



To: Interested Parties
From: Pete Brodnitz/NDN
Date: November 2, 2007
Re: National Poll: Clamoring for Change, Persistent Pessimism, Democrats dominating on economic issues.

NDN, a progressive think tank and advocacy organization, completed a national survey on the economy and globalization on October 15th. This is the **first of two memos** outlining key findings and analysis from the poll.

Enormous Voter Frustration Is Taking A Toll on Job Ratings; Voters Currently Believe Democrats Are More in Sync With These Concerns Than Are Republicans

As many recent polls have documented, one year after historic Democratic gains in Congress, most voters remain quite frustrated with the direction of the nation and continue to be frustrated at Washington's inability to be responsive to the problems that affect people in their daily lives, as well as the on-going war. This is evident in low job ratings for Congress. While this level of voter frustration certainly adds potential volatility to the 2008 elections, at this stage the frustration created by the GOP strategy of blocking Democratic initiatives is taking a heavier toll on the Republicans in Congress and the Republican Party than on the Democrats.

In fact, the standing of the Republican Party is at remarkably low levels. In the generic head to heads for both President and Congress, Republicans receive only a third of the vote, indicating their road back in 2008 will be a long and tough one. The recent 3rd quarter fundraising totals reinforce the weakness of the national Republican Party, as their candidates for President have been out-raised by \$76,000,000, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) holds a 17 to 1 advantage in cash-on-hand over the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) and the Republican National Chairman just resigned.

Some findings from our recent survey include the following:

- Though both political parties have suffered erosion, the generic ballot for Congress is only slightly narrower today than it was on the eve of the 2006 Congressional elections;
 - And, it is notable that while Democrats have an 81% advantage among self-described Democrats, Republicans have a 69% advantage among Republicans

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because 16% of Republicans are undecided on the test of generic party preference for Congress;

- Job ratings for Congress certainly represent a potential challenge in that an electorate that is this frustrated will be open to significant change, but currently the overall job rating for Democrats in Congress is slightly higher than it is for Republicans;
- Despite this closeness of the job ratings (which is based on performance), the GOP strategy of blocking Democratic initiatives to make it difficult for Democrats to show results is not working in the sense that voters continue to believe that the Democrats, more than the Republicans, are trying to have a positive impact on their lives;
- If you look at the generic Congressional ballot by the top 5 issues that people say they care about, you see that Democrats lead among voters who cite 4 of these issues (specifically, the top three issues voters cite as important are healthcare, Iraq and the economy). A smaller number also cite education and immigration as important concerns. Democrats have a significant lead among every group except those who say immigration is their top concern, and the GOP lead among this group is far from overwhelming.
- Among those who say their top concerns are health care or Iraq (the top 2 concerns), the generic Congressional advantage for Democrats is over 20 percentage points.

What all of this means is that the GOP is in a period of retrenchment in which they will continue to focus on efforts to shore up its base using issues such as immigration because it lacks standing on most of the things that people say concern them and that will factor into their decision-making in the 2008 Congressional elections.

Voters Seek Change in Washington - Both Congressional and Presidential

Voters are pessimistic about the direction of the country and continue to express a strong desire for change on national security and economic issues. They are frustrated with the performance of the President and Congress and the lack of progress on making health care more affordable, the situation in Iraq, and the precarious state of the economy. They perceive Democrats to be more likely to address these concerns and believe Democrats will stand up and fight for the middle class, leading more voters to support Democratic candidates than Republican candidates for President and Congress.

Views of the U.S. and its Leaders - Pessimistic

More than two out of three voters nationwide are unhappy with the direction of the country, including more than two out of three Independent voters and nearly 60% of voters who are undecided on a generic Congressional ballot.

In general, do you think that things in the country are going in the right direction or are they off on the wrong track?					
	All	Cong. Undc *	Party ID		
			D	I	R
Right direction	23	25	6	20	47
Wrong track	68	58	90	69	42
Don't know	9	17	3	11	11

**Voters who are undecided on a generic Congressional ballot*

The lack of progress in addressing economic concerns, specifically the affordability and accessibility of health care and the broader issue area of “the economy,” are the top concerns among all voters, and when added together account for 71% of the overall responses for “most important issue”: health care, economy, taxes and budget. Economic concerns are also the chief issues among voters who identify as Democratic, Independent, or Republican.

What two or three issues or problems would you say are the most important things that your Member of Congress should focus on? (OPEN-END)					
Only responses 2% or higher are shown	All	Cong. Undc	Party ID		
			D	I	R
Health Care	33	32	41	29	28
Iraq	28	25	34	27	21
Economy	23	26	23	24	22
Immigration	13	16	10	12	18
Education	12	13	10	13	12
Taxes	8	6	4	9	9
Budget	7	7	6	7	6
International	5	3	4	3	10
Crime	5	5	5	6	5
Social Security	5	4	6	4	4
Homeland Security & Terrorism	4	4	4	4	9
Energy	2	1	2	1	2
Environment	2	2	2	3	2
Government Reform	2	1	1	2	4
Don't know	3	4	2	3	4

33% of voters cite health care as the issue they most would like Congress to focus on, including 41% of Democrats, 29% of Independents, 28% of Republicans, and 32% of voters undecided on a generic Congressional ballot. Iraq follows health care as a top concern, with 28% of all voters citing it as one of their most important issues. Nearly one-quarter of voters believe the economy is one of the most important issues Congress should address.

President Bush’s job approval rating (“Excellent/Good”) has sunk to 29%, with more than seven in ten voters rating his job as “Fair/Poor.” More than three-quarters of Independents rate Bush’s job performance as “Fair/Poor,” as well as two-thirds of voters who are undecided about their Congressional vote. Four in ten (39%) Republicans, voters from his own party, give him negative marks.

How would you rate the job George Bush has been doing as President?					
	All	Cong. Undc	Party ID		
			D	I	R
EXCELLENT/GOOD	29	33	5	24	61
Excellent	7	6	1	5	16
Good	22	27	4	19	45
FAIR/POOR	71	65	94	76	39
Fair	23	30	17	28	24
Poor	48	36	77	48	15
DON'T KNOW	1	1	1	1	n/a

Under the dome of the Capitol, the news is not any better. Democrats in Congress currently fare worse than President Bush with a job approval rating of only 19% and nearly 80% of voters saying the Democrats’ performance is “Fair/Poor.” Further, even among Democrats, Congressional Democrats enjoy only a 31% approval rating, with 68% of Democrats calling their performance “Fair/Poor.”

How would you rate the job the **Democrats in Congress** have been doing? /
 How would you rate the job the **Republicans in Congress** have been doing?

	Congressional Democrats					Congressional Republicans				
	All	Cong Undc	Party ID			All	Cong Undc	Party ID		
			D	I	R			D	I	R
EXCELLENT/GOOD	19	14	31	16	10	15	14	4	13	31
Excellent	2	1	4	2	1	1	1	n/a	1	2
Good	17	13	26	14	9	14	13	4	12	29
FAIR/POOR	78	79	68	80	88	82	81	94	84	66
Fair	45	44	50	43	41	41	51	32	44	49
Poor	34	35	17	37	47	41	30	62	41	16
DON'T KNOW	3	7	2	4	2	3	5	2	3	3

Faring even worse than Congressional Democrats, however, are Congressional Republicans, who have a “Fair/Poor” rating of 82% overall, including 84% of Independents calling Congressional Republicans “Fair/Poor” and two-thirds of Republicans rating their performance as “Fair/Poor.”

Views of the Parties on Economic Issues

Democrats in Washington hold an advantage on the majority of attributes tested, giving them a strong foundation for the 2008 election. Voters believe Democrats are on their side, are standing up for middle class Americans, and are softening the impact of globalization. Democrats retain a strong lead among all voters for most of the attributes, but importantly, they also lead among key Independent voters. 61% of Independents believe that Democrats stand up more for the middle class, while only 17% argue that Republicans fight for middle class Americans – a 44-point Democratic advantage. While there is a clear Democratic advantage on issues facing the middle class, voters are divided as to which party has a plan to grow the economy, with 39% believing the statement applies more to each party. However, Independents side with Republicans on the issue – 29% believe Democrats have a plan and 39% think that Republicans have a plan for economic growth. By a 25-point margin (51% to 26%), voters believe Republicans are supporters of free trade. Republicans also have a 6% advantage on working to ensure a successful economy in the new era of globalization.

Does this apply more to Democrats or Republicans in Washington?	
Sorted by All-Democrats	% Applies to Democrats /

	% Applies to Republicans				
	All	Cong. Undc	Party ID		
			D	I	R
Stands up for the middle class	59/26	49/10	85/7	61/17	25/58
Wants to increase economic opportunity for the middle class	53/30	41/18	81/11	53/23	27/59
Wants to make taxes fair for middle class families	52/31	29/38	83/10	41/32	28/56
Is on the side of people like you	48/34	31/27	89/4	38/24	11/82
Encourages small and new businesses	45/36	31/32	74/10	44/33	21/63
Is working to soften the impact globalization has on the American economy	42/26	30/23	57/27	41/20	24/33
Will balance the Federal budget	41/29	21/23	73/10	31/30	16/53
Encourages new ideas and innovation	39/36	29/39	67/15	33/32	17/64
Has a plan to grow the American economy	39/39	21/37	71/11	29/39	15/71
Is working to make sure the American economy is successful in an era of globalization	34/40	27/28	54/19	32/38	19/61
Supports free trade	26/51	20/48	42/43	19/50	18/63

General Election Ballot – President

At the Presidential level, a generic Democrat leads a generic Republican by 13 points, 46% to 33% overall. The Democratic candidate enjoys a slight advantage among those voters who are undecided on the generic Congressional ballot, and among Independents the Democratic candidate has a 17-point advantage over the Republican, 39% to 22%. Nearly one in four voters, including nearly 40% of Independents, are still up for grabs.

Suppose the election for President was held today, for whom would you vote - a candidate? ... Well, which one do you lean toward at this time?					
	All	Cong. Undc	Party ID		
			D	I	R
<i>Difference (Democratic – Republican)</i>	+13	+4	+82	+17	-68
Democratic	46	21	87	39	9
Republican	33	17	5	22	77
Undecided	22	62	8	39	13

Generic Election Ballot - Congress

Despite Democrats' low approval ratings, voters view the Democrats as more able to bring about much-desired change and as the party on the side of middle class families. As a result, a generic Democratic candidate leads a generic Republican candidate for Congress as well as President by double digits.

In a generic Congressional race, 43% support the Democratic candidate and 33% choose the Republican candidate, a 10-point Democratic lead. Since nearly one-quarter (24%) of voters are undecided, the race is far from over, but there is little on the horizon to disrupt the balance in this race. Among Independents, the generic Democrat has a 12 point lead, but with more than four in ten yet to make up their minds, there is strong potential for volatility.

Suppose the election for Congress was held today, for whom would you vote - a ... candidate? ... Well, which one do you lean toward at this time?				
	All	Party ID		
		D	I	R
<i>Difference (Democratic – Republican)</i>	+10	+81	+12	-69
Democratic	43	86	35	8
Republican	33	5	23	77
Undecided	24	10	42	16

Congressional Ballot By Issue Concern And Compared with 2006 Ballots

- Among those who say their top concerns are health care or Iraq, the generic Congressional preference for Democrats is over 20 points.
 - Of the 13% of voters who say that immigration is their top issue, they favor the Republicans on the generic ballot by a 15 percentage-point margin. In contrast, among the 33% of voters who say health care is their top concern, the Democrats have a 22 point advantage. Among the 28% who say Iraq is their top concern, Democrats have a 33 point advantage.
- In an average of 7 major mainstream polls conducted the week before the 2006 election, the generic Democratic Congressional candidate had an 11.6 percentage-point advantage, only slightly higher than the 10 point lead Democrats now enjoy.

Suppose the election for Congress was held today, for whom would you vote - a ... candidate? ... Well, which one do you lean toward at this time?
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Number in parenthesis is the percentage of voters who say each is one of the two or three most important issues for Congress to address	Most Important Issue					2006 Final Week Avg of Top Polls*
	Health (33%)	Iraq (28%)	Econ (23%)	Immig (13%)	Educ (12%)	
<i>Difference (Democratic – Republican)</i>	+22	+33	+11	-15	+19	+11.6%
Democratic	50	56	42	30	46	52
Republican	28	23	31	45	27	41
Undecided	22	20	26	45	27	7

*The polls included in the average consist of CNN, Fox News, USA Today/Gallup, Pew, ABC News/The Washington Post, Newsweek, and Time.

Benenson Strategy Group conducted 1201 telephone interviews with likely voters nationwide between October 8th and October 15th, 2007. The margin of error for overall results is ±2.83%.

Benenson Strategy Group clients include Governor Kaine (VA), Senator Jim Webb (VA), and Senator Robert Menendez (NJ). Peter Brodnitz, who conducted this survey, was named “Pollster of the Year” by the American Association of Political Consultants earlier this year for his work for Kaine, Webb and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. It is a bi-partisan award given to one pollster every two years.