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To: Interested Parties

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Exploiting Republican Weakness in the Battleground

RAE Provides Opportunities to Consolidate Gains

A new Democracy Corps/Women's Voices Women's Vote Action Fund (WVWVAF) survey shows incumbents in 60 Republican-held battleground districts badly out of touch with voters -- especially with the Rising American Electorate (RAE). These voters—unmarried women, African Americans and Hispanics voters and youth—account for a majority of the nation's voting eligible population (53 percent). They drove progressive victories in 2006 and 2008, delivering 69 percent of their vote to congressional Democrats in national surveys. Opportunities in 2012 for progressive candidates would be much broader if the RAE vote was consolidated and achieved those historic support levels.

Voters, including the RAE, believe Republicans are out-of-touch on taxes and the deficit and prefer a more cooperative approach to governance from the Republican majority, rather than a strategy of obstruction and delay.¹

As a result, this class of battleground Republican incumbents enters the election year from a position of profound weakness. Electorally, they are held under 50 percent in a named trial heat for Congress; less than 40 percent commit to reelecting their incumbent “because he/she is doing a good job and addressing issues that are important to us.”

Unlike the 2008 election where the RAE posted record turnout, the RAE in this survey seems unengaged and uninspired compared to other voters in this electorate. A serious push among these voters will further weaken the Republican hold on the battleground and call into question current conventional wisdom that the House majority is out of play in 2012.

Much of the challenge for Democrats is highlighting the contrast between the two parties. Voters in the RAE deliver higher support for President Obama and the Democrats than other voters; there is less differentiation in their support for Republicans. Notably, after voters hear balanced criticism of both sides, key segments of the RAE, most notably unmarried women, move to the Democrats.

¹This memo is based on a survey of 1000 likely 2012 voters in 60 Republican battleground districts (500 in 30 Tier 1 districts, 500 in 30 Tier 2 districts) conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps and Women's Voice Women Vote Action Fund December 4-7, 2011. Margin of error = +/- 3.1% at 90% confidence. A complete list of the districts in this battleground can be found in the Appendix.



The Out-of-Touch Majority

Republican incumbents in these battleground districts stand crosswise with voters on the core issues of this election, most notably, taxes, the deficit and, more broadly, their relationship with the Obama administration. This disconnect is amplified further among voters in the Rising American Electorate.

Real legislation has ground to a halt in Washington to the growing frustration of the country. A 60 percent majority of voters in these Republican-held districts want their incumbent “to try and work with President Obama to address the country’s problems,” this jumps to 66 percent among voters in the RAE. Just a third (34 percent; 27 percent in the RAE), want their Representative to block the President.

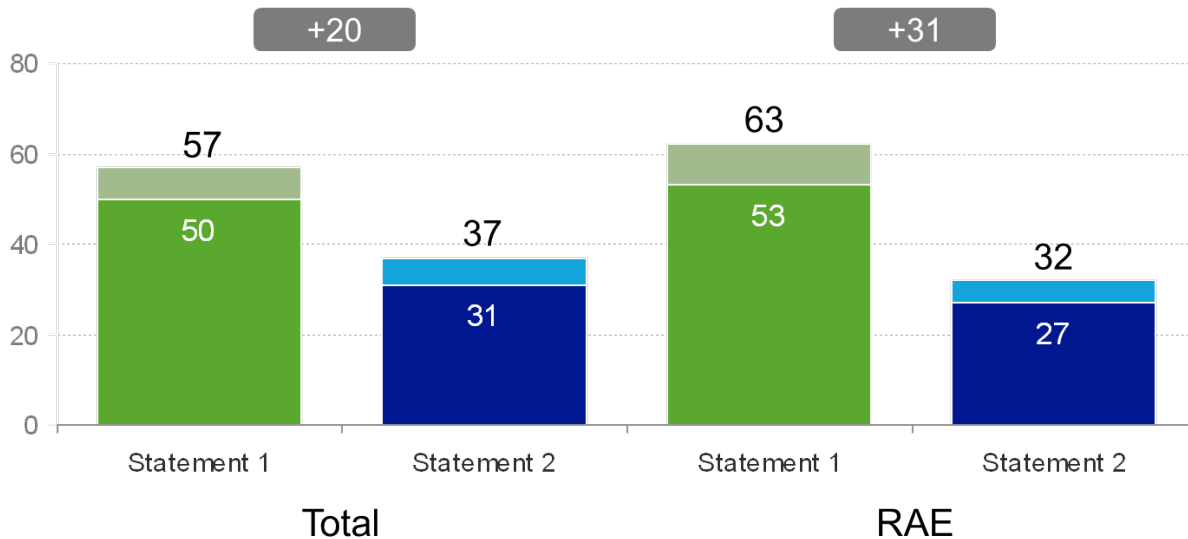
These House incumbents are woefully out-of-touch on the historic debate over taxes. A 57 percent majority wants “to vote for a Member of Congress who will ask the wealthiest to pay a greater share of taxes to address our problems and the deficit.” By nearly a 2:1 margin, RAE voters violate Republican orthodoxy and argue for higher taxes on the wealthy.

■ **Figure 1: Majority of RAE Wants Wealthiest to Pay Greater Share**

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

Statement 1: I want to vote for a Member of Congress who will ask the wealthiest to pay a greater share of taxes to address our problems and the deficit.

Statement 2: I agree with (HOUSE INCUMBENT) who says (HE/SHE) won't vote for any tax increase





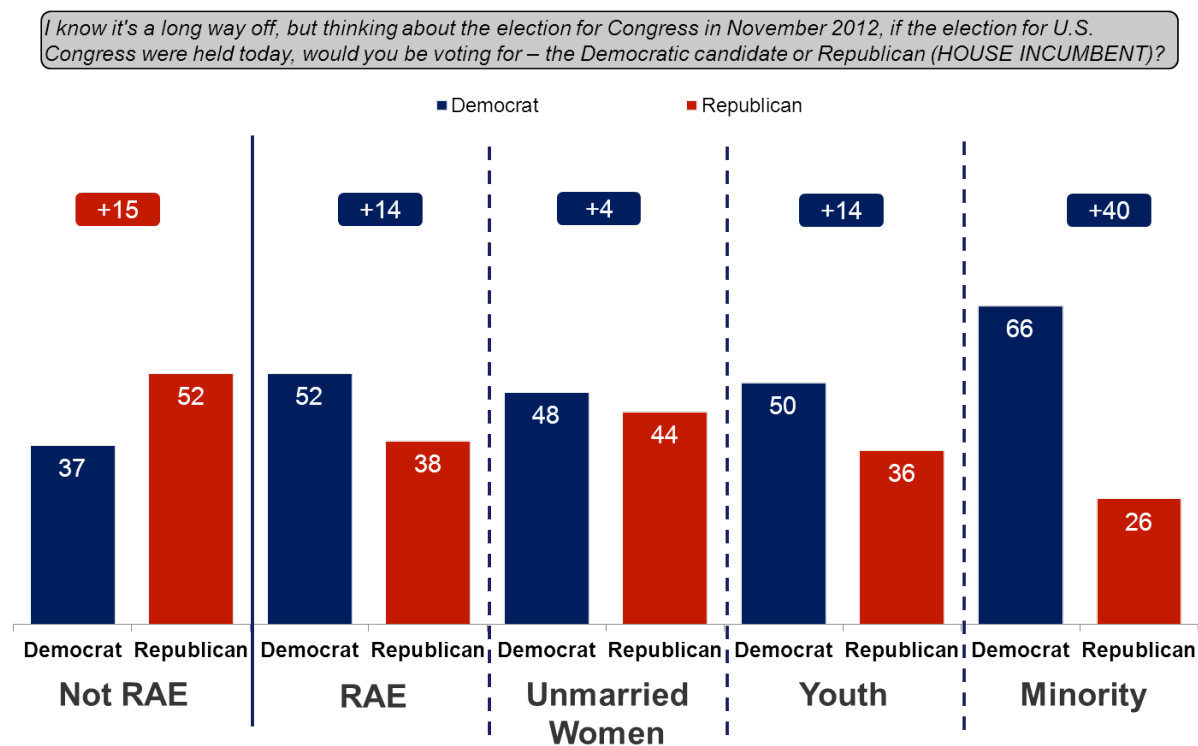
The disconnect between these incumbents and their constituents carries a growing electoral price. This price would be significantly higher if progressives consolidated their historic support among voters in the Rising American Electorate.

Opportunity for Consolidation

Republican incumbents in these battleground districts fall below 50 percent in the named trial heats for Congress. Among independent voters, who largely elected the Republican majority in these districts in 2010, support for the incumbents has dropped from 52 to 33 percent three months ago to 44 to 36 percent currently. Less than four in ten (36 percent) commit to reelecting their incumbent.

And yet, Democrats have not reached their ceiling in this battleground. Historically, Democratic support among these voters can reach up to 70 percent nationally. Though support leveled off in 2010, even in that election, RAE voters delivered solid majorities to the Democrats. In this battleground, however, the electoral difference between the RAE and non-RAE voters is historically modest and Democrats get nowhere close to their potential. Progressives would do well to focus specifically on unmarried women and youth, voters who delivered 65 percent or more of the vote to the Democrats in 2008, but are competitive in this battleground.

■ **Figure 2: Room to Consolidate Democratic Support among RAE**

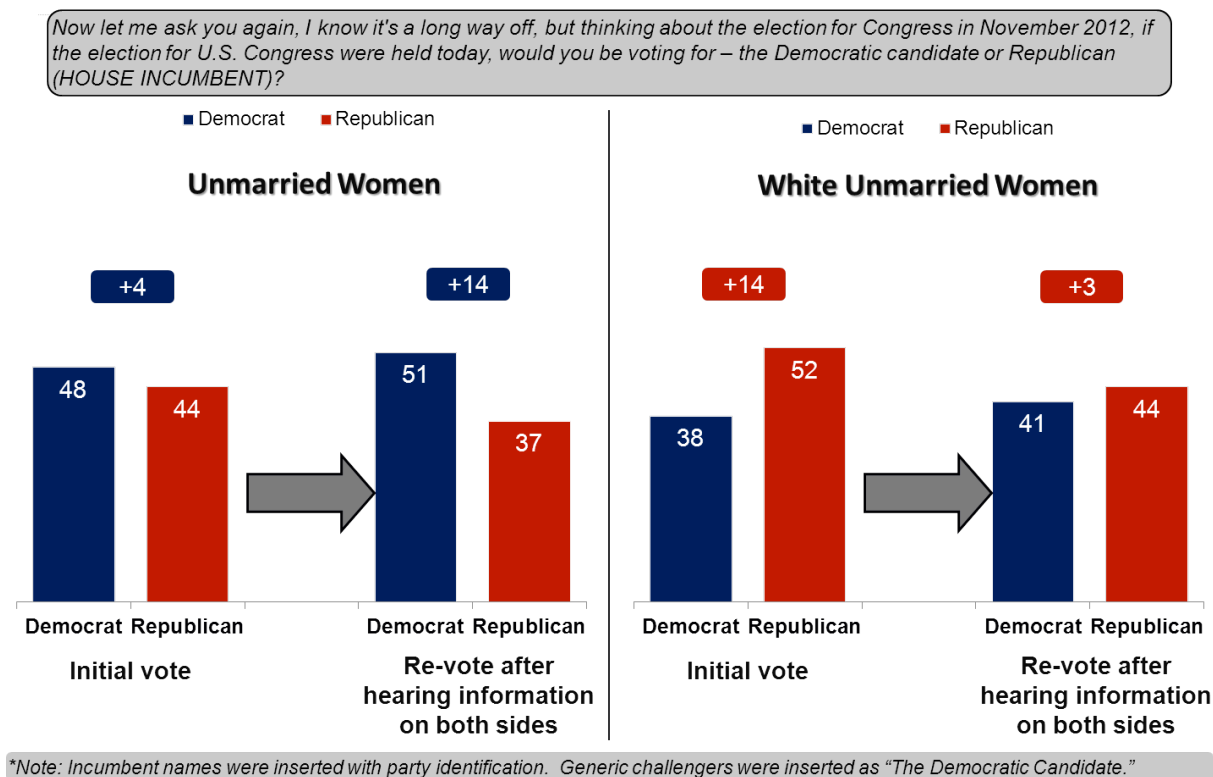


*Note: Incumbent names were inserted with party identification. Generic challengers were inserted as "The Democratic Candidate."



Importantly, after voters hear balanced attacks on both sides, segments of the Rising American Electorate come back to the Democrats. Unmarried women in particular are among the most likely of any subgroup to switch their support.

■ Figure 3: Unmarried Women Shift to Majority Support for Democrats



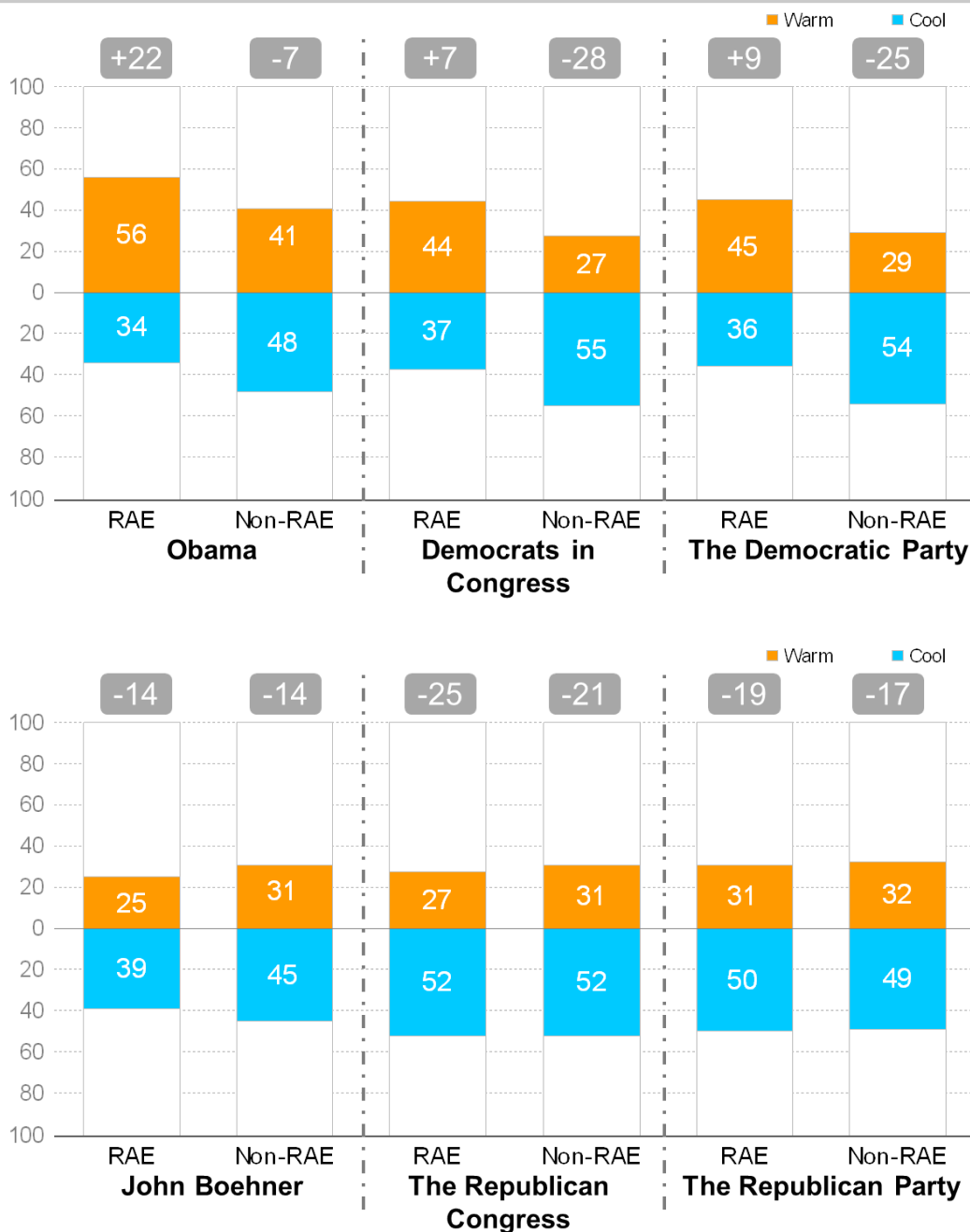
Compare and Contrast

The main problem the Democrats face among RAE voters is not that they are insufficiently pro-Democratic, but that they are insufficiently anti-Republican. Approval ratings for President Obama, the Democratic Party and Democrats in Congress are not where they were three years ago, to be sure, but are still significantly higher than average. When asked about Republicans—Speaker Boehner, the Republican Party, Republicans in Congress—the difference between RAE and non-RAE voters is almost imperceptible. In fact, approval ratings for these Republican incumbents are slightly higher among RAE voters (43 percent approve, 23 percent disapprove) than non-RAE voters (40 percent approve, 25 percent disapprove).



■ **Figure 4: Greater Difference between RAE and Non-RAE on Democratic Thermometers**

Now, I'd like you 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.



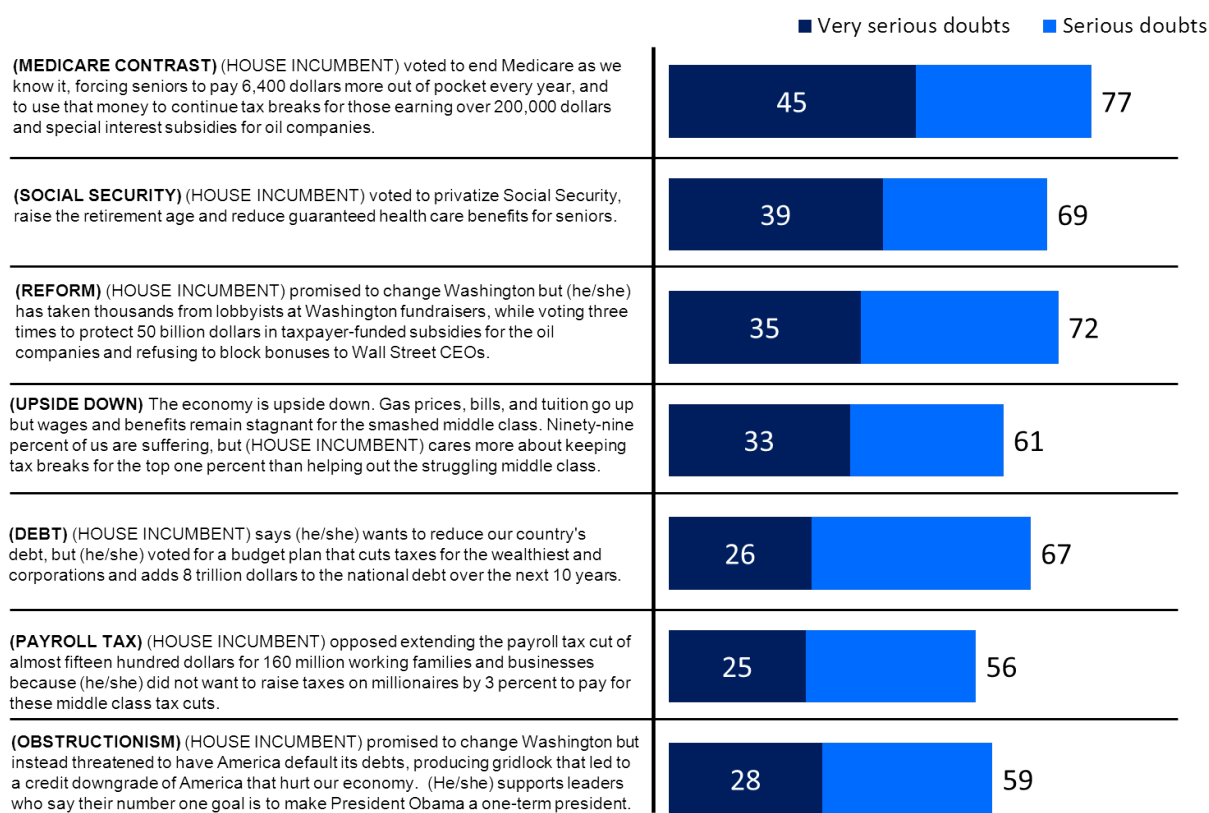
Both sides have an opportunity for contrast in the months ahead, but the Republicans have more to account for among RAE voters. By asking families—particularly economically marginalized families within the RAE—to give up more while those earning over \$200,000 a year and special



interests continue to evade paying their fair share—Republican incumbents expose themselves to a critical contrast.

Figure 5: Cuts to Medicare and Social Security Among the Most Powerful Attacks on Republicans

Now let me read you some statements that some people have made about (HOUSE INCUMBENT). After I read each statement, please tell me whether this raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about (HOUSE INCUMBENT). (AMONG RAE)



The argument over the budget and the deficit cuts to the core of the current political debate in this country. The Republican vulnerability on this issue, particularly when engaged by national candidates, strongly suggests an even more competitive battleground than we see in this survey, particularly among RAE voters.

Engaging the RAE

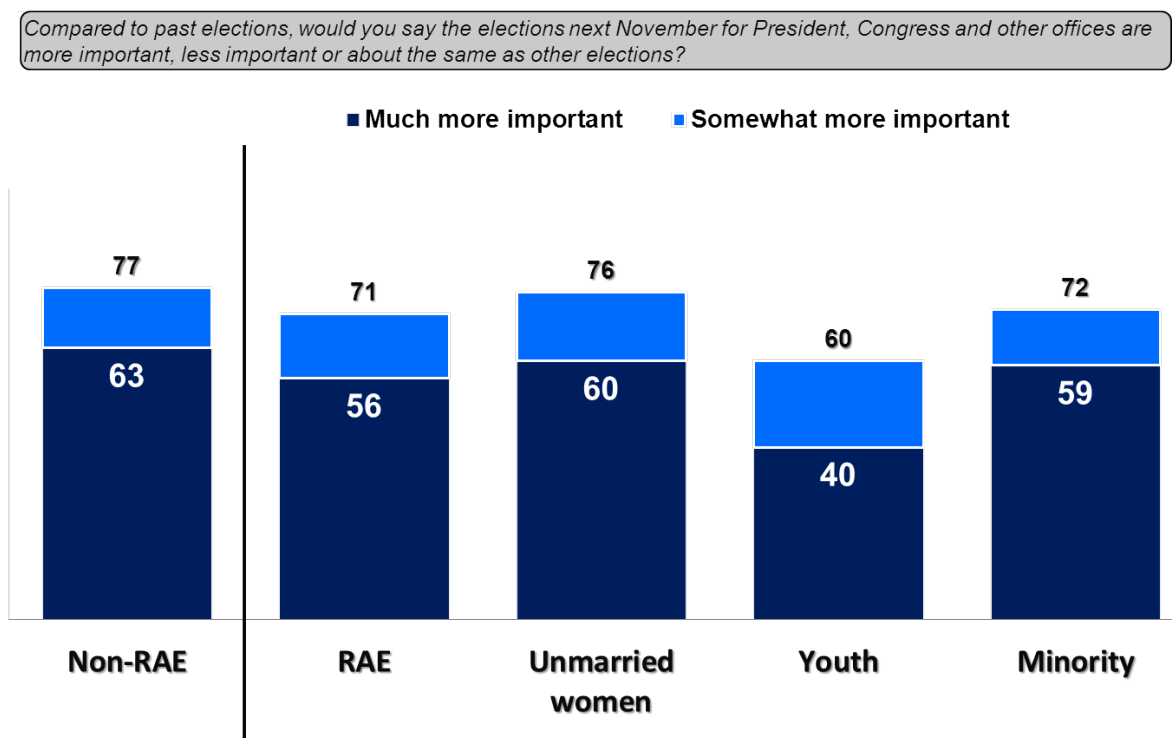
Voters in the RAE are not only in a different place than they have been when it comes to vote preference; they are also in a different place when it comes to their level of interest and engagement in the 2012 election. These measures speak to turnout. Historically, younger voters,



unmarried women and people of color have not been fully represented in our democracy. The 2006 and, particularly, the 2008 elections started to change that, but turnout fell off in 2010. With the exception of minority voters, we have seen little evidence that RAE voters will turn out in 2008 numbers next November.

RAE voters in the battleground are significantly less interested in the 2012 elections than voters outside the RAE; moreover, they are also significantly less likely to believe this election is more important than other elections. The drop in engagement among young voters is particularly acute.

■ **Figure 6: RAE Less Likely to Say 2012 Elections are More Important**



Part of the problem is that politicians sometimes speak past these voters and fail to speak to the reality of their lives. In separate questions, voters were asked what issues they hear candidates talking about and what issues they want to hear politicians talking about. The former list is dominated by the “the economy.” However, the economy placed third on the latter list, following jobs and health care.



■ **Figure 7: Voters Want Candidates to Talk About Jobs and Healthcare**

<i>From what you have heard so far, what one or two issues are politicians and candidates for public office most likely to talk about these days?</i>		<i>Thinking specifically about your own life, what one or two issues do you believe politicians and candidates for public office should address right now?</i>	
The economy	58	Jobs	42
Jobs	30	Health care	42
Health care	29	The economy	32
National debt/budget deficit	10	School funding and education	7
Medicare	5	Immigration	6
Immigration	4	Taxes/cutting taxes	6
School funding and education	4	National debt/budget deficit	5
Marriage equality	4	Government waste/spending	5
Social Security	3	Medicare	4
International policy	3	Social Security	4
Wars in the Middle East	3	Poverty/helping the middle class	3
Taxing the wealthy/corporations	3		

Voters were also asked what changes coming out of the 2012 elections would have the most impact on their lives. RAE voters are 10 points more likely to list “making education more affordable for the middle class” than non-RAE voters.

For some voters here, “the economy” is an abstraction. It is about GDP, arcane debates among partisan economists and seemingly small changes in employment figures. However, “jobs” is about putting food on the table, paying rent and, hopefully, achieving the middle class. One key to engaging the middle class is translating the debates in Washington in a fashion that speaks more directly to their lives.



Appendix:

Tier 1

District	2008 Presidential vote margin	2010 Congressional vote margin	Representative	Cook PVI
AZ-1	McCain +10	Rep +7	Paul Gosar	R +6
CA-3	Obama +0	Rep +8	Dan Lungren	R +6
CA-24	Obama +3	Rep +20	Elton Gallegly	R +4
CA-26	Obama +4	Rep +17	David Dreier	R +3
CA-50	Obama +4	Rep +18	Brian Bilbray	R +3
CO-3	McCain +2	Rep +4	Scott Tipton	R +5
FL-8	Obama +5	Rep +18	Dan Webster	R +2
FL-22	Obama +4	Rep +8	Allen West	D +1
FL-25	McCain +1	Rep +10	David Rivera	R +5
IL-6	Obama +13	Rep +28	Peter Roskam	Even
IL-8	Obama +13	Rep +1	Joe Walsh	R +1
IL-10	Obama +23	Rep +2	Robert Dold	D +6
IL-11	Obama +8	Rep +14	Adam Kinzinger	R +1
IL-13	Obama +9	Rep +28	Judy Biggert	R +1
IL-14	Obama +11	Rep +6	Randy Hultgren	R +1
IL-16	Obama +7	Rep +34	Don Manzullo	R +2
IL-17	Obama +15	Rep +10	Bobby Schilling	D +3
MN-8	Obama +8	Rep +1	Chip Cravaack	D +3
NV-3	Obama +12	Rep +1	Joe Heck	D +2
NH-1	Obama +6	Rep +11	Frank Guinta	Even
NH-2	Obama +13	Rep +1	Charlie Bass	D +3
NJ-3	Obama +5	Rep +3	Jon Runyan	R +1
NJ-7	Obama +1	Rep +18	Leonard Lance	R +3
NY-25	Obama +13	Rep +0	Ann Marie Buerkle	D +3
OH-6	McCain +2	Rep +5	Bill Johnson	R +2
PA-7	Obama +13	Rep +11	Pat Meehan	D +3
PA-8	Obama +9	Rep + 8	Mike Fitzpatrick	D +2
PA-11	Obama +15	Rep +10	Lou Barletta	D +4
WA-8	Obama +15	Rep +6	Dave Reichert	D +3
WI-7	Obama +13	Rep +8	Sean Duffy	D +3

**Tier 2**

District	2008 Presidential vote margin	2010 Congressional vote margin	Representative	Cook PVI
AR-1	McCain +21	Rep +9	Rick Crawford	R +8
AZ-5	McCain +5	Rep +9	David Schweikert	R +5
CA-44	Obama +1	Rep +12	Ken Calvert	R +6
CA-45	Obama +5	Rep +10	Mary Bono Mack	R +3
CO-4	McCain +1	Rep +12	Cory Gardner	R +6
FL-10	Obama +5	Rep +32	C.W. Bill Young	R +1
FL-16	McCain +5	Rep +34	Tom Rooney	R +5
IN-8	McCain +4	Rep +20	Larry Bucshon	R +7
IN-9	McCain +1	Rep +10	Todd Young	R +6
MI-1	Obama +2	Rep +11	Dan Benishek	R +3
MI-7	Obama +5	Rep +5	Tim Walberg	R +1
MI-11	Obama +9	Rep +20	Thad McCotter	Even
MN-3	Obama +6	Rep +22	Erik Paulsen	Even
NE-2	Obama +1	Rep +23	Lee Terry	R +6
NY-19	Obama +3	Rep +6	Nan Hayworth	R +3
NY-20	Obama +3	Rep +10	Chris Gibson	R +2
NY-24	Obama +3	Rep +6	Richard Hanna	R +2
NC-2	Obama +5	Rep +2	Renee Ellmers	R +2
OH-1	Obama +11	Rep +7	Steve Chabot	D +1
OH-12	Obama +7	Rep +16	Patrick Tiberi	D +1
OH-15	Obama +9	Rep +14	Steve Stivers	D +1
PA-3	McCain +0	Rep +11	Mike Kelly	R +3
PA-6	Obama +17	Rep +14	Jim Gerlach	D +4
PA-15	Obama +13	Rep +15	Charlie Dent	D +2
TX-23	Obama +3	Rep +5	Francisco Canseco	R +4
TX-27	Obama +7	Rep +1	Blake Farenthold	R +2
VA-2	Obama +2	Rep +10	Scott Rigell	R +5
WA-3	Obama +6	Rep +6	Jaime Herrera	Even
WI-8	Obama +9	Rep +10	Reid Ribble	R +2
WV-1	McCain +15	Rep +0	David McKinley	R +9