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To: Friends of Democracy Corps
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Democrats Poised to Challenge in Republican Battleground

Democrats' historic opportunity in Republican-held districts

As President Bush gave his last State of the Union address to Congress, Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Research conducted a large scale survey in the Republican battleground – the most competitive 40 Republican-held House seats. Democrats have an historic opportunity to contest deep into Republican territory. They are already well ahead of 2006 and even more voters seem open to voting Democratic.

Democrats start off even with Republicans (45 to 46 percent) in a challenging battleground that Republicans won by a 10-point margin in the past two elections. These named long-term incumbents are at only 46 percent on average – and are behind in the most competitive 20 seats. But in this Republican territory, the Democrats have a more positive image and more voters are winnable for them than for Republicans. By a 9-point margin, voters here prefer to elect a new Democratic candidate to bring change than to reelect their current member.

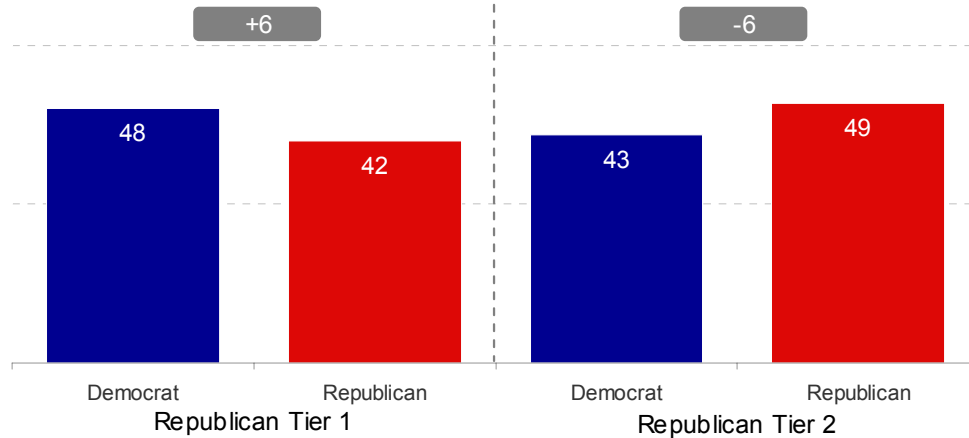
State of the Congressional Race

Democrats are in a very strong position in the Republican battleground as they tie the congressional vote in districts that Kerry lost by 10 points in 2004 and Democrats lost by the same margin in 2006. More importantly, Democrats are ahead by 6 points in the most competitive districts (48 to 42 percent) and continue to be competitive in the harder to reach districts (43 to 49 percent) – a net 10-point improvement compared to Democrats' 2006 performance in these second tier districts. Democrats have the potential to turn 2008 into another wave election.



Democrats ahead in most competitive Republican districts

Thinking about the election for Congress in 2008, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate*?



*Note: Actual names of incumbents inserted, and a generic candidate was inserted for the opposing party.

In order to refine our targets in this expanded battleground, we have classified districts into different categories. From suburban and urban districts -- where Democrats' performance is higher (49.8 and 47.5, respectively) and voters tend to be more liberal; to exurban, suburban-rural and rural-small town districts where voters are more conservative and the Democratic performance is lower (46.9 in suburban-rural, 44.8 in exurban and 43.1 in rural-small town districts).



The voting history by type of districts

NCEC Dem Normal Performance	2002 vote			2004 Vote			2006 Vote			2008 Vote		
	Dem	Rep	Net	Kerry	Bush	Net	Dem	Rep	Net	Dem	Rep	Net
Suburban 49.8	36	64	-28	50	50	0	47	53	-6	46	45	+1
Urban 47.5	27	73	-46	47	53	-6	43	57	-14	48	43	+5
Exurban 44.8	32	68	-36	43	57	-14	44	56	-12	44	46	-2
Rural/ Small town 43.1	33	67	-34	37	63	-26	44	56	-12	41	50	-9
Suburban /Rural 46.9	37	63	-26	44	56	-12	44	56	-12	46	47	-1

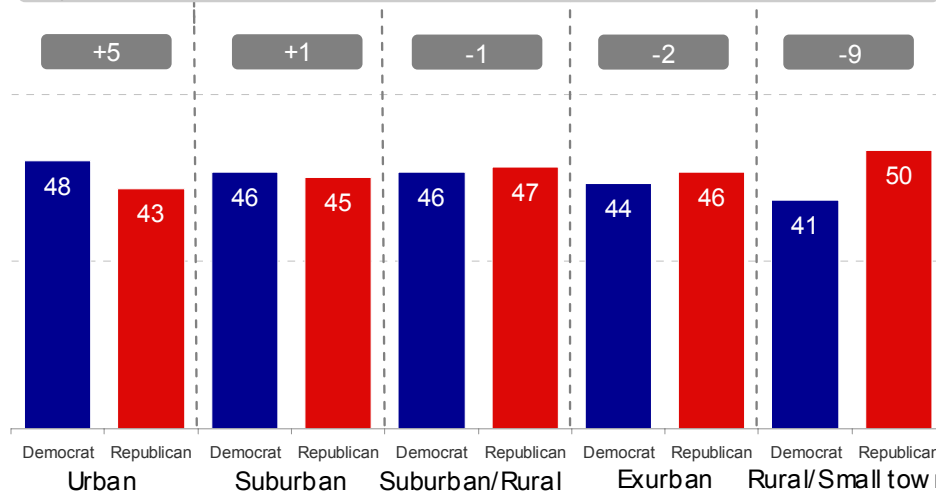
**Note: Data from the NCEC and the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives and Secretary of State websites for election results.*

Not surprising, Democrats are performing best in urban districts and have their toughest challenge in rural-small town districts. Indeed, Democrats carry the urban districts by 5 points (48 to 43 percent) and are tied with Republicans in suburban, suburban-rural and exurban districts. Only in rural-small town districts do Republicans hold a significant advantage with a 9-point edge (50 to 41 percent). But in four of the five types of districts, the Republican incumbent is well below 50 percent and even in the most difficult, the named incumbent is just at this critical tipping point.



Democrats best in urban districts, most challenged in rural-small town

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?

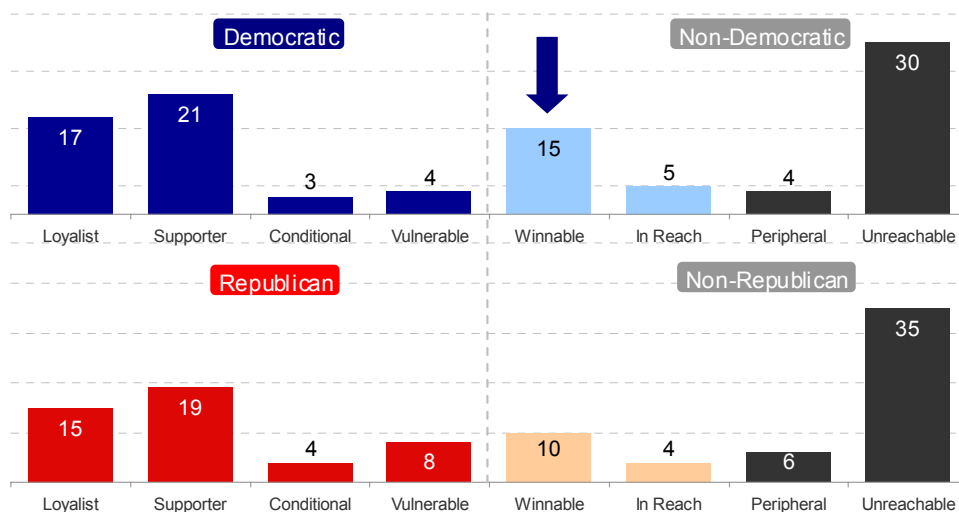


**Note: Actual names of incumbents inserted, and a generic candidate was inserted for the opposing party. Data from Democracy Corps combined run of surveys conducted in December, 2007 and January 2008 in the 40 battleground GOP districts of a total of 2,726 likely voters.*

Perhaps more important than Democrats’ strong standing, is the fact that they have a serious opportunity to expand their advantage in the Republican battlefield. A striking 15 percent are ‘winnable’ for Democrats, compared to 10 percent for the Republicans. Moreover, Democrats have fewer vulnerable voters, suggesting the opportunity to be on the offensive.



Congressional Voter Choice Scale: Democrats have more winnable, fewer vulnerable and fewer unreachable



Key groups of winnable voters include independents and moderate voters, older women, voters with post graduate education, women with a college education, older white voters with a college education, older men with a college education, single men and Catholics.

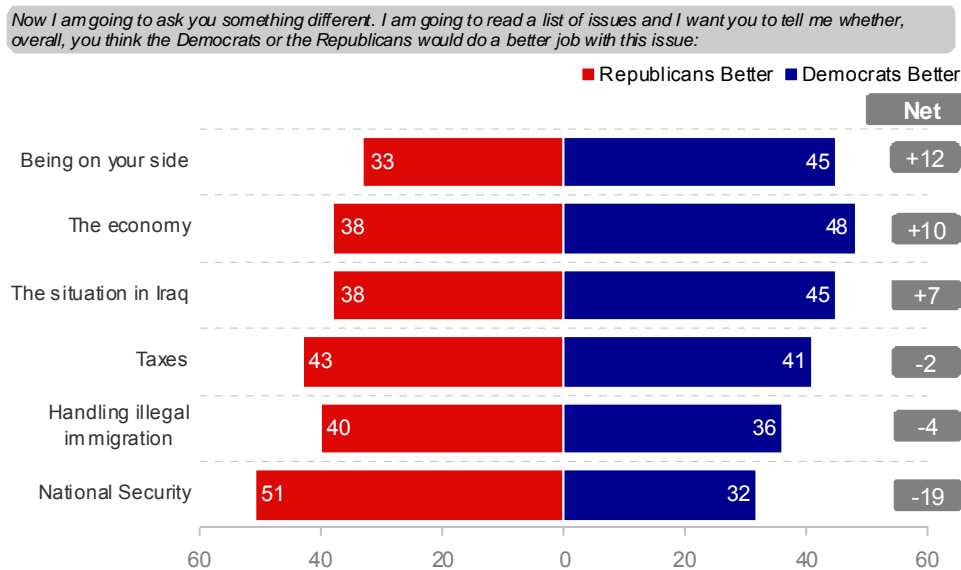
Democratic Advantage in Republican Battleground

Democrats walk into the 2008 election with a significant branding advantage. Democrats have balanced positive and negative ratings, but their net favorability is 10 points higher than Republicans’ (-4 compared to -14). The Democratic brand is stronger than the Republican brand across all types of districts – with the exception of rural-small town districts, ranging from a 32-point advantage in suburban districts to an 8-point gap in suburban-rural districts.

On the issues most important to voters, Democrats hold a significant advantage over Republicans. Democrats have a 7-point advantage on Iraq and a 10-point edge on the economy. More importantly, Democrats’ hold their strongest advantage on ‘being on your side’ -- an issue that our regression analysis identifies as a key driver of the vote.



Democrats will do a better job on being on your side, economy and Iraq



Based on regression models, the most important issues to make gains in order to shift the congressional vote are ‘being on your side’ and ‘taxes.’ As mentioned in Democracy Corps’ latest memo “Bring it On,” Democrats should be proactive on taxes, demanding permanent tax cuts for a burdened middle class while also attacking a tax system rigged for the wealthiest and corporations.

Incumbents’ Vulnerability

Republican incumbents in this battleground are remarkably weak. They hold a 41 percent approval rating and a net favorability significantly below the national average (just +4 compared to +15). Republican incumbents are even vulnerable in exurban and rural-small town districts, where their approval rating stands below the 40 percent mark and the change and anti-Washington climate is very strong.

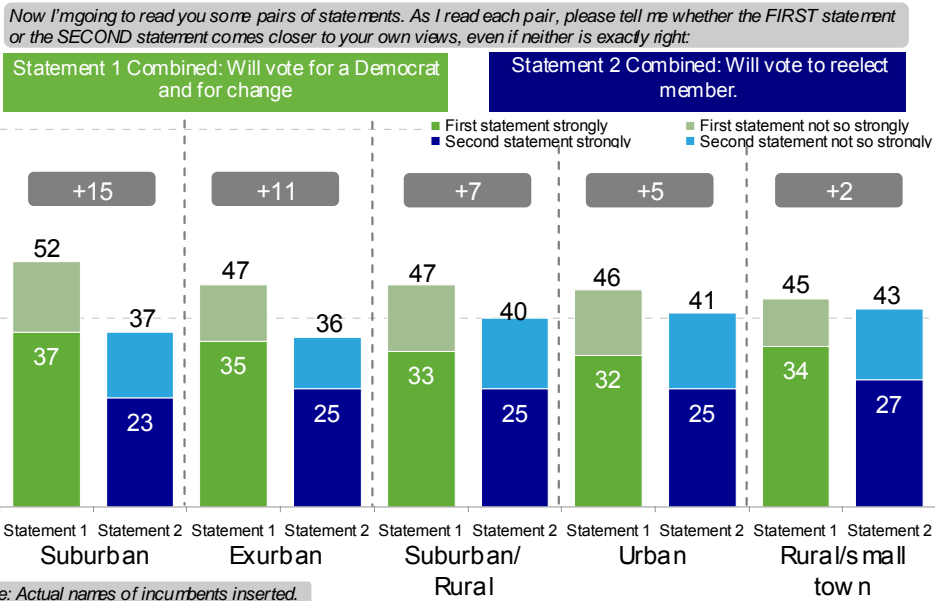
Voters here want to vote for change. By an 8-point margin, voters would rather vote for someone new to bring change than reelect their current member. More importantly, despite the Democratic Congress’ low favorability ratings, Democrats still represent the change that voters want. By a 9-point margin (49 to 40 percent) voters prefer to elect a Democratic candidate to Congress to bring change than reelect their current member despite the Democratic Congress being characterized as ‘just business as usual.’

A change election will certainly help Democrats across all types of districts. With the exception of rural-small town districts – where voters are split, the public everywhere else would rather vote for change embodied by the Democratic candidate than reelect their current member



of Congress. The margin is especially large in suburban districts (52 to 37 percent), where Democrats can persuade winnable voters with a change message.

Vulnerability greatest in Suburban and Exurban districts



Republican incumbents face a great challenge to obtain their reelection in a change environment when voters see them as a continuation of the status quo. Indeed, voters do not see Republican incumbents as agents of change or independent, but rather as a continuation of Bush and allies of big businesses and special interests.

In exurban and rural-small town districts, where Republicans felt safer and were less aware of the need to protect themselves, members have become more vulnerable. Just 43 percent describe their members as being ‘for people like you’ compared to 47 percent across the battleground as a whole. In rural-small town districts in particular, members are seen as out of touch with voters and cozy with big businesses and special interests. Democrats running for Congress in rural-small town and exurban districts should make an effort to define Republican incumbents early in the process before they attempt to improve their standing.

Defining the election

Elections ultimately represent a choice between two candidates or two positions on a given issue. In this survey, we presented respondents with several definitions of the upcoming election and asked them after each one if it was a difference that would make them more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate.

Virtually all of the definitions of the election result in majority support for the Democratic candidate. Nonetheless, our regression model showed that certain definitions are more effective than others in predicting the Democratic congressional vote:



- **Advocates of the middle class:** Pairing support for the wealthy or special interests instead of the middle class and listening to the people are definitions that will increase Democrats’ advantage. This is especially true in suburban and urban districts, where a choice between the wealthy and the middle class leads nearly two-thirds of voters to vote for the Democratic candidates.
- **Problem solvers:** More than one-third of voters are much more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate for Congress when the choice in the election is framed as setting the priorities abroad or at home, or comparing mismanagement of disasters like hurricane Katrina or the war in Iraq and solutions to real problems.

Democrats define choice in the election

	Much more likely	Total more likely
NOTHING ON HEALTH CARE: Republicans have done nothing about health care while costs skyrocketed and more lost insurance. Democrats will work for affordable health insurance for all.	39	58
NOTHING ON GAS PRICES: Republicans have done nothing about high gas prices and Middle East oil. Democrats will work for solar power, alternative fuels, energy independence and to stop global warming.	37	57
WEALTHY VS. MIDDLE CLASS: Republicans have worked for the wealthiest and big corporate special interests. Democrats will work for the middle class, not just the few.	35	56
ECONOMY FOR WEALTHY VS. ECONOMY FOR MIDDLE CLASS: Republicans make the economy work for the wealthiest and big corporations. Democrats will work for an economy that works for the middle class, not just the few.	36	55
SINKING BILLIONS ABROAD VS. PRIORITIZING ISSUES AT HOME: Republicans will continue focusing only abroad and sinking billions in other countries. Democrats will prioritize health care, energy, and our economy.	35	54
MISMANAGED ISSUES VS. BACK ON TRACK: Republicans have mismanaged the war in Iraq, foreign relations, oil, Katrina, and the economy. Democrats will get us back on track on dealing with important problems.	36	52

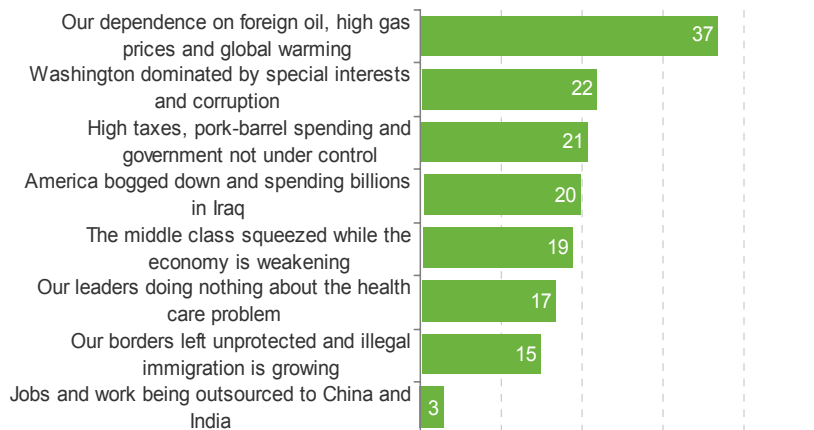
Defining Change

The electorate in this Republican battleground is thirsty for change and their frustrations are driven largely by rising gas prices and global warming, a sense of a lack of accountability in government and an endless war that is costing us billions. Democrats are well positioned to represent the change that voters want in each of these areas.



What is wrong: underlying issues

*Now I am going to read you a list of phrases that people use to describe why our country is going in the wrong direction. After I read the list, please tell me which TWO come closest to your own views of why the country is going in the wrong direction.**



**Note: This question was only asked of those who responded that the country was going in the wrong direction.*

Democrats have an opportunity to be the voice of change – both on the economy and changing government. That is the case they have to make as challengers in this change election.

- **The economy:** Democrats hold a 9-point advantage over Republicans on the economy (48 to 39 percent) and can use this advantage to put forward a progressive agenda that will address voters’ economic concerns about gas prices while protecting the environment.
- **Changing government:** Democrats hold a significant advantage over Republicans on accountability and changing government. More importantly, this advantage holds in all types of districts except for rural-small town districts, where voters feel Republicans would do a better job ‘making sure that taxpayers get value for their tax dollars’ and ‘doing what is good, not just what is good for themselves’ and are split on which party would be best at ‘working with others, regardless of party.’

The Republican battlefield of 40 incumbent Republican seats is wide open to the Democrats who can challenge deep into the second tier. Voters are very attentive to politics this year and that only seems to be opening further opportunities in 2008. This is clearly a year to think expansively and to define the change against the Republicans who are responsible for the government in Washington and the direction of the country.