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To: Friends of Democracy Corps
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CONSOLIDATING THE HISPANIC VOTE

Democracy Corps Report on Hispanic Voters in Inner Mountain West (AZ, CO, NM, NV)

Barack Obama holds a commanding lead among Hispanics in the southwest. The Democratic nominee leads John McCain by 45 points in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada, according to the latest Democracy Corps survey of Hispanic voters.¹

Just a few months ago, analysts were questioning whether Obama had a Latino problem, given the success of Hillary Clinton among Hispanics during the primaries. Today, Obama has a chance to perform better among Hispanic voters than any Democratic presidential candidate in recent history. In the four southwestern states, he is running an average 10 points ahead of John Kerry's share of the vote four years ago, while McCain receives only a bare majority of Bush's 2004 Latino vote.

Obama has consolidated the Democratic Hispanic vote in a way that he has yet to do among non-Hispanic white voters. Nationally, Obama runs 3 points below the generic Democratic presidential vote among white voters, but among Latinos his vote effectively matches the generic preference for a Democrat.² He also holds a nearly 2-1 lead among independent Hispanics.

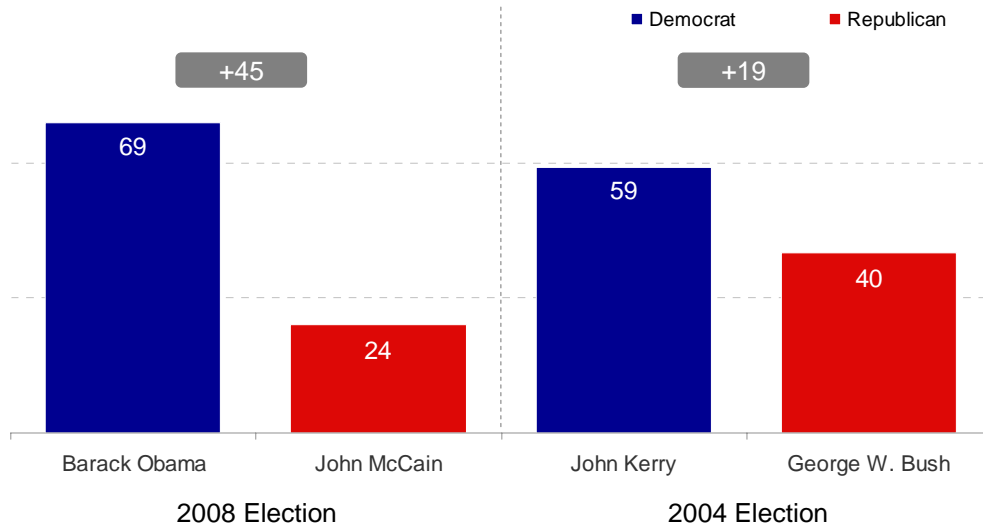
¹ Democracy Corps survey conducted in AZ, CO, NM and NV among 1,003 likely Hispanic voters July 11 – August 3, 2008.

² Data for white voters nationally based on Democracy Corps poll of 1,004 likely voters nationwide conducted July 21-24, 2008.



Obama's lead surpasses Kerry's performance in AZ, CO, NM, NV

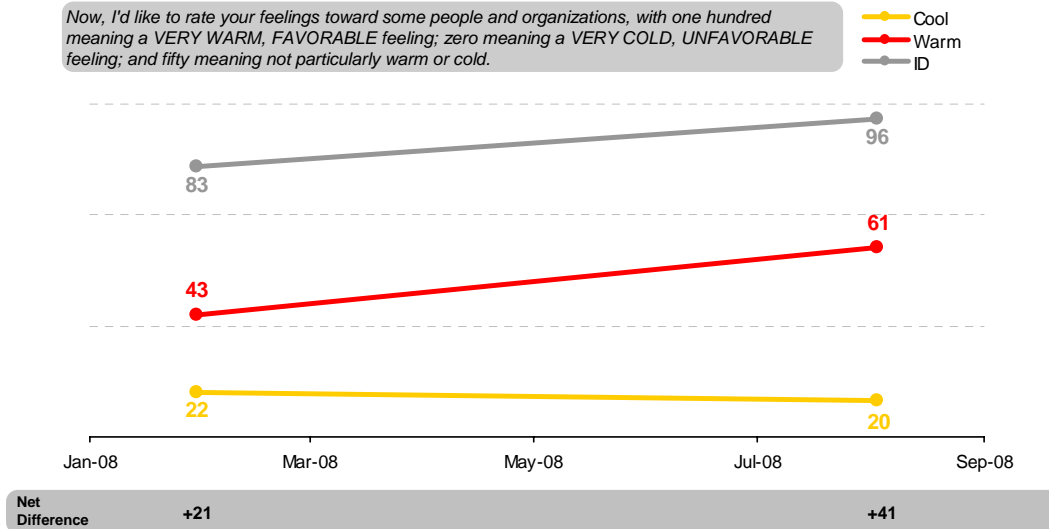
Now let me ask you again about your vote for President but with the candidate names. If the election for president were held today and the candidates were -- Democrat Barack Obama or Republican John McCain for whom would you vote?



Obama has said all along that Hispanic voters would embrace him as they got to know him better, and that is proving to be the case. In our January poll, 83 percent of Hispanic voters in the southwest were able to identify Obama, and twice as many gave him a positive rating as a negative one. Today, his identification is nearly universal (96 percent), and his positive ratings outnumber his negative by three times. The share of people who give him a positive rating has risen by nearly 50 percent in that time, while the number who gives him a negative rating has barely budged.

Obama's image improving with familiarity

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.





Obama’s image among Hispanics is now superior to that of Hillary Clinton (and Bill Clinton, whose ratings are higher than his wife’s). The New York Senator could be of great help as a surrogate to Obama, however. She retains particularly strong backing among older Hispanic women, a group with which Obama is underperforming, and she retains a great reservoir of support in the key swing state of Nevada.

Notwithstanding the good news for Obama, our research contains some warning signs as well. Latino voters, like other Americans, are still just getting to know Obama, and they need to be reassured about his background and preparedness to lead. Complacency about the Hispanic vote would be a mistake.

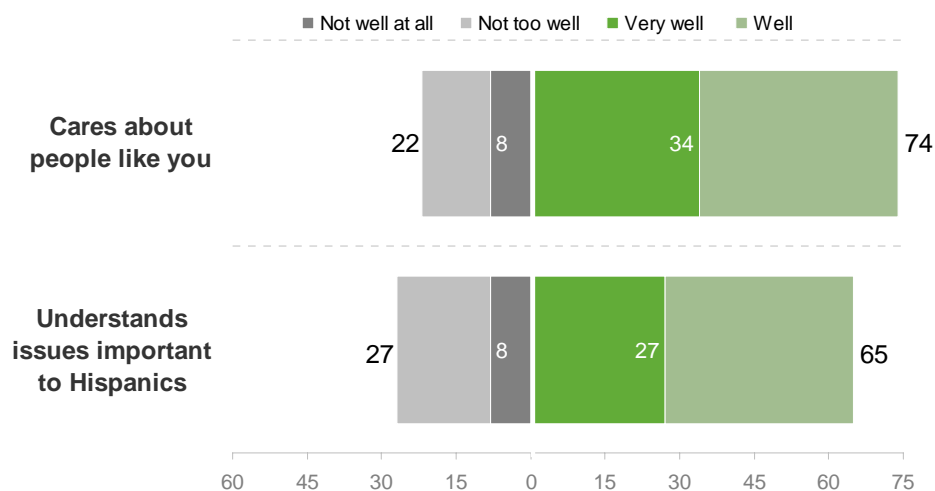
Obama Connecting

As these results suggest, Obama has clearly been able to establish a connection with Hispanic voters, and the concern among some that Hispanics would not vote for a black presidential candidate has largely shown to be unfounded.

About two-thirds of Latinos in the southwest say that Obama understands issues important to Hispanics, and three-quarters say he cares about people like them.

Obama connecting with Hispanics

Now, I am going to read you a list of words and phrases people use to describe political figures. For each word or phrase, please tell me whether it describes Barack Obama very well, well, not too well, or not well at all.



Nearly half of Hispanic voters say the concerns of blacks and Hispanics are similar, and among them, Obama holds an eye-popping 56-point lead over McCain. But even among those who say the concerns of blacks and Hispanics are very different, Obama leads by 37 points.

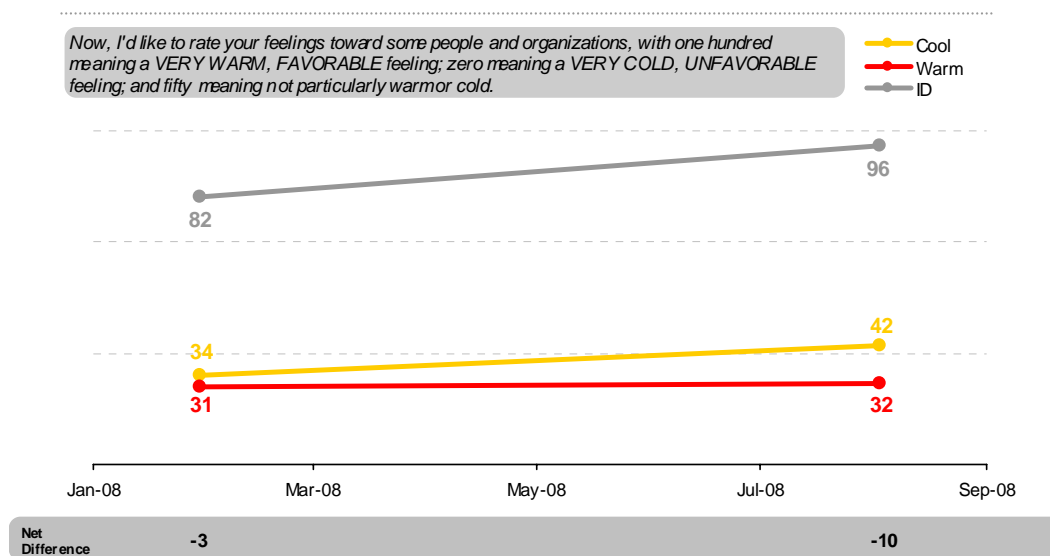


Having said that, there are some signs in our research of racially-driven feelings. While only one-third of Hispanic voters in the southwest think that Obama will put the interests of black Americans ahead of others, a majority of Democratic defectors – those planning to vote for a Democratic candidate for Congress, but who support McCain – hold that view.

McCain Faltering

As Obama's standing among Hispanics has improved, McCain's position has weakened in the southwest. The share of voters who have a positive image of the Arizona Senator has held steady since January, while the percentage that has a negative impression of him has risen by 8 points.

Negative impressions of McCain rise



McCain is, of course, operating within a very difficult political environment, as the Republican brand has been so severely damaged. Only 1 in 5 Hispanic voters approve of George Bush's performance as president, and 3 of 5 believe that McCain will continue Bush's policies.

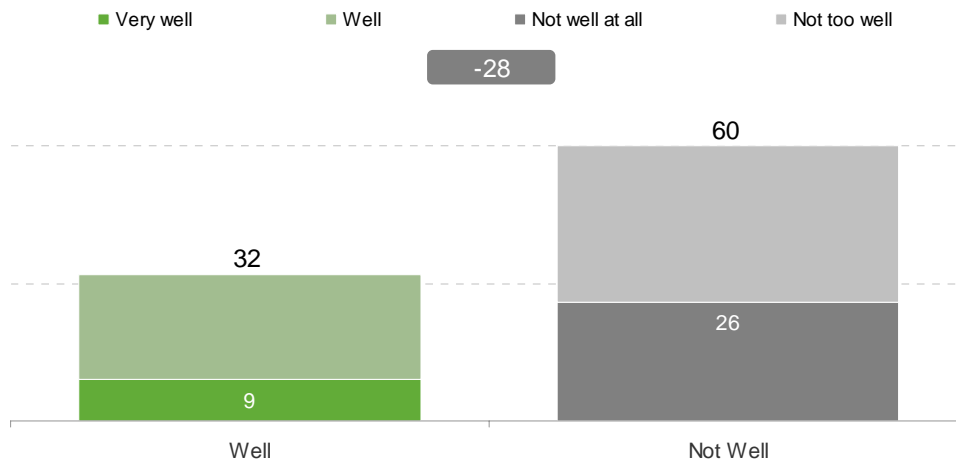
For McCain to seriously improve his position among Hispanics, he would not only have to carve into Obama's lead among independents, but he would also have to retain significant Democratic support. Democrats hold a 63 to 14 advantage in party identification among southwestern Hispanics.



McCain’s problems, however, are also personal. He is not connecting with Latino voters, as only a third say he “understands the concerns of the Hispanic community,” and only 9 percent say that phrase describes him very well.

McCain not seen to understand Hispanic issues

Now, I am going to read you a list of words and phrases people use to describe political figures. For each word or phrase, please tell me whether it describes John McCain very well, well, not too well, or not well at all...
Understands the concerns of the Hispanic community...



McCain’s standing overall is such that he has pretty much reached a floor among Hispanics in the southwest. It is not plausible for him to go any lower than his current 24 percent share of the vote. If Obama’s vote share is to increase, the survey shows it will largely come from those who are currently undecided. McCain’s growth would come at Obama’s expense.

Introducing Obama

Even though Obama is much better known today than he was at the start of the year, there are still many Hispanics, like other voters, who do not know much about his background. When the Obama campaign unveiled its biographical television spots on the candidate, it wisely focused on his modest upbringing by a single mother and his work as a community organizer. It was essential – and still is, given the McCain campaign’s critique of Obama as a “celebrity” – to underscore that Obama had to struggle to get ahead. As our survey shows, this message is particularly helpful among Hispanics, as many have faced a similar struggle.

Latinos react particularly well to information about Obama’s work as a community organizer, particularly a version that notes that he worked among Latinos as well.



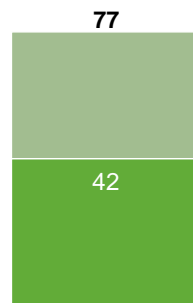
Obama's community work resonates with Hispanics

Now I am going to read you a series of statements about Democrat Barack Obama. For each statement, please tell me whether this description, if accurate, makes you much more likely to vote for Democrat Barack Obama, somewhat more likely, just a little more likely, no more likely or less likely to vote for Democrat Barack Obama.

Latino Neighborhoods

After college, Obama turned down big money jobs from Wall Street to work as a community organizer to help white, black and Latino poor neighborhoods devastated by the closing of steel plants

■ Somewhat/ little more likely
■ Much more likely



Total more likely to support

McCain Vulnerable on Economy and Health Care

Once he has established who he is, Obama can focus on the economy and health care to be able to hold his vast lead among Hispanics. As among the general public, the economy is the dominant concern for Latinos, and McCain is particularly vulnerable on the issue. The most effective critiques of him involve his policies, such as tax cuts and service cutbacks, which would favor the rich at the expense of the middle class and poor. This message is potent overall and with key Latino swing voters:

The Republican Party and George Bush have spent the last eight years giving tax breaks to the rich. Now, John McCain wants \$2 trillion in new tax breaks for the wealthy, saying he'll pay for it by cutting early education, student loans, cancer research, affordable housing, and transportation programs.

The Iraq war is also troubling to Hispanic voters, not only because of the conflict, but because of its economic impact in the United States. When discussing the Iraq war, Obama can also do so within the context of the economy. This statement also raised very serious doubts for Hispanic swing voters about McCain:

The Republicans have already spent over 600 billion dollars in Iraq. If elected president, John McCain will maintain the Republican's commitment to Iraq and spend another trillion dollars instead of using that money to rebuild our schools and roads, invest in alternative energy and create jobs here at home.



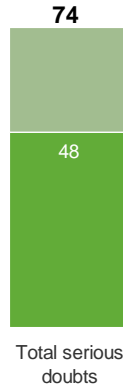
McCain weak on economy; Iraq can become part of the debate

Now let me read you a statement about Republican John McCain. Please tell me whether this description, if accurate, raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts or no real doubts in your own mind about Republican John McCain.

Failed Bush Economic Policy

The Republican party and George Bush have spent the last eight years giving tax breaks to the rich. Now John McCain wants two trillion dollars in new tax breaks for the wealthy, saying he'll pay for it by cutting early education, student loans, cancer research, affordable housing, and transportation programs.

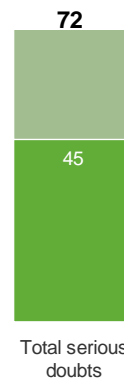
■ Serious doubts
■ Very serious doubts



Iraq Spending

The Republicans have already spent 600 billion dollars in Iraq. If elected president, John McCain will maintain the Republicans' commitment to Iraq and spend another trillion dollars there instead of using that money to rebuild our schools and roads, invest in alternative energy and create jobs here at home.

■ Serious doubts
■ Very serious doubts



Health care is also an important part of the economic narrative, given the rising concern over health care costs. Health care is a particular concern among older women, the demographic group with which Obama is weakest.

By far the most potent criticism of McCain among Hispanic swing voters that we tested involves the economic impact of his health care plan.

McCain's health care plan would threaten the coverage of 158 million Americans who currently get health care from their employer. He would require individuals to buy their own insurance directly from the insurance companies while allowing those companies to deny coverage and boost premiums.



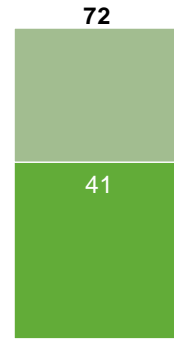
McCain most vulnerable over health care plan

Now let me read you a statement about Republican John McCain. Please tell me whether this description, if accurate, raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts or no real doubts in your own mind about Republican John McCain.

McCain plan threatens coverage

McCain’s health care plan would threaten the coverage of 158 million Americans who currently get health care from their employer. He would require individuals to buy their own insurance directly from the insurance companies while allowing those companies to deny coverage and boost premiums.

■ Serious doubts
■ Very serious doubts



Total serious doubts

Withstanding Republican Attacks

Given the adverse political environment and the vulnerabilities that McCain has on issues important to Hispanics, McCain will only be able to make significant gains if he can raise serious doubts about Obama. That of course is McCain’s overall strategy as well.

Many of the Republican lines of attack have not had much of an impact thus far among Hispanic voters. For example, they do not question his overall preparedness for the presidency, with 71 percent saying he “has what it takes to be president.” An attack on Obama’s lack of executive experience raises serious doubts for relatively few people.

But there are issues that remain unsettled in people’s minds about Obama.

- **Patriotism.** The survey suggests that Obama may be vulnerable among Hispanic voters to attacks on his patriotism. While few initially doubt that he is patriotic – 72 percent say the term describes him well – narratives that include Michelle Obama’s remark about being proud of her country for the first time, the occasion in which Obama did not cover his heart during the national anthem, and Jeremiah Wright’s comment that the United States brought about the 9/11 attacks are fairly potent among swing voters.



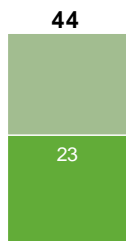
Foreign policy attacks on Obama fairly potent

Now let me read you a statement about Democrat Barack Obama. Please tell me whether this description, if accurate, raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts or no real doubts in your own mind about Democrat Barack Obama.

Obama Patriotism Attack

At a recent public event, Obama didn't cover his heart during the National Anthem. Obama's wife recently said she had never been proud of America and his pastor even says that we brought the 9/11 attacks upon ourselves.

■ Serious doubts
■ Very serious doubts



Jeremy Wright Attack

Obama's pastor Jeremiah Wright says that blacks should sing, quote "God Damn America," instead of God Bless America and that we brought the nine-eleven attacks upon ourselves. Yet Obama attended Wright's sermons for 20 years without ever protesting.

■ Serious doubts
■ Very serious doubts



- **National security.** Issues of preparedness and patriotism are also related to Obama's relative weakness on national security, which is reinforced by McCain's strength on the issue. Among Hispanic voters who cite terrorism as their top concern, Obama's lead is only 8 points (though this is skewed somewhat since Republican voters are more likely to cite terrorism as a top concern).

Obama's rating overall on national security is not bad – 71 percent agree he “will keep America strong” – but the survey suggests that some voters are holding back from supporting him because of concerns in that area. Indeed, Democratic congressional voters who support McCain feel that the term “will keep America strong” does not describe Obama well by a 51-point margin.

A national security attack on Obama raises doubts about him for many Hispanic voters. In the survey, we tested the Republican argument that Obama has no foreign policy experience, suggested bombing Pakistan, and would negotiate with leaders of terrorist states like Iran. Nearly half of Hispanic voters said that raised serious doubts about Obama.

- **Taxes:** In the case of taxes, Republican attacks will take place in an environment that is already fertile. 2 in 5 Hispanic voters say that Obama “will raise my taxes,” and his share of the vote is 16 points smaller among voters who cite taxes as one of their top two concerns.



The charge that Obama voted to raise taxes 94 times and would repeal the Bush tax cuts and raise the Social Security tax prompts concerns for a majority of Latino voters. This attack is particularly potent among swing voters, especially the young men who make up a disproportionate share of McCain's winnable voters.

- ***Social issues:*** Finally, social issues could complicate Obama's appeal to Hispanic voters. McCain already leads among those who cite "moral values" as a top concern, and an attack on Obama for supporting gay marriage, adoptions by gay couples and partial birth abortion is troubling to many Hispanic voters overall, and to swing voters.

Despite these concerns, Obama thus far does very well with Hispanic Catholics, who are often seen to be motivated by these social issues. His lead among Catholic Latinos in the southwest is 51 points, compared to 23 points among Protestants. Even among Catholics who attend religious services every week, Obama's lead of 45 points matches his overall lead with Hispanics in these four states.