

Date: October 30, 2013

To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

From: Stan Greenberg, James Carville, and Erica Seifert

Revolt Against Washington and the Republican Congress Survey of Battleground House districts shows rising GOP vulnerability

The most recent Democracy Corps Congressional Battleground survey, fielded just two days after Congress ended the government shutdown, reveals a nation angry with Washington, the country's direction, and congressional incumbents.¹ While voters withhold anger for no party or person in Washington, Speaker Boehner and the Republican Congress are at the center and have taken the hardest hits from voters. While the actual named vote for Congress has not yet moved, everything else has moved against the Republican members.

What we know for sure is that Republican incumbents are more vulnerable coming out of the shutdown, with job disapproval ratings and 'won't re-elect' numbers worse than those for incumbents in prior cycles where many faced defeat. Their vote is much less solidified and fewer voters are considering voting for them. Seniors are moving to vote Democratic. The country is done with its leaders.

The first battleground survey in June showed Republicans potentially at risk in a fair number of seats. We thought Democratic incumbents were less at risk, though some pundits disputed that conclusion.² This survey shows no change in the overall vote in both the Republican and Democratic districts, as the public is reluctant to reward anyone in Washington, but the survey shows big and asymmetric changes in the standing of Republican incumbents that leave them very exposed.

The big takeaway from this survey is the collapse in confidence about the country and the Republican Party. The president and the Democrats in Congress have slipped modestly amidst the tumult, though at first blush both Democratic and Republican incumbents paid some personal price. But it is Republicans who are losing ground on the key metrics of electability. The parti-

¹ This memo is based on a unique survey of 1,250 likely 2014 voters in the most competitive Democratic and Republican Congressional districts in the country. This survey was conducted from October 19-24, 2013 using a list of 2006 voters, 2010 voters, and new registrants. Some questions were asked only in Democratic-held or Republican-held seats. For questions asked of all respondents, the margin of error = +/- 2.77% at 95% confidence. For questions asked just in Republican districts, the margin of error = +/- 3.58% at 95% confidence. For questions asked in just Democratic districts, the margin of error = +/- 4.38% at 95% confidence.

² See: David Wasserman, "House Overview," *Cook Political Report*, June 20, 2013, Stuart Rothenberg, "Is the Senate More Volatile Than the House in 2014?" *Rothenblog*, June 24, 2013.



san context is poisoned by the image of the House Republicans. The result is that the Republican vote has become much less solid and Republican incumbents have much fewer voters open to them. A larger bloc now wants to see Democrats in control of the Congress, and they are losing seniors and older voters in an off-year electorate where they traditionally hold sway.

We suspect that this is a more Republican and conservative sample than the one candidates will face next year. We only interviewed those who actually voted in 2010 or 2006 in these districts and new registrants with a high likelihood of voting. Respondents are 85 percent white, only 9 percent are under age 30, 6 percent are Latino, and 4 percent African-American. It assumes that the polarized and nationalized politics does not bring in more minority voters and women who shaped the presidential election. Virginia may give an indicator of changes in mid-term voters next week, as it did in 2009 for the 2010 mid-term elections.

The vote for Congress was unchanged in this poll, though this sample is significantly more Republican and conservative than the poll we conducted in these same districts four months ago. In the most competitive Republican districts, respondents in this survey recalled voting for Republican for Congress by 10 points over the Democrat – compared to 7 points in the June survey (and 9 points in the actual election). In the Democratic battleground, voters in this survey, recalled voting for Romney by 1.4 points, compared to preferring Obama by 5 points in June, and 2.3 points in the actual election. The same pattern is evident on ideology: self-identified conservatives are a much larger portion in the sample, perhaps energized by the shutdown drama. We strongly suspect that there was a vote shift in this battleground.

Democracy Corps' Congressional Battleground poll is the only one where interviews are conducted exclusively in the most competitive Democratic and Republican seats, using the actual names of incumbents in their districts. This is not a generic test ballot. This survey has been a good guide to the expanding battlegrounds in the elections of 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012.

Key findings:

- **Country despairs of Washington.** This survey finds a dramatic increase in those saying the country is on the wrong track—up 11 points (to 76 percent) since June in Republican districts. Across all battleground districts (Democratic and Republican), incumbent disapproval is up, marking a strong anti-incumbent and anti-Washington wave. While everything Republican has collapsed, both parties have lost ground in both the Republican and Democratic battleground districts.
- **But public support for the Republican Congress has collapsed.** The changes facing the Republicans—but above all the Republican Congress—are on a different order of magnitude that we have not witnessed in some time. In the Republican districts, the party brand has declined from net -12 in June to *net* -30 now. A stunning 61 percent now give the Republican Congress a negative rating—a 12 point jump since June—while negative ratings of Democrats in Congress remain fairly stable. John Boehner is now the face of the House Republicans and his intense negative ratings are up 10 points.



- **While vote for Congress is stable in this poll, half of all voters in the Republican battleground districts now say they “can’t vote to re-elect” their incumbents**, compared to just 39 percent who say they will vote to re-elect their incumbents. There is no comparable shift in the Democratic districts.
- **The vote is a dead heat in the most competitive Republican seats** (unchanged since June) but the vulnerabilities beneath the initial vote choice put these Republican incumbents at serious risk. In those districts, when asked which party they would prefer to control Congress, by a 2-point margin, voters prefer Democrats —and only 42 percent say they want the status quo and Republican control.
- **Republican incumbents are very vulnerable to attack.** After even messages and attacks on both sides, Democratic challengers lead in the vote in the most competitive districts by 6 points (a net 8-point shift) and challengers in Tier 2 bring the margin down to 3 points (a net 9-point shift.)
- **Seniors are a big story.** Seniors broke heavily for Republicans in 2010, and they are a disproportionate voice in off-year elections. In the Republican battleground, the vote is tied among seniors and the Democratic candidate has gained 5 points among this group since June. In the Democratic battleground, Democratic incumbents **lead** by 14 points (51 percent to 37 percent) among seniors. This trend has also emerged in the last three national Democracy Corps surveys – which is a sea change.

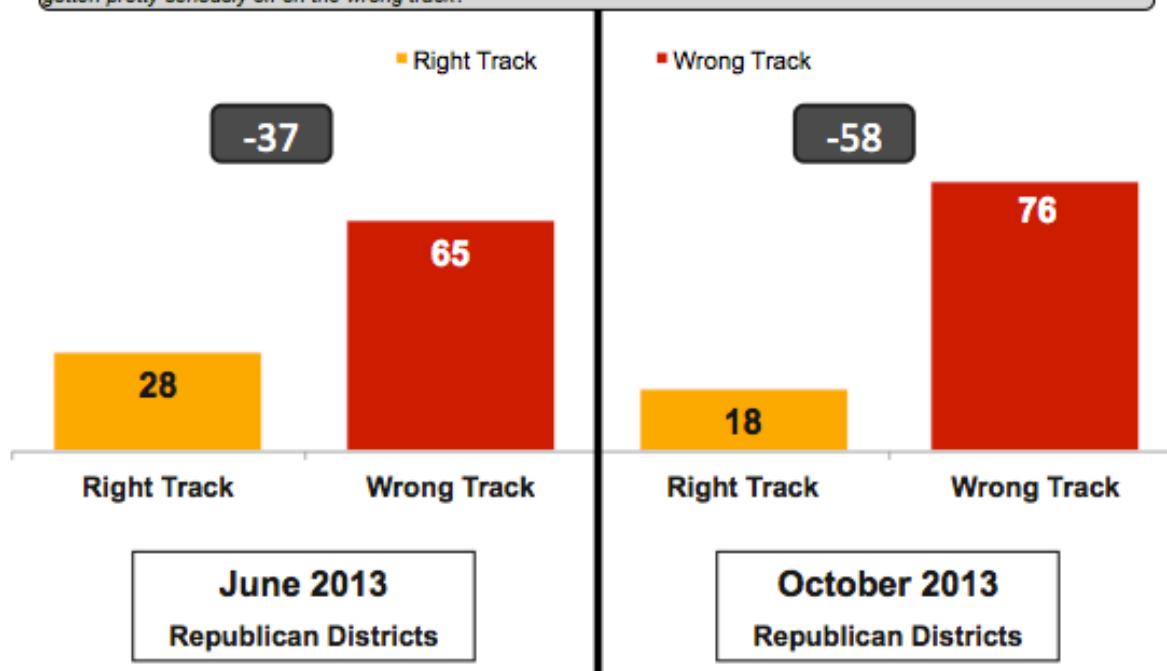
Direction and mood

The Washington meltdown drove real people to despair, which is reflected in the collapse in confidence in the country’s direction and in the battleground districts, regardless of party. In Republican districts, three quarters (76 percent) now say the country is off on the wrong track— compared to two thirds (65 percent) just four months ago. Just one in five (18 percent) now say the country is headed in the right direction.



Sharp increase in wrong track— three quarters in Republican battleground believe country headed in wrong direction

Generally speaking, do you think that things in this country are going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?



All incumbents—Democrats and Republicans—saw rise in their job disapproval and all saw a rise in the percent giving them negative personal ratings. We see a very clear and strong anti-incumbent wave in this survey, which fielded just after Congress ended the government shut-down. But the member disapproval rating for Republicans exceed that in any of the prior cycles where one party lost seats – and their support is becoming less solid, with viewer voters open to them. There is a bigger bloc that wants the Democrats to control the Congress, which may pull voters away if this becomes a referendum on the Republican House.

Underneath the surface, where we are seeing stability in the vote and a wholesale rejection of Washington, we find a massive turn against the Republican Party, House Republicans, and John Boehner. We are not sure we have seen anything of this scale.

House Republicans and John Boehner have taken the biggest hit in these Republican districts.

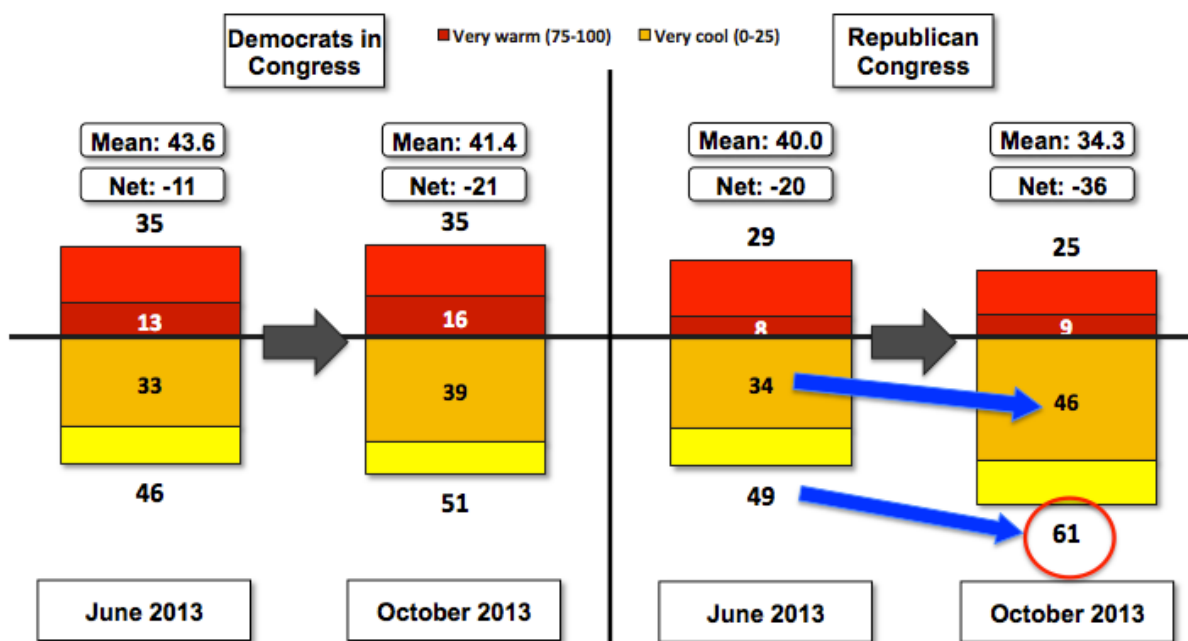
- Republican Congress:** Negative ratings of the Republican Congress jumped 15 points to 62 percent across Republican battleground districts. The net rating for the Republican Congress fell from -18 to -38 points—a net -20 point decline. At the same time, we find no change in ratings for Democrats in Congress. Repeat, no change. Just a quarter (25 percent) give the Republican Congress a favorable rating—compared to a third who rate the Democrats in Congress favorably (unchanged since June.) Remember, this is in the Republican districts.



- John Boehner:** The Speaker now has a worse net rating in these Republican districts than Nancy Pelosi. Since July, we find an 11-point rise in negative ratings for John Boehner in the Republican battleground—now up to 55 percent negative. His net negative rating is -30 — 8 points higher than for Pelosi in the 50 Republican seats.
- The Republican Party:** The Republican Party’s net negative rating has more than doubled in these districts since June (from -12 to -29.) Negative ratings of the GOP are now at 56 percent in their own districts (down from 47 percent in June). In Republican districts, 40 percent give the GOP a very negative rating (less than 25 on our 100-point scale).

Both parties fall but Republican Congress collapses – in the Republican districts

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.



The plate-shifting on party brand is reflected now in who they want to control the Congress — even if this has not yet translated into a vote change. When asked in the most competitive seats which party you would prefer to control Congress, the margin is +2 for the Democrats—3-points better than the margin in the named vote. Only 42 percent want the status quo, Republican control.



We find these shifts despite the fact that this poll is more Republican than our previous and despite a very conservative estimate of the off-year electorate.

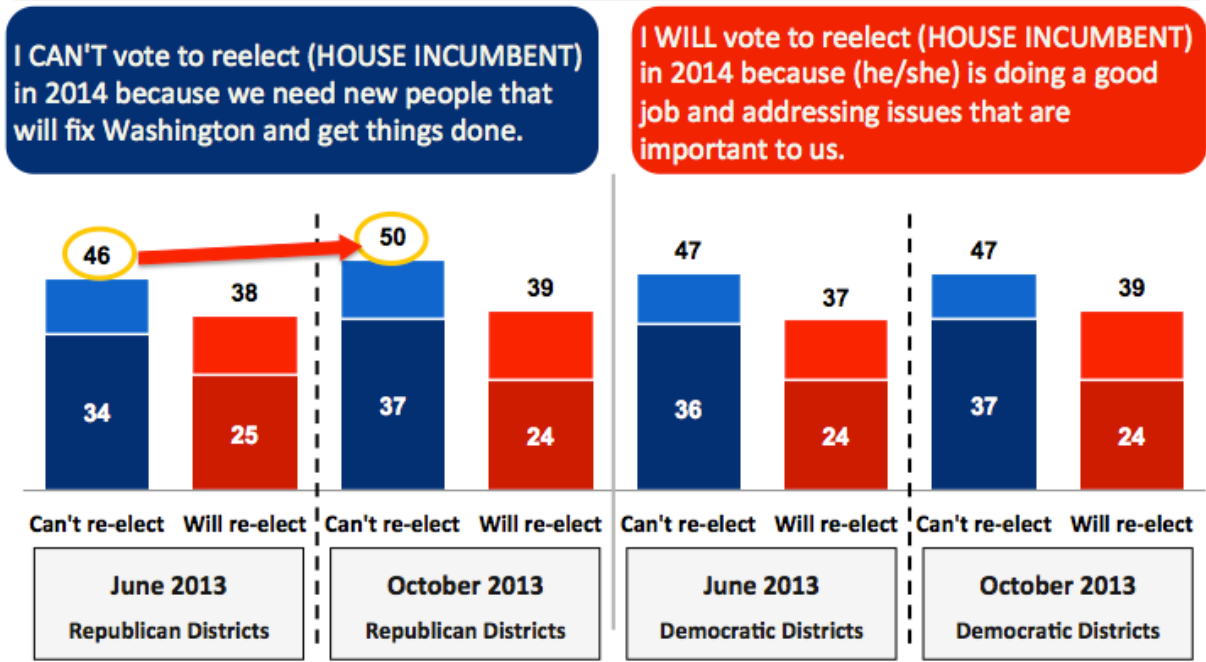
Republican incumbent vulnerabilities

There are two major points where we find rising vulnerabilities for these Republican incumbents—first, the vote to re-elect incumbents and second, the solidity of their supporters and the proportion of voters still considering them. All of that has worsened for the Republicans – but not for the Democratic candidates and districts.

Half of all voters in the Republican battleground now say, “I can’t vote to reelect (NAMED HOUSE INCUMBENT) in 2014 because we need new people that will fix Washington and get things done.” That is up 4 points from the last poll and is 7 points higher than at this point in the 2010 cycle when Democratic incumbents went on to lose on a massive scale. While on the surface voters may seem to be punishing both parties and Washington more broadly, we find no change on this metric in the Democratic battleground. The weakening on this key indicator has come entirely in the Republican battleground.

But ½ of voters in GOP districts now say, ‘I can’t vote to re-elect’ named incumbent; while stable in Democratic seats

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

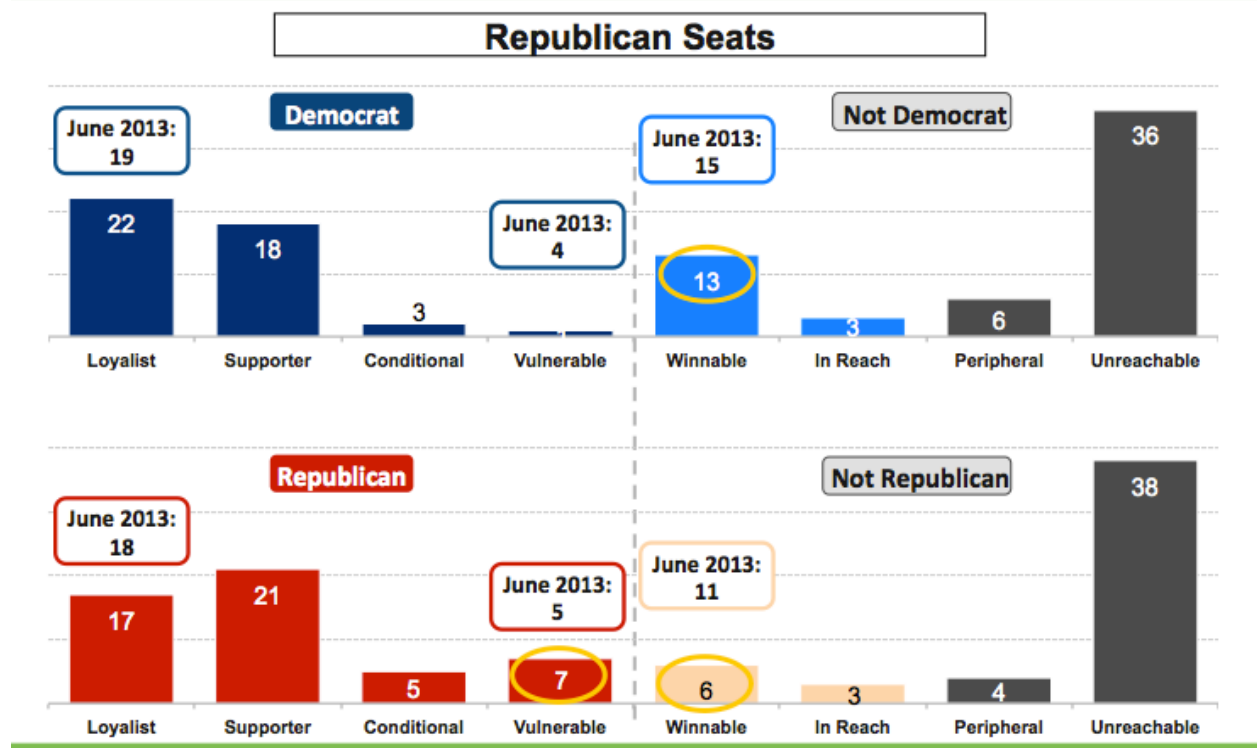


Much more importantly, this pull back and party shift is reflected in our Voter Choice Scale, which measures strength of support and openness to changing one’s vote. This is one of the big-



gest areas of change. Support for Democratic challengers in Republican seats has become more solidified, with 13 percent of voters still available (‘winnable’) for the Democratic challengers—largely unchanged from June. But the Republicans incumbent has fewer ‘loyalists’ and 7 percent who are ‘vulnerable’ – open to changing their vote. Just 6 percent of voters are winnable for the Republican incumbents—down from 11 percent in the last poll. These are major underlying changes in the races.

Vote dynamics trending against Republicans: they have more vulnerable and fewer winnable voters.

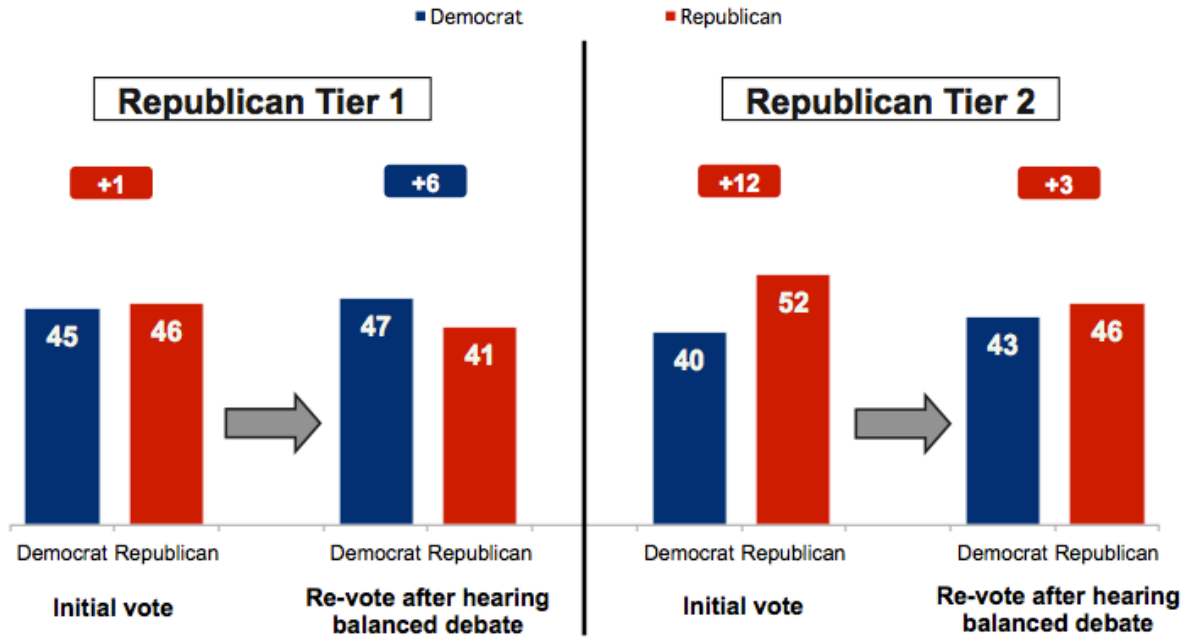


The survey simulates a campaign where both candidates come under attack, which tells us whether these vulnerabilities can be translated into real losses. After balanced attacks the vote shifts significantly against the Republican incumbents in the battleground. In the Republican battleground, the vote shifts 7 points in the Tier 1 districts (from +1 to -6) and 9 points in the second tier (from +12 to +3.) This shift brings the Democratic candidate to a level of support outside the margin of error in Tier 1 and to within the margin of error in Tier 2.



Republican incumbents vulnerable. Balanced attacks produces big shifts against GOP incumbents

Now let me ask you again, I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for Congress in 2014, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for – the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?

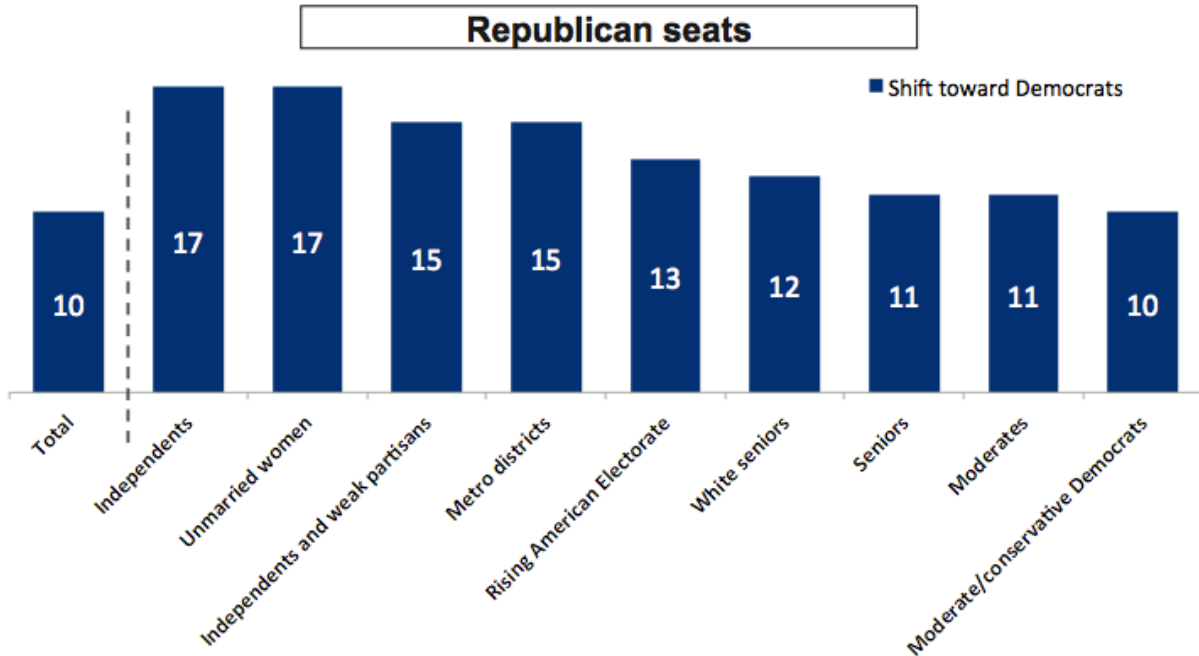


The biggest shifts come from both swing and Democratic base voters. Among swing voters, independents, independents and weak partisans, and seniors produced the biggest shifts toward voting for the Democratic candidate in these Republican districts. Democratic base voters also shifted significantly, especially unmarried women who have not polled impressively in the battleground up until now.



Independents, unmarried women, RAE, and Seniors produce biggest shift toward Democrats

Now let me ask you again, I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for Congress in 2014, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for – the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?



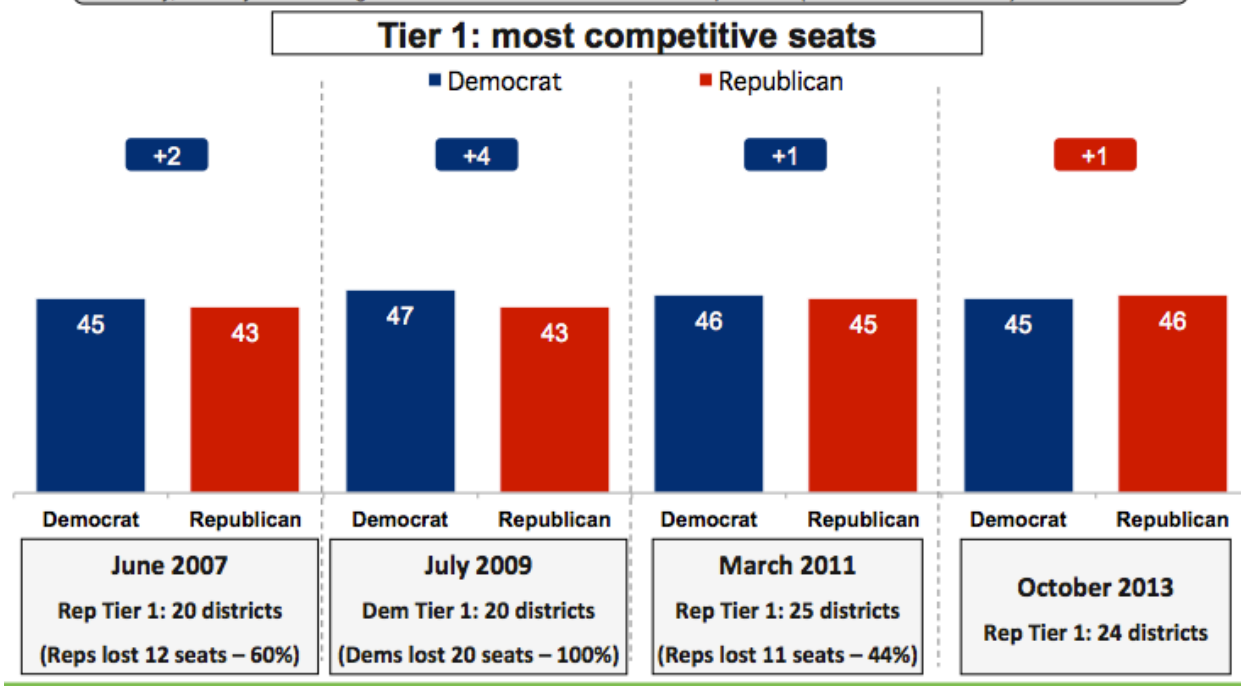
Congressional vote

We said last time that there was a potential for Democrats to make net gains in 2014. While this poll does not show further gains, this is a more Republican sample, as we noted. And more importantly, there are real changes underneath that suggest an even deeper Republican vulnerability.



In most vulnerable districts, incumbents are in same position as incumbents in past wave elections

I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for Congress in 2014, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for – the Democratic candidate or Republican (HOUSE INCUMBENT)?



The reason Democrats are doing well are gains among seniors, senior women, and white seniors. When Republicans swept Democrats in the 2010 off-year elections, they won seniors by 21 points. Democrats lost white seniors by 24 points. Just this past November, Republicans won seniors by 12 points in the vote for Congress. In the Republican battleground, the vote is now **tied** among seniors and the Democratic challenger has gained 5 points among this group since June. In the Tier 1 most competitive seats, the Republican incumbent is now tied among seniors and (43 percent to 44 percent) white seniors.

However, while these are real gains and seniors will vote, Democrats are not doing at all well with unmarried women and the Rising American Electorate. Democratic challengers now have just a 8-point advantage among unmarried women and have just 50 percent support among all RAE voters in the Republican battleground. Democrats have a lot of work to do with these critical groups but note that these are also the groups that produce some of the biggest shifts after attacks that are on issues broader than the shutdown.



The Democratic Battleground

There is still room for Democrats to take losses in their own districts, despite the greater stability of their support and the better partisan climate.

Democrats are now performing comparably across regions—with a marginal 2-point advantage in suburban seats (down from a 9-point lead in June) and tied in metropolitan districts (up from a 7 point disadvantage in June.) In rural areas—which account for 22 percent of the Democratic battleground—Democratic incumbents now have an 8-point advantage, a significant improvement over the 1-point disadvantage incumbents held in these seats in June.

Most important is how well Democratic incumbents are doing among seniors. In Democratic seats, incumbents now lead among seniors by a remarkable 14 points—up from 4 points in June. And among white seniors, Democratic incumbents now lead by 9 points in their districts. This is a major shift among voters we know will turn out next November.

On our Voter Choice Scale, the Democratic candidates in the marginal Democratic seats have seen their loyalist vote rise by 4 points since June—from 20 to 24 percent. They continue to have 11 percent ‘winnable’ – meaning there has been no comparable erosion of the Democratic incumbent’s vote.

The strongest messages for Democrats center around their support for bi-partisanship amid the shutdown and their support for reforms that change Washington.

Incumbents vulnerable to attack and issue climate

The Republican focus on ‘repeal and ‘replace’ is a minority position in these districts, and we suspect this continued pre-occupation with Obamacare hurts rather than helps them. By 53 to 42 percent voters in the Republican districts would prefer to “implement and fix” the ACA rather than “repeal and replace” it— with a 8 point intensity advantage for implementation.

If the debate is about who should implement the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare, Democrats have a 32-point advantage in the Republican districts and 25 points in the Democratic battleground districts.

If one gets to the broader set of issues, Republicans have lost ground not just on their brand, but also which party voters trust to make the most fundamental choices. Democrats now have a 9-point advantage in Republican districts on putting progress over partisanship and 12-point edge on putting people’s interests ahead of partisanship. Democrats have a similar presumptive advantage on trust and issues in the Democratic districts.

That is why the attacks have such power.

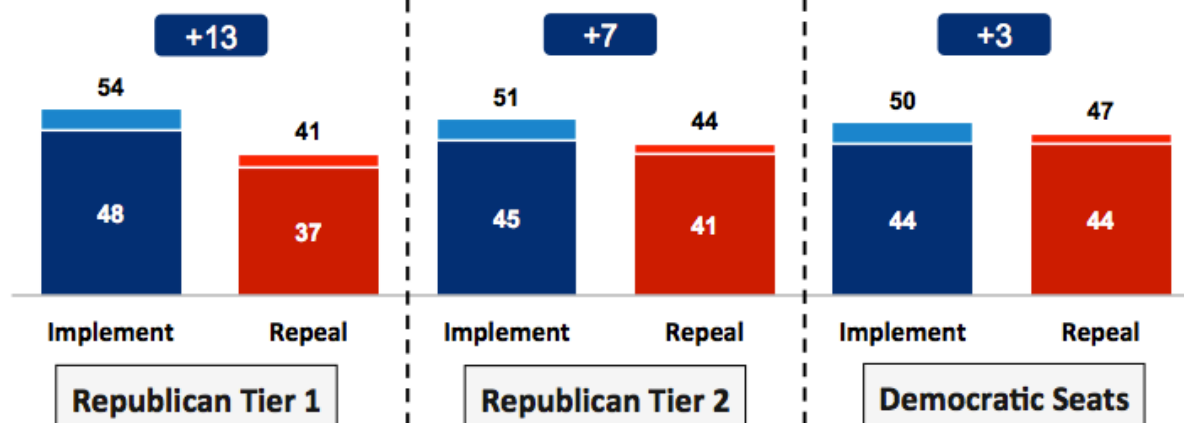


Remember, repeal and replace a minority position – especially in the Republican battleground seats

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

We should implement and fix the health care reform law.

We should repeal and replace the health care reform law.



Republicans are very vulnerable on a range of post-shutdown issues that will soon be front and center—Medicare, paycheck fairness, economic support for low-income workers, taxes, and education. The attacks around the shutdown have less traction and intensity. Voters seem tired of it and do not want to go back. Democrats gain a much larger advantage when they hit Republican priorities on women and Medicare and the cuts that are hurting people.

Across all Republican districts, the most powerful attack focuses on implementing and enforcing paycheck fairness legislation. This attack raises doubts about incumbents for 63 percent of all voters in Republican districts, 38 percent very serious doubts. It is the strongest attack among white non-college graduates and women (tied with Medicare.) But this is also a strong attack among seniors.

An attack centered on the Republican plan to reduce Medicare spending and turn it into a voucher program is also very powerful across all Republican districts and is the strongest attack in the Tier 1 most competitive seats. This attack is made more even powerful when attached to campaign contributions from insurance companies and pharmaceutical lobbyists. This is by far the strongest attack among seniors and probably contributing to the senior shift against Republicans. This is also among unmarried women, the Rising American Electorate, and independents.

Finally, voters in these Republican districts are also concerned about pay for low-wage workers. This message attacks incumbents for voting against raising the minimum wage and voting for the



GOP flextime bill, which would eliminate overtime pay. This attack raises serious doubts for 58 percent of voters in Republican districts and very serious doubts for 36 percent. This is the strongest attack among unmarried voters, suburban voters, and young voters under the age of 30.

These strongest attacks focus on ,the kinds of issues that may soon produce shifts in the vote that seem increasingly likely within this battleground electorate.

Top attacks in Republican districts expose vulnerabilities

Now I'm going to read you some things that some people might say about (REPUBLICAN HOUSE INCUMBENT). After I read each one, please tell me whether this raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about (REPUBLICAN HOUSE INCUMBENT).

<p>(PAYCHECK FAIRNESS) (INCUMBENT) opposes requiring equal pay for equal work for women, allowing employers to escape being penalized when they pay men a higher salary than women which makes it tough on working women and families.</p>	<p>38 63</p>
<p>(MEDICARE W/ MONEY) (INCUMBENT) voted to dramatically reduce spending on Medicare by turning it into a voucher program, forcing seniors to pay over six thousand dollars more a year for their health care, while taking tens of thousands in campaign contributions from insurance and pharmaceutical lobbyists.</p>	<p>36 61</p>
<p>(LOW-WAGE) (INCUMBENT) voted against increasing the minimum wage from seven to ten dollars an hour and voted to eliminate overtime pay for working families, who rely on overtime pay to make ends meet, cutting a worker's paycheck by up to 10 percent and pushing more working families into poverty.</p>	<p>36 58</p>
<p>(MEDICARE) (INCUMBENT) voted to dramatically reduce spending on Medicare by turning it into a voucher program, forcing seniors to pay over six thousand dollars more a year for their health care.</p>	<p>34 62</p>
<p>(EDUCATION) (INCUMBENT) supports the budget that slashed subsidies for student loans, cut student financial aid programs by almost 100 million dollars, knocked 60 thousand children off Head Start and school breakfasts, and is forcing schools to layoff teachers and education support staff .</p>	<p>33 54</p>
<p>(TAXES W/ MONEY) (INCUMBENT) made sure that taxes on those earning over \$250 thousand were not raised - and blocked any cut in special interests breaks and subsidies to be used for deficit reduction while taking donations from the wealthiest CEOs, lobbyists, and special interests</p>	<p>32 59</p>



TIER 1: The 24 Most Competitive Republican Districts

District	Representative	2012 Presidential margin	2012 Congressional margin
CA-10	Jeff Denham	Obama +3.6	+7.1
CA-21	David Valadao	Obama +11.1	+17.9
CA-31	Gary Miller	Obama +16.6	+10.5
CO-6	Mike Coffman	Obama +5.1	+3.6
FL-10	Dan Webster	Romney +7.6	+3.5
FL-13	OPEN (Young)	Obama +1.5	+15.2
FL-2	Steve Southerland	Romney +5.9	+5.5
IA-3	Tom Latham	Obama +4.3	+8.7
IL-13	Rodney Davis	Romney +0.3	+0.4
IN-2	Jackie Walorski	Romney +14.0	+1.4
KY-6	Andy Barr	Romney +13.6	+3.9
MI-1	Dan Benishek	Romney +8.3	+0.7
MI-7	Tim Walberg	Romney +3.1	+10.3
MN-2	John Kline	Obama +0.1	+8.2
NE-2	Lee Terry	Romney +7.2	+2.4
NV-3	Joe Heck	Obama +0.8	+7.6
NY-11	Michael Grimm	Obama +4.4	+6.6
NY-19	Chris Gibson	Obama +6.3	+6.9
NY-23	Tom Reed	Romney +1.2	+3.9
OH-14	David Joyce	Romney +3.3	+15.8
OH-7	Bob Gibbs	Romney +9.5	+13.3
PA-8	Mike Fitzpatrick	Romney +0.1	+13.3
WI-7	Sean Duffy	Romney +3.1	+12.3
WV-2	OPEN (Capito)	Romney +22.0	+39.6



TIER 2: The 25 Next Most Competitive Republican Districts

District	Representative	2012 Presidential margin	2012 Congressional margin
AR-1	Rick Crawford	Romney +24.6	+17.4
AR-2	OPEN (Griffin)	Romney +11.8	+15.7
CA-25	Buck McKeon	Romney +1.8	+11.2
FL-16	Vern Buchanan	Romney +9.3	+7.2
IA-4	Steve King	Romney +8.2	+8.6
IN-8	Larry Bucshon	Romney +18.8	+10.3
MI-11	Kerry Bentivolio	Romney +5.4	+6.4
MI-3	Justin Amash	Romney +7.4	+8.6
MI-8	Mike Rogers	Romney +3.2	+21.3
MN-3	Erik Paulsen	Obama +0.8	+16.3
MT-AL	Steve Daines	Romney +13.7	+10.3
NC-9	Robert Pittenger	Romney +13.4	+6.1
NJ-2	Frank LoBiondo	Obama +8.2	+17.9
NJ-3	Jon Runyan	Obama +4.6	+8.9
NJ-5	Scott Garrett	Romney +3.0	+13.1
NM-2	Stevan Pearce	Romney +6.8	+18.2
NY-2	Peter King	Obama +4.4	+17.5
OH-16	Jim Renacci	Romney +8.2	+4.5
OH-6	Bill Johnson	Romney +12.5	+6.7
PA-12	Keith Rothfus	Romney +16.9	+3.6
PA-6	Jim Gerlach	Romney +2.5	+13.9
PA-7	Pat Meehan	Romney +1.8	+18.9
VA-2	Scott Rigell	Obama +1.5	+7.6
WA-3	Jaime Herrera Beutler	Romney +1.6	+20.2
WI-8	Reid Ribble	Romney +4.5	+11.9



The 31 Democratic Districts

District	Representative	2012 Presidential margin	2012 Congressional margin
AZ-1	Ann Kirkpatrick	Romney +2.5	+3.3
AZ-2	Ron Barber	Romney +1.6	+0.2
AZ-9	Kyrsten Sinema	Obama +4.5	+3.1
CA-24	Lois Capps	Obama +11.0	+9.6
CA-26	Julia Brownley	Obama +10.3	+4.0
CA-3	John Garamendi	Obama +11.2	+7.8
CA-36	Raul Ruiz	Obama +3.2	+3.9
CA-52	Scott Peters	Obama +6.4	+1.1
CA-7	Ami Bera	Obama +3.9	+1.6
CT-5	Elizabeth Esty	Obama +8.2	+3.0
FL-18	Patrick Murphy	Romney +4.2	+0.6
FL-26	Joe Garcia	Obama +6.7	+10.6
GA-12	John Barrow	Romney +11.8	+7.4
IL-10	Brad Schneider	Obama +16.4	+1.0
IL-12	Bill Enyart	Obama +1.5	+8.7
IL-17	Cheri Bustos	Obama +16.9	+6.6
MA-6	John Tierney	Obama +10.9	+1.0
MN-7	Collin Peterson	Romney +9.7	+25.5
MN-8	Rick Nolan	Obama +5.5	+8.9
NC-7	Mike McIntyre	Romney +19.2	+0.2
NH-1	Carol Shea-Porter	Obama +1.6	+3.7
NH-2	Ann McLane Kuster	Obama +9.6	+5.1
NV-4	Steven Horsford	Obama +10.7	+7.9
NY-1	Tim Bishop	Obama +0.5	+4.3
NY-18	Sean Maloney	Obama +4.3	+3.4
NY-21	Bill Owens	Obama +6.2	+2.2
NY-24	Dan Maffei	Obama +16.0	+4.6
TX-23	Pete Gallego	Romney +2.7	+4.8
UT-4	Jim Matheson	Romney +37.0	+1.2
WA-1	Suzan DelBene	Obama +10.8	+20.3
WV-3	Nick Rahall	Romney +32.2	+7.9