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To: Friends of Democracy Corps
From: Stanley Greenberg, James Carville, Andrew Baumann

On the Verge of Another Wave?

Democratic Candidates Improve Position in Top 50 Republican Seats

The latest congressional battleground survey by Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, part of our weekly tracking of the most competitive Republican House seats, finds that Democratic candidates have improved their standing and taken the lead, even closing in on the Republicans in the bottom tier of supposedly toughest seats. With our finding last week that Democratic incumbents have surged in the most marginal Democratic seats, Democrats are poised to make stunning gains on a battlefield that is still expanding at the Republicans' expense.

In the top tier of races, the 20 most vulnerable Republican seats, Democratic candidates are beginning to pull away, doubling their 4-point lead from last week to 8 points. Meanwhile, Democrats in the next two tiers remain within striking distance, trailing their Republican opponents by just 2 points in the second tier and 3 points in the third and holding the Republicans under 50 percent in both.¹ The result in Tier 2 is unchanged from a week ago, but the Democrats' deficit in Tier 3 has been cut in half since last week and has closed a remarkable 13 points since we first surveyed these districts two weeks ago. Seats that once appeared out of reach are now very much in play. We will bring more Republican seats into our next survey.

Democrats are poised to improve their standing further across the battleground by hammering home a strong economic message over the final two weeks of the campaign. A simulated campaign that matched the strongest Democratic economic messages against the strongest economic messages from the Republicans produced a 4 to 5-point shift towards the Democrats in all three tiers; further consolidating their advantage in Tier 1 and moving the Democratic candidates into a 2-point lead in both Tiers 2 and 3.

This memo is based on a survey of 1,780 likely voters in the 50 most competitive Republican-held Congressional districts. It was conducted October 13-16, 2008.

¹ The second tier contains the 21st through 40th most vulnerable Republican districts while the third tier contains the 41st through 50th most vulnerable. A full list of districts in each tier accompanies this memo.

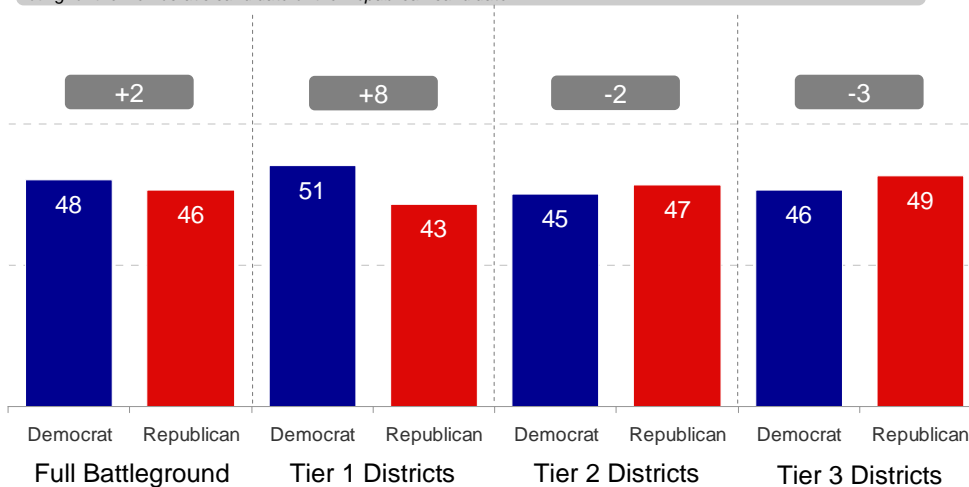


Democrats Pull Into Lead in 50-Seat Battleground

Democrats lead in this 50-district battleground for the first time, pulling ahead of their Republican rivals by a 48 to 46 percent margin. In the top tier of Republican seats their lead now stands at an impressive 8 points. If they can maintain this lead, Democrats are poised to capture most of these districts.

Democrats lead in GOP battleground; expanding lead in Tier 1 seats

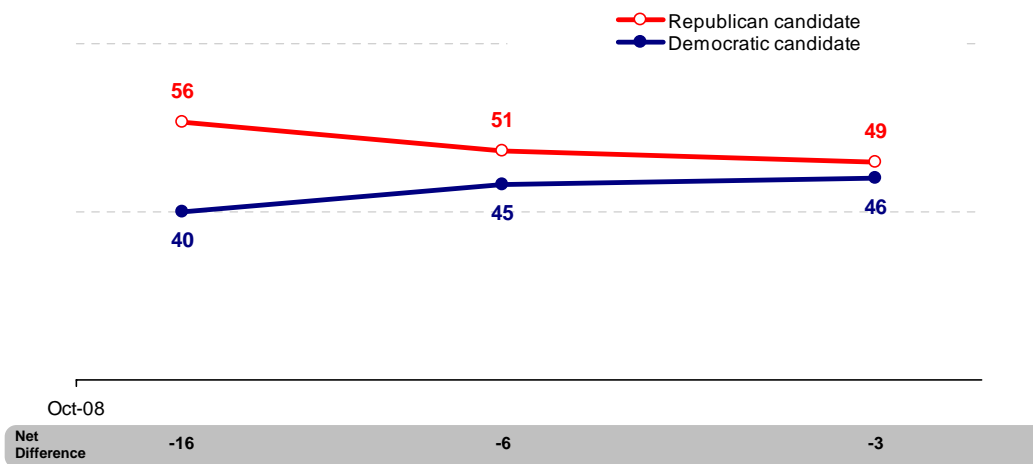
Thinking about the election for Congress in November, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate*?



*Note: For each district, the candidates' names were inserted, preceded by their party identification. In the LA-4, where the candidates are not yet official, generic candidates ("the Democratic candidate" and "the Republican candidate") were inserted.

Democratic candidates closing the gap in GOP Tier 3

Thinking about the election for Congress in November, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate*?



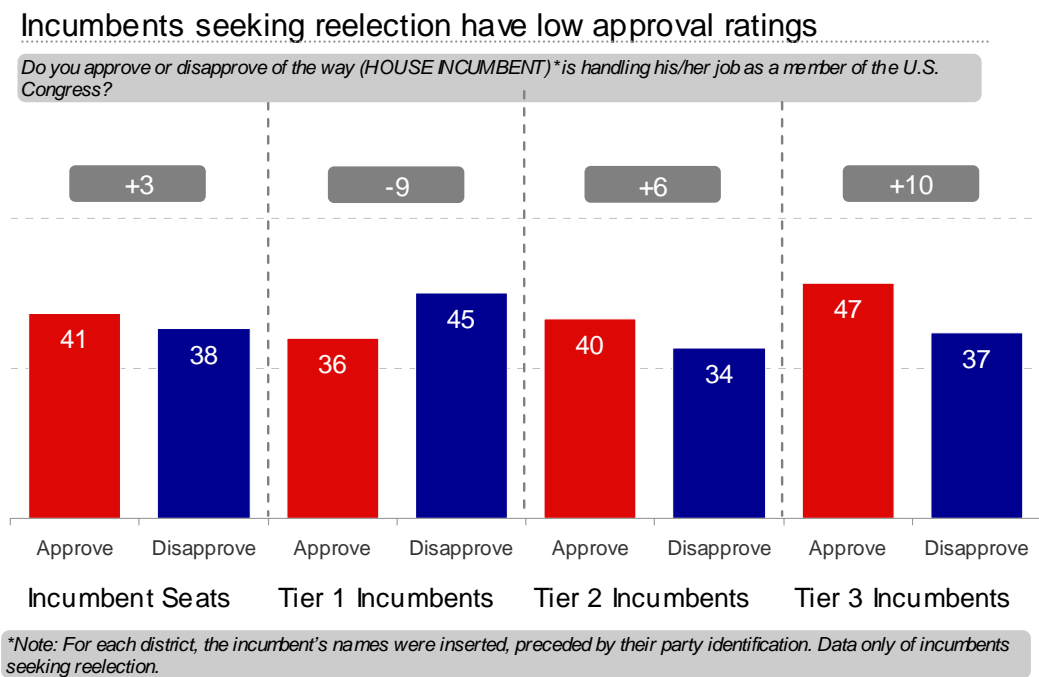
*Note: Data from Tier 3 districts. For each district, the candidates' names were inserted, preceded by their party identification.



In Tiers 2 and 3, Democrats are keeping the race close and putting themselves in position to pick up several more seats if they can close strong. In the second tier they trail by 2 points, unchanged from last week, and hold Republican candidates to just 47 percent. The Democratic candidates in the 3rd tier have continued their rapid improvement, moving from a 16-point deficit two weeks ago to just a 3-point disadvantage. While it once appeared that Democratic gains would be limited to the 40 most endangered Republican seats, it is clear that the battleground has expanded in the Democrats’ favor.

GOP Incumbents’ Dismal Ratings Point to Possibility of Larger Gains

The Democrats’ gains are driven largely by an improvement among independents (among whom they moved from a 5-point deficit to a 5-point lead) and in the 21 open seats in this battleground, where Democrats have moved from an even position to a 10-point lead. Democratic challengers facing incumbents have not yet made similar gains and still trail by 4 points. However, these Republican incumbents, especially in the top two tiers, remain very weak and present a ripe opportunity for Democrats to make up even more ground. The 29 Republican incumbents in this battleground sport an anemic collective job approval rating of 41 percent and even the incumbents in Tier 3 have approval ratings under 50 percent.



Moreover, the Republican incumbents post weak and declining ratings on a number of attributes, including those our regression modeling has identified as the most important drivers of the vote. Just half of voters in these districts say their incumbent “fights for people here” and only 45 percent say he or she is “on your side.” These are weak numbers for incumbents on what our regressions have identified as the two most important attributes. Moreover, only 40

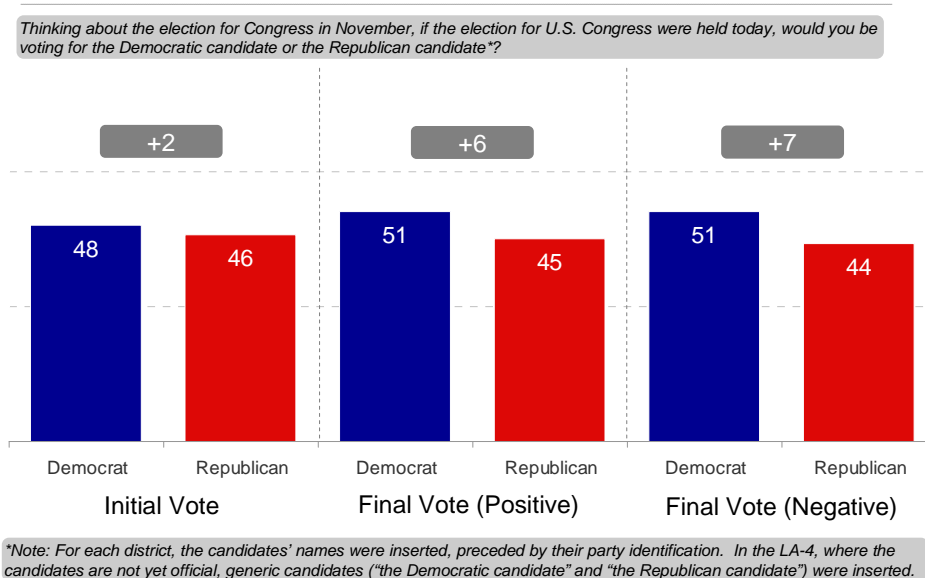


percent believe these incumbents can “bring the right kind of change” to Washington and just 35 percent disagree that they “follow Bush’s direction too much;” these incumbents are tied firmly to an unpopular status quo.

Economic Debate Further Improves Democrats’ Position

A simulated debate that pits the strongest Democratic messages on the economy against the strongest Republican messages results in further gains for the Democratic candidates. After hearing a set of positive Democratic messages on taxes, outsourcing and energy and a mixture of positive and negative Republican messages on taxes, spending and the financial crisis we see a net 4-point movement among voters toward the Democrats. A set of negative messages on taxes, outsourcing and Social Security (matched against the same Republican messages) moves the needle by a similar 5-point margin.²

Democrats improve electoral advantage after each set of messaging



This economic messaging is equally effective across the tiers, increasing the Democratic lead in Tier 1 to 13 points and moving the Democrats ahead by 2 points in each of Tiers 2 and 3. It is particularly effective among independent voters (resulting in a net gain of 9 points for the Democrats) and against the Republican incumbents mentioned above (Democrats gain a net of 6 points here). It is clear that if Democrats can effectively engage this economic debate they can make further gains across the Republican-held battleground.

² To simulate these two economic debates we split our sample into two sub-samples. Half of respondents heard a battery of positive Democratic messages on the economy. The other half heard economic messages attacking the Republican candidates. Both sub-samples heard the same Republican messages.