

Date: May 14, 2009
To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner
From: Stan Greenberg and James Carville, Democracy Corps
Mike Bocian and Al Quinlan; Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

A Carnahan Advantage in Missouri Senate Race

Pitched Battles Over Economy, Health Care and Energy

The closest state during the 2008 presidential election, Missouri shows early signs of opportunity for Democrats to pick up the senate seat currently held by Republican Kit Bond. A new Democracy Corps survey by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research shows Secretary of State Robin Carnahan leading Republican Congressman Roy Blunt 53 to 44 percent and leading former Treasurer Sarah Steelman 54 to 42 percent.¹

After voters hear profiles of each candidate, Carnahan maintains a 7-point advantage over Steelman and a 9-point advantage over Blunt. After attacks on each candidate, Carnahan remains above 50 percent against both Republicans, and leads Blunt by 7 and Steelman by 6. At this early and uncertain stage, Carnahan starts off the contest with a strong personal and professional standing that puts her in a position to defeat either potential opponent. At the same time, it appears as if Steelman may be the tougher foe with a stronger profile than Blunt and the potential to run a fresh outsider candidacy that Blunt cannot offer.

President Obama provides a slight boost to Carnahan, even in a state he failed to carry, with a 56 percent job approval rating (compared to 58 percent nationally)² and voters preferring, by a 49 to 40 percent margin, *a senator who will mostly support Obama's agenda to get things done rather than one who will mostly oppose his agenda to provide balance.*

While the strength of the candidates will be critical, the senate campaign will also take place amidst pitched battles on President Obama's top priorities – the economy, health care and

¹ Democracy Corps survey of 800 likely voters in Missouri conducted April 28 – 30, 2009. The survey is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points.

² Democracy Corps survey of 800 likely voters in Missouri conducted April 28 – 30, 2009. The survey is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points.



energy. Voters divide evenly on the economic debate and the health care debate, while giving the President’s position an 18-point advantage on energy.

Advantage Carnahan

Robin Carnahan starts her campaign for U.S. Senate well-known and highly regarded. She enjoys a better than 2:1 favorable-unfavorable ratio (46 percent favorable – 22 percent unfavorable with 87 percent name identification) and 60 percent of voters approve of the job she’s doing as Secretary of State while just 21 percent disapprove.

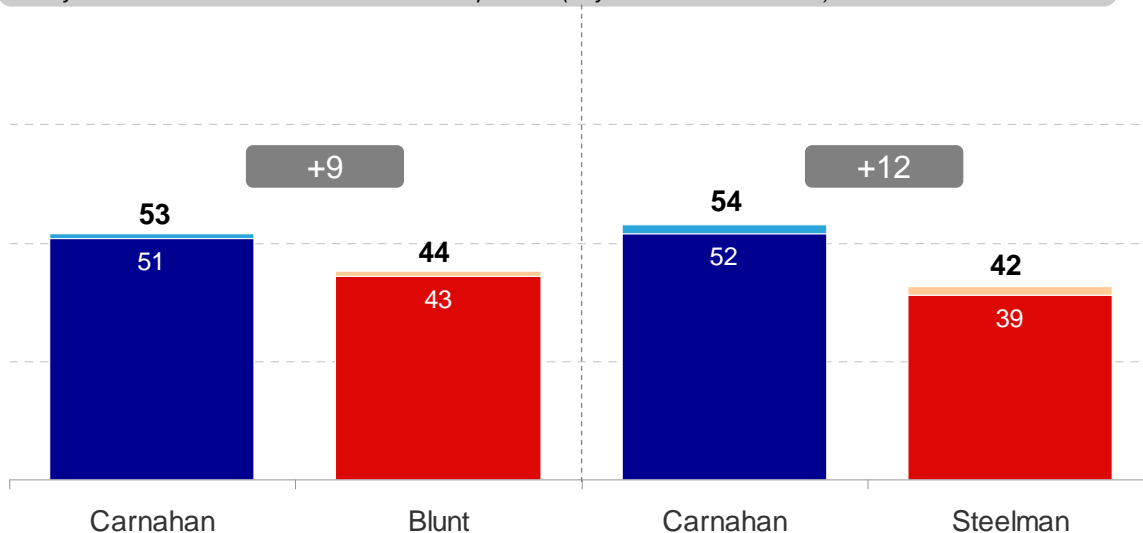
Among white voters, older women represent one of Carnahan’s strongest electoral blocs (49 – 20 percent favorable-unfavorable, 63 percent job approval). While white older women are more Democratic than their younger or male counterparts, women candidates often underperform with older women. But, among this group, Carnahan overperforms partisanship by a net of 16 points when matched against Blunt and 20 points when matched against Steelman – more than she does in any other white gender/age subgroup.

Roy Blunt brings mediocre ratings to the campaign with a 33 – 27 percent favorable-unfavorable rating despite 82 percent name identification. Sarah Steelman is not yet defined to a large segment of the electorate. Just 51 percent can identify despite a previous stint holding statewide office and a failed bid for Governor last year. Overall, voters offer her a 22 – 13 percent favorable-unfavorable rating.

As the chart below shows, Carnahan leads both opponents in an initial vote matchup:

Carnahan leads both Blunt and Steelman

And thinking about the November 2010 election for U.S. Senate, if the general election for U.S. Senate were held today, and the candidates were Democrat Robin Carnahan and Republican (Roy Blunt/ Sarah Steelman), for whom would you vote -- Democrat Robin Carnahan or Republican (Roy Blunt/ Sarah Steelman)?





- It is telling that Steelman initially performs nearly as well as Blunt, despite having a name identification 30 points lower. This speaks to Blunt’s weakness as a candidate.
- Carnahan’s base appears very solid, as she leads Blunt 95 to 5 percent and Steelman 96 to 3 percent among Democrats. The Republican-leaning independent bloc gives Carnahan a slight edge against Blunt, 49 to 45 percent, and a 52 to 39 percent advantage over Steelman.
- Carnahan’s leads emerge from her significant overperformance with women and less educated voters. Among women, Carnahan leads Blunt by 18 points and Steelman by 24, while a generic Democrat defeats a generic Republican by just 3 points. Among voters with only a high school education, Carnahan leads by 18 against Blunt and by 17 against Steelman, whereas a generic Democrat leads by just 2 points.

Stelman Potentially Tougher Challenger

As the table below shows, Carnahan maintains advantages over both Republicans as the race unfolds, first with positive profiles and then after attacks. However, the race does narrow, particularly against Steelman.

Table 1: Carnahan – Blunt and Carnahan – Steelman Vote Progression			
	Initial Vote	Post-Positives	Post-Attacks
Carnahan	53	53	52
Blunt	44	45	45
<i>Carnahan – Blunt</i>	+9	+7	+7
Carnahan	54	52	51
Stelman	42	45	45
<i>Carnahan – Steelman</i>	+12	+7	+6

Stelman looks like the tougher candidate. In addition to having more success in narrowing the race against Carnahan, her profile tests 7 points better than Blunt’s (68 vs. 61 percent convincing reason to voter for each). The negatives tested against her lack the potency of Blunt’s and she has the potential to run as an outsider. The consummate political insider, Blunt is weighed down by his long history of voting the Republican Party line, his numerous votes to give himself pay raises while opposing a minimum wage increase, and his leading support for the TARP bailout.



The Big Debates: Economy, Health Care, Energy

Economic Debate Draws to a Tie

Missouri voters stand evenly divided on the economic debate before the country with 49 percent agreeing *that the Obama Administration is making the right decisions to get our economy moving* while an equal share *believe the Obama Administration is spending too much, borrowing too much and taxing too much*, as Republicans assert.

When a debate over the President’s economic recovery plan is described in some detail and put in the context of a senate race between Carnahan and Blunt, voters remain nearly deadlocked with a marginal advantage for Carnahan.

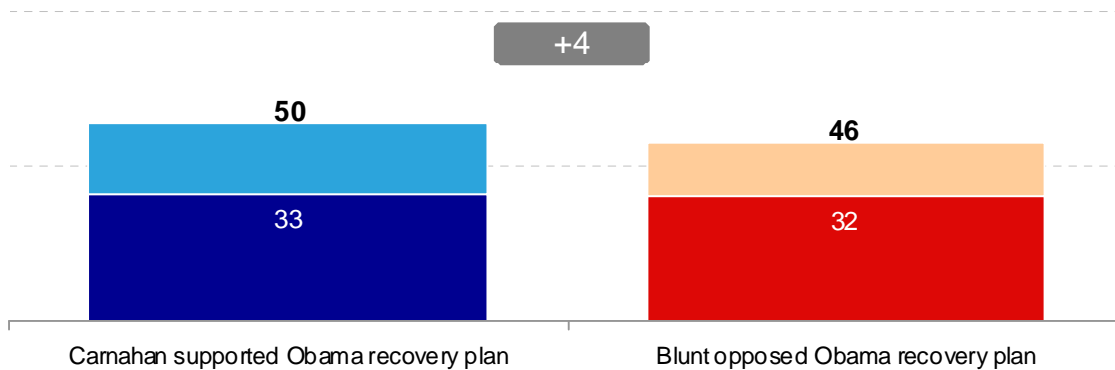
Carnahan – Blunt economic contrast

Now, let me read you two statements about the economy. Please tell if these statements make your more likely to support Robin Carnahan or Roy Blunt for U.S. Senate?

Robin Carnahan supports President Obama’s economic recovery plan because we need to get the economy moving by creating jobs and cutting taxes for the middle class. She supports raking action rather than doing nothing while the economy falls apart.

Roy Blunt voted against President Obama’s stimulus plan and budget because we can’t tax, spend and borrow our way out of a recession. He supported an alternative budget that made the tough choices to keep spending under control and cut taxes.

■ Carnahan much more likely ■ Carnahan somewhat more likely ■ Blunt much more likely ■ Blunt somewhat more likely



Health Care Debate Evenly Divided

Voters split on an outline of a potential health care plan from President Obama after hearing detailed (and policy-heavy) arguments for and against it, as the following chart illustrates. The opposition’s arguments about doctor choice and access, coverage for illegal immigrants and government-controlled decisions can erode support for Obama’s nascent health care proposal if proponents don’t take steps to hedge off these specious arguments and develop more effective messaging in favor of reform.



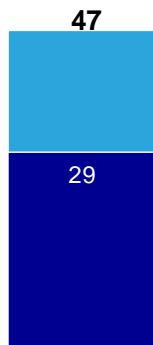
Obama health care plan debate

Now, let me read you two statements about President Obama's health care plan. After hearing these statements, please tell me if you favor or oppose President Obama's healthcare plan.

Obama Position

President Obama says we need to provide affordable health care to every American. His plan gives all Americans the option of keeping the insurance they currently have or joining a national insurance pool that offers a choice of private and public plans, including the same options that Members of Congress receive. His plan, which would save families \$2500 in premiums per year, expands Medicare and Medicaid eligibility and requires employers to offer coverage or pay into an insurance pool. It requires insurance companies to accept people regardless of pre-existing conditions. And it brings down the cost of health care in the long term by increasing preventive care and reducing administrative costs in the health care system.

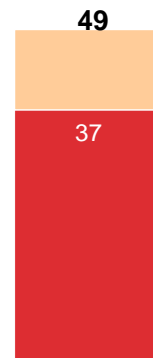
- Somewhat favor Obama plan
- Strongly favor Obama plan



Opponents' Position

(Some/other) people say Obama's health care plan is a new government-run program that takes decisions out of a doctor's hands and gives them to bureaucrats. It means Americans will pay thousands of dollars in new taxes and more people will not be able to keep their own doctor, or go to the hospital without waiting in long lines. Plus, taxpayers will pay for illegal immigrants to get health care. It's a trillion dollar government program that will cost consumers more money, give them less choice, and require new taxes on Americans. Instead, we should expand health coverage through health savings accounts that empower patients to make their own decisions about their health care in conjunction with their doctors.

- Somewhat oppose Obama plan
- Strongly oppose Obama plan



After hearing these arguments, independents oppose the proposal 41 to 56 percent and opposition in southern Missouri (22-point margin against it) is not offset by the 3-point margin supporting the proposal in the St. Louis market. Winning this debate in Missouri will require the Administration to better appeal to non-college educated women who support it by a marginal 1-point margin despite identifying as Democrats over Republicans by 12 points, and to seniors who support the proposal by just 5 points despite identifying as Democrats over Republicans by 17 points.

Strong Support for Clean Energy Proposal

While the energy debate rages on in Washington, voters in Missouri favor a plan based on President Obama's approach by 18 points, 57 to 39 percent, after proponents and opponents air their arguments.

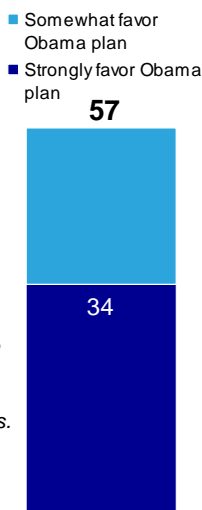


Obama energy plan debate

Now, let me read you two statements about President Obama's energy plan. After hearing these statements, please tell me if you favor or oppose President Obama's energy plan.

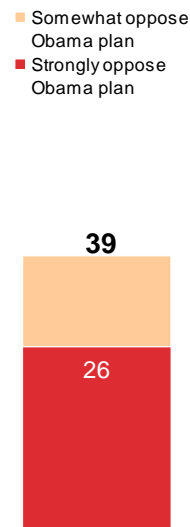
Obama Position

President Obama says we need to get America running on clean energy by rewarding companies that produce alternative energy like wind and solar and requiring companies to reduce their pollution. It will provide financial rewards to companies that produce clean energy and require more of America's energy to come from alternative sources like wind and solar power. Obama's energy plan will use America's technological know-how to re-charge our economy with new industries and new jobs. And it will reduce our dependence on foreign energy and unstable parts of the world. For too long we've relied on the same old, dirty energy sources. Energy costs are rising already and it's time to get America running on clean energy .



Opponents' Position

(Some/others) say the energy scheme coming out of Washington will create a new three-thousand dollar a year tax on every American because companies will pass off fees to energy customers. Every time we turn on a light switch or fill up the car with gas, we will face a new tax. With the economy in recession, this will stifle economic growth, cost millions of jobs, and hit Americans in the pocket at the worst possible time. It will also put unfair restrictions on American businesses while countries like China continue to pollute. And it won't work because it will be run by a big new government bureaucracy. We need to develop alternative energy like wind and solar and also explore new domestic sources of oil and more nuclear power, but a giant new energy tax on the middle class is the wrong way to do it.



- Independent voters favor the proposal 52 to 43 percent.
- Voters under 30, a key turnout target for Democrats in 2010, favor the energy proposal by 29 points.
- A large 24-point margin in support of the proposal in the St. Louis market more than overcomes the marginal 2-point opposition in southern Missouri.

In sum, Robin Carnahan offers Democrats a big opportunity to win the open senate seat in Missouri, giving the state two Democratic women senators. The campaign will take place amidst big debates in the country – on the economy, health care and energy – with much left in the balance of how those debates are defined for voters. But the strength of the candidates will also prove critical. Carnahan begins the cycle with strong standing despite running in a state that is split down the middle in partisan terms. On the Republican side, Blunt's standing is merely mediocre while Steelman shows more potential to present Carnahan with a tougher challenge.