

**DEMOCRACY CORPS**  
**CARVILLE ♦ GREENBERG**

**Date:** November 6, 2007  
**To:** Friends of Democracy Corps  
**From:** Stan Greenberg and James Carville

**RE: DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS' YEAR ANNIVERSARY**  
**The State of the Congress One Year After the 2006 Election**

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One year after the 2006 election where Democrats gained control of the House and Senate, the media and political commentators have been paying a great deal of attention to the Congress' low approval ratings. That is a legitimate measure on the public's discontent with Washington, but it is not a window on how the public is viewing the parties and who should carry the mantle of change next year. The focus on Congress' approval allows the press to write more 'balanced stories,' but in the process, misses the main story: it is incumbent Republican members individually and 'Republicans in Congress' generally who are paying the price for the current battles. That helps account for why the Democrats have moved into a stable lead in the named balloting for Congress – bigger than the margin they achieved in 2006.<sup>1</sup>

With just one quarter of voters giving positive ratings to the Congress, it should get our attention – especially in a volatile year with voters wanting change.<sup>2</sup> But when we put a face to the Congress the story is very different. Indeed, voters hold their Democratic House incumbents (asked by name) in high esteem – a judgment stable over the last six months; while Republican incumbents are losing their voters – with their favorability ratings falling significantly over the same period, particularly in the last month.

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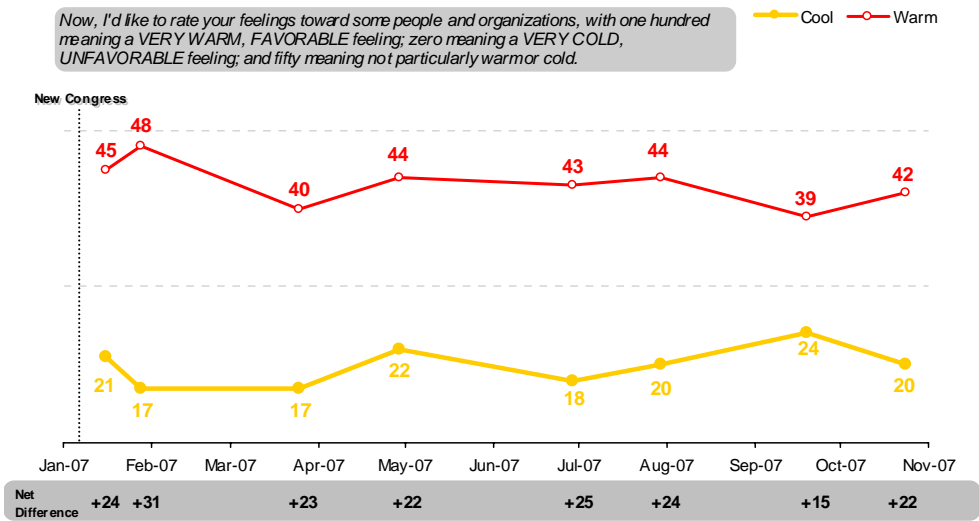
<sup>1</sup> Democracy Corps poll of 994 likely voters conducted October 21-23, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> NPR poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies in conjunction with Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research of 800 likely voters nationwide October 4, 6-7, 2007.

# The State of the Congress One Year After the 2006 Election

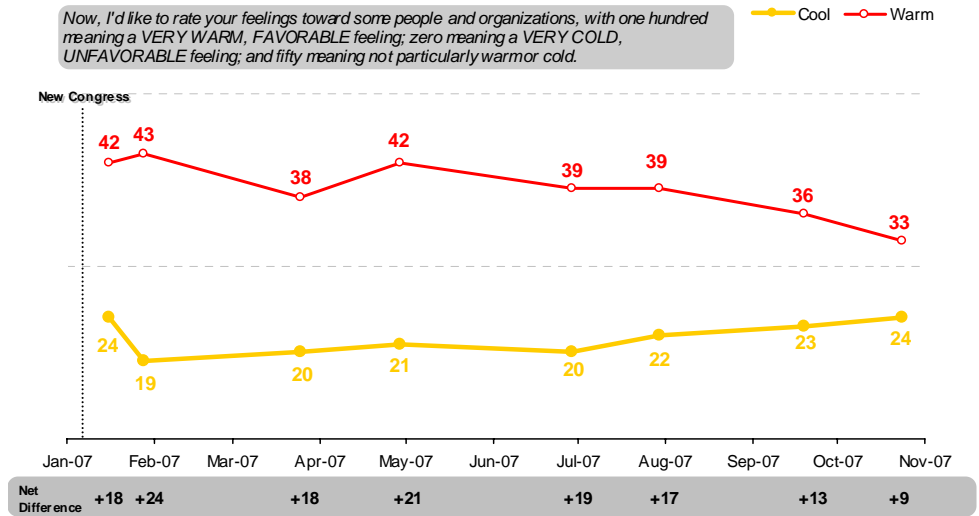
## Democratic House members (named) stable favorability 2:1

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.



## Republican House member (named): big fall in esteem

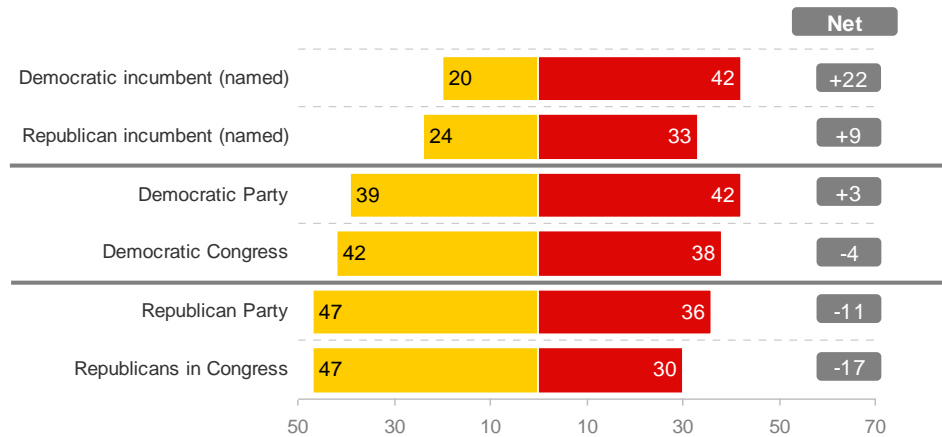
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While it is tempting to hold up a score card on legislative accomplishments, the main story for voters are Republican members supporting the President on issue after issue – starting with Iraq and ending with health care and budget priorities. As a result, when voters create their own hierarchy of political actors and institutions, at the bottom sits the ‘Republicans in Congress’ – with negative ratings exceeding positive by 17 points. They are 13 points weaker than the ‘the Democratic Congress.’

Congressional favorability ratings

*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.*



This Congressional dynamic has real consequences at the ballot box and leading into the 2008 election. Democrats hold a stable advantage in the Congressional vote (51 to 41 percent) – their new plateau for almost all of 2007. And more relevant for 2008, Democrats are well ahead (54 to 37 percent) in the 35 Democratic battleground districts, including their 2006 pick-up seats. And perhaps even more relevant, the Democrats are running ahead (48 to 42 percent) in the Republican-held battleground seats.<sup>3</sup> That is likely the most important message from voters on the one-year anniversary and one year out before voters have another chance to express their judgment on the course of the country.

<sup>3</sup> Based on results from Democracy Corps poll of 1,600 likely voters in 35 competitive Democratic districts and 35 competitive Republican districts conducted July 25-31, 2007.