plan to replace the current system with one in which candidates would receive small donations with matched public funding receives broad support across districts. And some of the strongest supporters are swing voters—the ones both parties will target in their campaigns next fall.
- **In these vulnerable Congressional districts—districts that could decide the balance in Congress next November and where the most money is apt to be spent—candidates from both parties could capitalize on the current anger and frustration by making reform central to their platforms.**

Intensely grim and anti-Washington mood

This survey, which fielded just two days after the government shutdown ended, highlights the sharp deterioration in the national mood and trust in Washington politicians. The Washington meltdown drove people to despair, which is reflected in the collapse of confidence in the country's direction throughout all the battleground districts, regardless of party. In Republican districts, three quarters (76 percent) now say the country is off on the wrong track—compared to two thirds (65 percent) just four months ago. Just one in five (18 percent) now say the country is headed in the right direction.

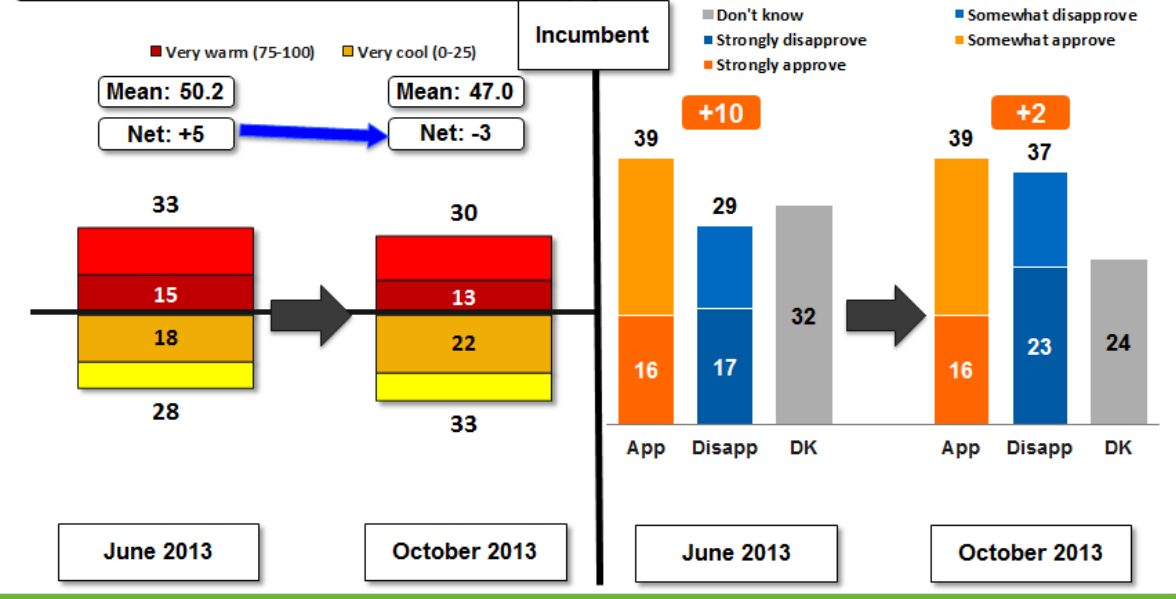
Across all battleground districts (Democratic and Republican), incumbent disapproval is up, marking a strong anti-incumbent and anti-Washington wave. While the Republican brand has been tarnished, incumbents in both Democratic and Republican districts have taken a hit in approval.



All Washington incumbents take a hit

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold.

Do you approve or disapprove of the way (HOUSE INCUMBENT) is handling his/her job as a member of the U.S. Congress?



However, Republican incumbents have to find ways to balance or deflect the public’s deep hostility to the Republican Congress and gridlock in Washington.² The Republican brand has been tarnished, especially in the Republicans’ own battleground districts.

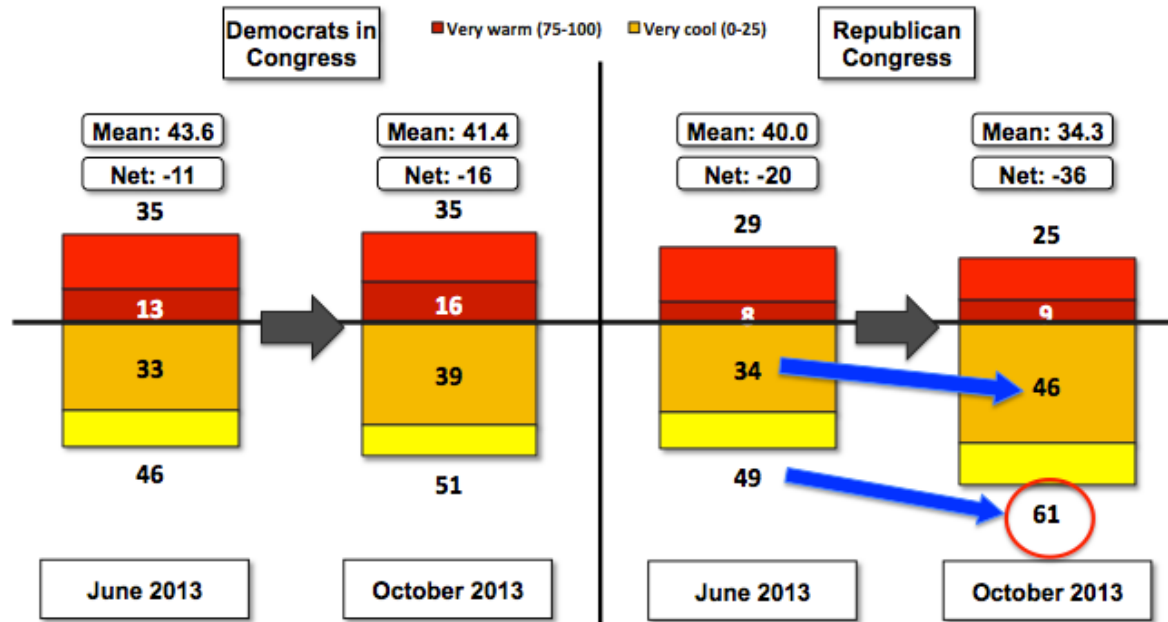
Negative ratings of the Republican Congress jumped 15 points since July to 62 percent across Republican battleground districts. Just a quarter of voters in these Republican districts now give the Republican Congress a positive rating. The Republican Party’s net negative rating has more than doubled in Republican districts since July (from -12 to -30 percent.)

² In the [Democracy Corps June battleground survey](#), a plurality of voters across all battleground districts identified the Republican Party as the one that controls congress.



Both parties fall but Republican Congress collapses – in the Republican districts

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Money in politics as a breakaway issue

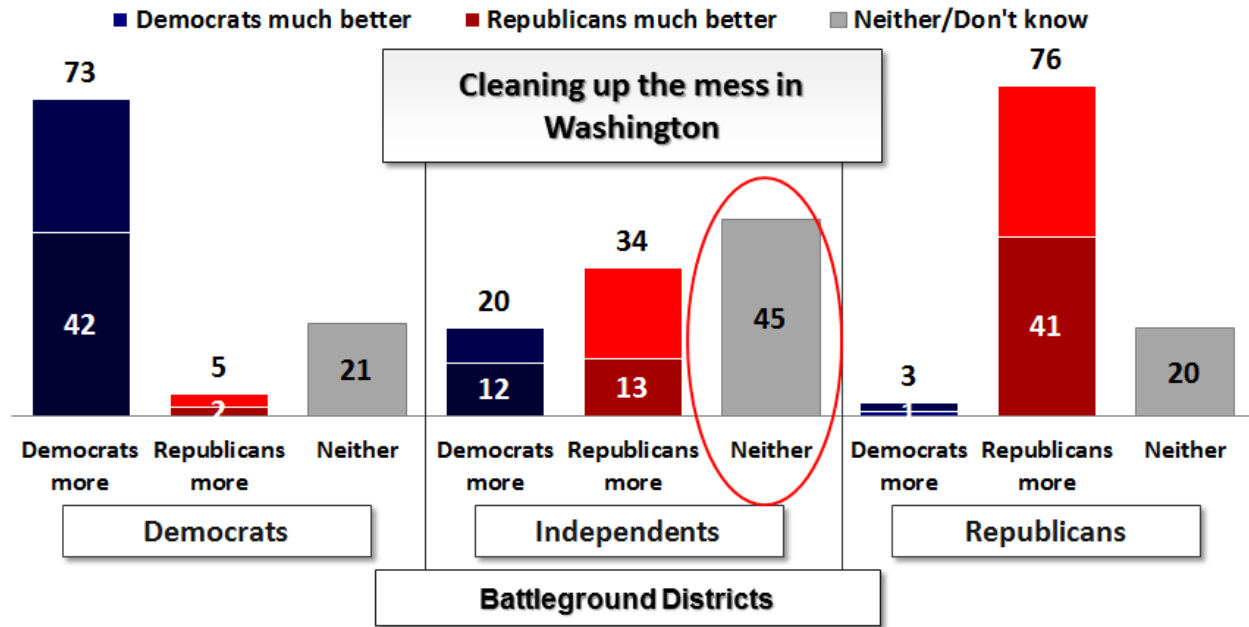
Amid the intense negativity toward Washington, incumbents and challengers from either party would do well to run against the current system of money in politics.

When it comes to cleaning up the mess in Washington, voters trust neither party. Among all battleground voters, one in three (28 percent) volunteer that they trust neither party to clean up the mess in Washington. And the strongest critics are swing voters. Among independents, almost half (45 percent) say neither party is better at cleaning up the mess in Washington.



Nearly half of independents say neither party is better at cleaning up the mess in Washington— as well as a fifth of partisans

Now I am going to read a list of issues and I want you to tell me whether, overall, you think the Democrats or the Republicans would do a better job with this issue. If you do not know, just tell me and we will move on to the next item.



This presents a significant opening and highlights a real need for candidates to take this issue seriously. This is true for Democrats, to whom voters turn to challenge the current system, as well as Republicans, who more clearly need to distinguish themselves from their collapsing party brand.

Democrats have a strong advantage when it comes to putting the people’s interests ahead of big moneyed interests. In Republican districts, half (48 percent) say Democrats are better on this issue, 29 percent much better. Just 29 percent believe Republicans are better at putting the people’s interests ahead of big moneyed interests.

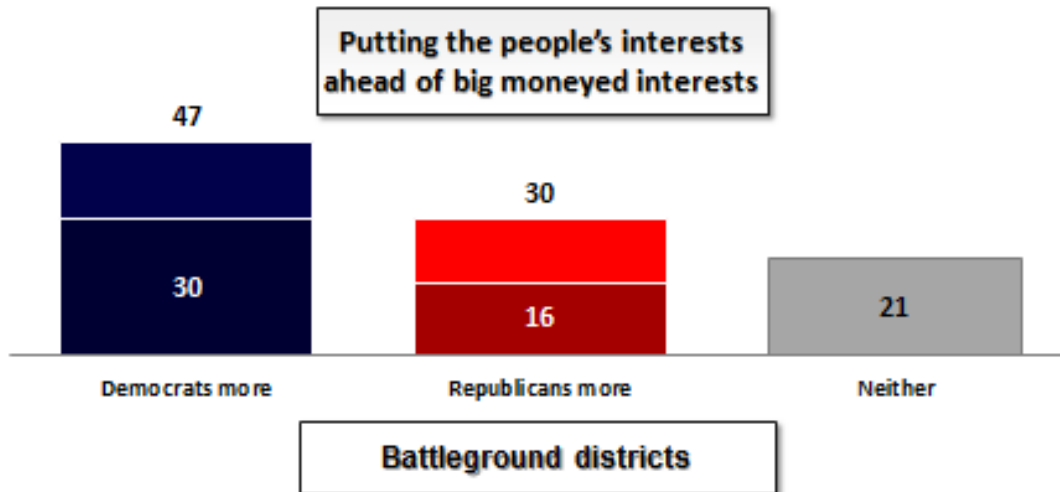
However, a fifth hold back and say neither party is better at putting people ahead of money. As a result, there is room for Democrats to increase their advantage by making money in politics central to their platform and party brand. And amidst the public revulsion against the GOP, there is room for individual Republicans to separate from the Washington mess and disentangle themselves from the Republican Congress.



Much more significant divide when it comes to putting people ahead of moneyed interests— but still a fifth say neither

Now I am going to read a list of issues and I want you to tell me whether, overall, you think the Democrats or the Republicans would do a better job with this issue. If you do not know, just tell me and we will move on to the next item.

■ Democrats much better ■ Republicans much better ■ Neither/Don't know



Proposals to reduce influence of money in politics

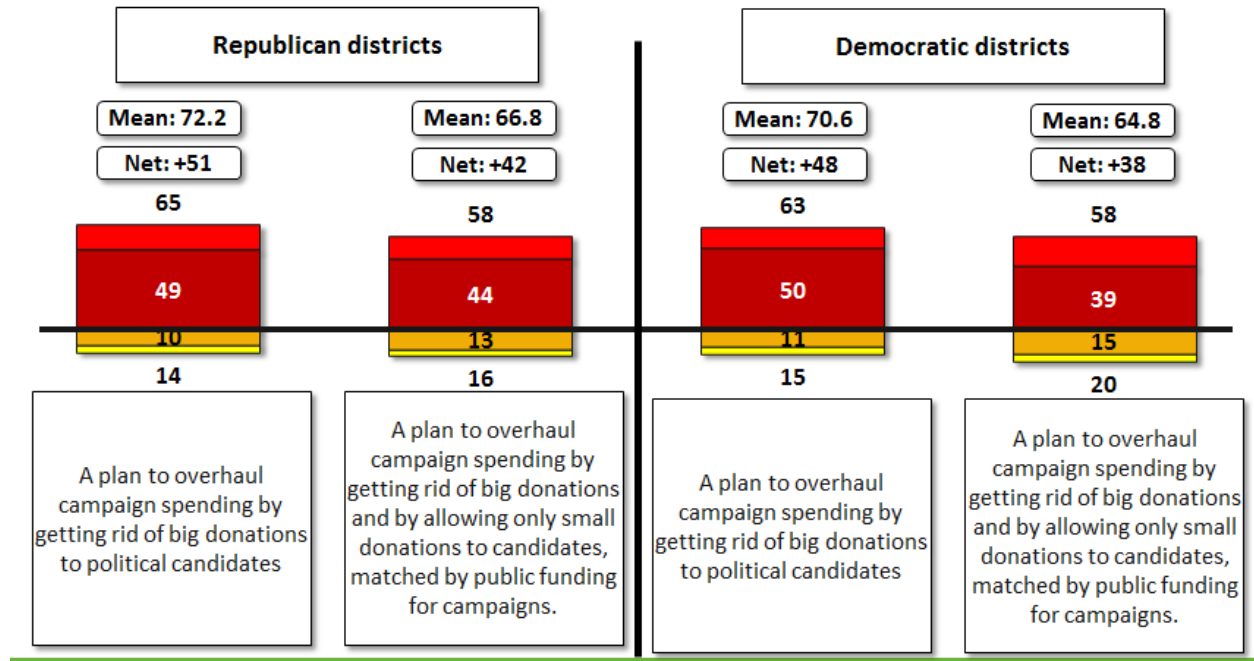
Voters in these districts strongly support bold reforms to reduce the influence of money in politics, which they believe contributes to dysfunction in Washington. And there is no downside for doing so—voters register almost no negative response to reform efforts, even those that would require significant public contributions to political campaigns.

In the 49 most vulnerable Republican seats, two thirds of voters support “A plan to overhaul campaign spending by getting rid of big donations to political candidates.” A substantial majority continue to support the proposal even when it includes matching public funds.



Voters very positive to plans including and excluding public funding; half strongly support plan to get rid of big donations

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold.



A more specific and bolder plan, with significant matching funds, receives broad support across districts and demographic groups.

Candidates for Congress would raise a large number of small donations of up to \$150, and once they qualify, they'll be eligible to have those donations matched by six to one from a fund. Larger contributions wouldn't be matched. Voters would receive a limited tax credit for donations and there would be strict enforcement of election laws.

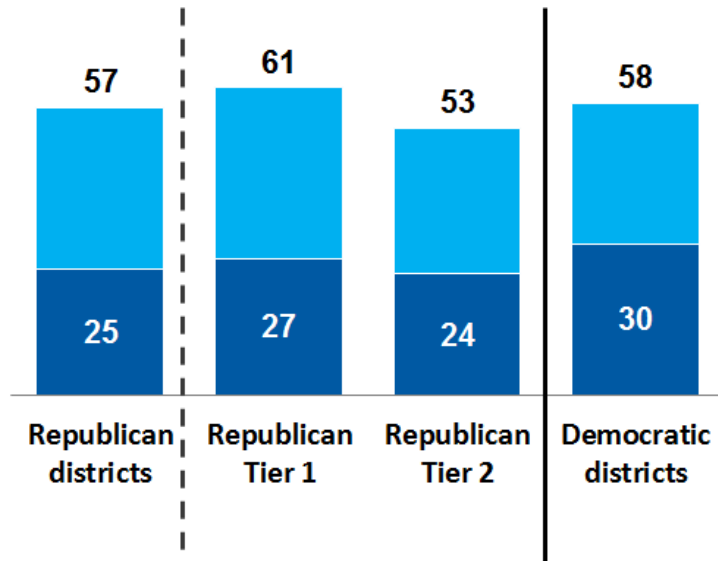
In the most vulnerable Tier 1 Republican seats, 61 percent support this plan, 27 percent strongly. In the most vulnerable Democratic districts, 58 percent support this proposal, 30 percent strongly.



Broad support for reforming campaign money by limiting large donations and matching small donations with funding

After this political nightmare and gridlock, a group of bi-partisan members announced what we need to do is reduce the power of special interest money that is creating this partisan and extreme agenda and crowding out the voices of the average voter. They say the most important thing is to make reforms and change businesses as usual in Washington. Now let me read you a proposal that some people have suggested to reform the campaign finance system.

Candidates for Congress would raise a large number of small donations of up to \$150, and once they qualify, they'll be eligible to have those donations matched by six to one from a fund. Larger contributions wouldn't be matched. Voters would receive a limited tax credit for donations and there would be strict enforcement of election laws.



Incumbents in both Republican and Democratic districts will take note of the strong support among key swing groups. More than half (55 percent) of those who are undecided support this proposal, a quarter strongly. Among voters who are vulnerable to switching their votes and winnable for the other party, 63 percent support this proposal, 27 percent strongly. And among white seniors, who could cast deciding votes next fall, this proposal has 57 percent support—almost a third (30 percent) support it strongly.

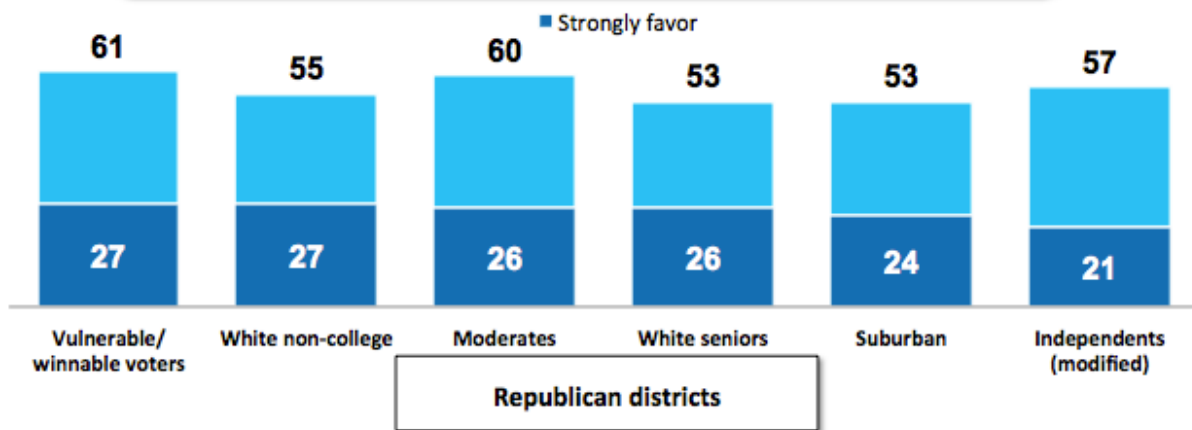
And in Republican districts, incumbents should pay attention—the voters these incumbents must win in order to hold their seats strongly favor this proposal.



In Republican battleground, strong support for reform proposal among swing voters courted by both parties

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Advocating for reform

There is a clear advantage to putting a spotlight on money in politics and highlighting why it matters. Messages that emphasize cutting the ties between leaders and big money campaign contributors enhance voters' reception to these policies.

Among all battleground voters, the strongest message says that we need to do something about big money in politics by forcing candidates to raise money in their districts in order to cut the influence of Wall Street and PACs. Almost three quarters (73 percent) say this message makes them more likely to support campaign reform, half (48 percent) much more likely.



Best message focuses on reducing influence of money in politics

Now let me read you a reason that some people support such a proposal. After the statement, please tell me if the statement makes you much more likely to support, somewhat more likely, a little more likely, no more likely, or less likely to support reforming Washington.

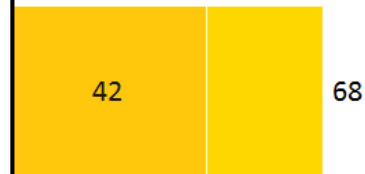
REDUCE INFLUENCE OF MONEY; RAISE MONEY BACK HOME

Washington is awash in big money and it's time to do something about it. A new proposal would reduce the influence of money in politics, and would make politicians of both parties seek support back home rather than raising money in Washington or on Wall Street. By cutting the influence of super PACs and lobbyists, politicians would have to listen to everyday Americans for a change.



ACCOUNTABLE TO PEOPLE; SMALL DONATIONS

Congress should be accountable to the people not their big money contributors. Under this proposal, a candidate running for Congress would collect small contributions from his or her home state and they'd receive matching funds to run the campaign. By cutting the connection between big donors and candidates, Congress would be free to work on the people's business.



This message is especially strong in the most vulnerable Tier 1 Republican districts where 74 percent say this message makes them more likely to support reform, half (48 percent) much more likely.



Raising money back home to reduce influence of Wall St and PACs has advantage in Republican districts, especially most vulnerable seats

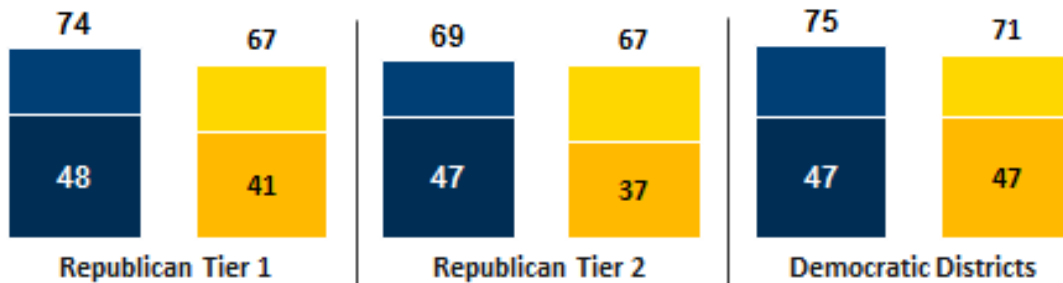
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TIER 1: The 24 Most Competitive Republican Districts

District	Representative	2012 Presidential margin	2012 Congressional margin
CA-10	Jeff Denham	Obama +3.6	+7.1
CA-21	David Valadao	Obama +11.1	+17.9
CA-31	Gary Miller	Obama +16.6	+10.5
CO-6	Mike Coffman	Obama +5.1	+3.6
FL-10	Dan Webster	Romney +7.6	+3.5
FL-13	OPEN (Young)	Obama +1.5	+15.2
FL-2	Steve Southerland	Romney +5.9	+5.5
IA-3	Tom Latham	Obama +4.3	+8.7
IL-13	Rodney Davis	Romney +0.3	+0.4
IN-2	Jackie Walorski	Romney +14.0	+1.4
KY-6	Andy Barr	Romney +13.6	+3.9
MI-1	Dan Benishek	Romney +8.3	+0.7
MI-7	Tim Walberg	Romney +3.1	+10.3
MN-2	John Kline	Obama +0.1	+8.2
NE-2	Lee Terry	Romney +7.2	+2.4
NV-3	Joe Heck	Obama +0.8	+7.6
NY-11	Michael Grimm	Obama +4.4	+6.6
NY-19	Chris Gibson	Obama +6.3	+6.9
NY-23	Tom Reed	Romney +1.2	+3.9
OH-14	David Joyce	Romney +3.3	+15.8
OH-7	Bob Gibbs	Romney +9.5	+13.3
PA-8	Mike Fitzpatrick	Romney +0.1	+13.3
WI-7	Sean Duffy	Romney +3.1	+12.3
WV-2	OPEN (Capito)	Romney +22.0	+39.6



TIER 2: The 25 Next Most Competitive Republican Districts

District	Representative	2012 Presidential margin	2012 Congressional margin
AR-1	Rick Crawford	Romney +24.6	+17.4
AR-2	OPEN (Griffin)	Romney +11.8	+15.7
CA-25	Buck McKeon	Romney +1.8	+11.2
FL-16	Vern Buchanan	Romney +9.3	+7.2
IA-4	Steve King	Romney +8.2	+8.6
IN-8	Larry Bucshon	Romney +18.8	+10.3
MI-11	Kerry Bentivolio	Romney +5.4	+6.4
MI-3	Justin Amash	Romney +7.4	+8.6
MI-8	Mike Rogers	Romney +3.2	+21.3
MN-3	Erik Paulsen	Obama +0.8	+16.3
MT-AL	Steve Daines	Romney +13.7	+10.3
NC-9	Robert Pittenger	Romney +13.4	+6.1
NJ-2	Frank LoBiondo	Obama +8.2	+17.9
NJ-3	Jon Runyan	Obama +4.6	+8.9
NJ-5	Scott Garrett	Romney +3.0	+13.1
NM-2	Stevan Pearce	Romney +6.8	+18.2
NY-2	Peter King	Obama +4.4	+17.5
OH-16	Jim Renacci	Romney +8.2	+4.5
OH-6	Bill Johnson	Romney +12.5	+6.7
PA-12	Keith Rothfus	Romney +16.9	+3.6
PA-6	Jim Gerlach	Romney +2.5	+13.9
PA-7	Pat Meehan	Romney +1.8	+18.9
VA-2	Scott Rigell	Obama +1.5	+7.6
WA-3	Jaime Herrera Beutler	Romney +1.6	+20.2
WI-8	Reid Ribble	Romney +4.5	+11.9



The 31 Democratic Districts

District	Representative	2012 Presidential margin	2012 Congressional margin
AZ-1	Ann Kirkpatrick	Romney +2.5	+3.3
AZ-2	Ron Barber	Romney +1.6	+0.2
AZ-9	Kyrsten Sinema	Obama +4.5	+3.1
CA-24	Lois Capps	Obama +11.0	+9.6
CA-26	Julia Brownley	Obama +10.3	+4.0
CA-3	John Garamendi	Obama +11.2	+7.8
CA-36	Raul Ruiz	Obama +3.2	+3.9
CA-52	Scott Peters	Obama +6.4	+1.1
CA-7	Ami Bera	Obama +3.9	+1.6
CT-5	Elizabeth Esty	Obama +8.2	+3.0
FL-18	Patrick Murphy	Romney +4.2	+0.6
FL-26	Joe Garcia	Obama +6.7	+10.6
GA-12	John Barrow	Romney +11.8	+7.4
IL-10	Brad Schneider	Obama +16.4	+1.0
IL-12	Bill Enyart	Obama +1.5	+8.7
IL-17	Cheri Bustos	Obama +16.9	+6.6
MA-6	John Tierney	Obama +10.9	+1.0
MN-7	Collin Peterson	Romney +9.7	+25.5
MN-8	Rick Nolan	Obama +5.5	+8.9
NC-7	Mike McIntyre	Romney +19.2	+0.2
NH-1	Carol Shea-Porter	Obama +1.6	+3.7
NH-2	Ann McLane Kuster	Obama +9.6	+5.1
NV-4	Steven Horsford	Obama +10.7	+7.9
NY-1	Tim Bishop	Obama +0.5	+4.3
NY-18	Sean Maloney	Obama +4.3	+3.4
NY-21	Bill Owens	Obama +6.2	+2.2
NY-24	Dan Maffei	Obama +16.0	+4.6
TX-23	Pete Gallego	Romney +2.7	+4.8
UT-4	Jim Matheson	Romney +37.0	+1.2
WA-1	Suzan DelBene	Obama +10.8	+20.3
WV-3	Nick Rahall	Romney +32.2	+7.9