



DEMOCRACY CORPS

CARVILLE ♦ GREENBERG

GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

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To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

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100 Days Out: From Serious Vulnerability to a Wave Election

The first Democracy Corps survey of the reapportioned battleground shows Republican incumbents in serious and worsening trouble. The 2012 campaign has just turned the corner on 100 days and the message of this survey could not be clearer: these 54 battleground Republicans are very vulnerable and many will lose their seats.

These members, on average, are barely ahead of their challengers and are as vulnerable as the incumbents in 2006, 2008 and 2010. Those elections we now know crystallized earlier—in 2010, incumbent vulnerability translated into anti-Democratic voting by March as health care came to a close in 2010. These incumbents are equally vulnerable but have not yet paid the price for the Ryan budget and their priorities, but it is clear that their support is now falling.¹

These Republican incumbents now hold a marginal edge against their unnamed challengers—47 to 45 percent. In the most competitive half of the battleground – the 27 most vulnerable Republican-held seats, where Democrats lead the named incumbent by 6 points, 50 to 44 percent—two-thirds could lose their seats. While Democrats start behind in the vote in the second-tier districts, a balanced battle on the Ryan budget and tax cuts erodes the Republican advantage by two-thirds, getting Democrats to within 3 points in these districts.

A number of things have come together to make these incumbents vulnerable. Obama has made significant gains in these districts—he edges Romney on the ballot by a 2-point margin—just two points short of his margin in these districts in 2008. The Republican brand is also in trouble in these Republican seats, and the party image is growing increasingly negative. Finally, these incumbents themselves are very weak on the traditional measures of incumbency, like fighting for people in their own district.

¹ This memo is based on a survey of 1000 voters in the 54 most competitive Republican house districts, which are listed on the last page of this document, conducted from July 21-26, 2012. In the three districts that are either new or have a vacant seat (MI-11, CA-21 and AZ-1), respondents were offered the generic “the Republican candidate” instead of the named incumbent. In all other districts, incumbents’ names were piped in on all vote questions and where questions indicate (HOUSE INCUMBENT).



Scope of Republican losses

These incumbents are as weak—on some measures weaker—than battleground incumbents in these previous wave elections. But while these incumbents are in trouble, their vote position does not yet produce a wave election.

Voters in these 2012 battleground districts are no more favorable toward their incumbents than voters in Democratic-held districts were toward theirs in 2010. At this point in the 2010 campaign, Democratic incumbents had a net approval of +2, exactly the same as it stands now for these Republican incumbents. And compared to 2008, these incumbents actually fare worse. In 2008, Republican incumbents had a net positive +5 favorability.

	2008 Incumbent Republican		2010 Incumbent Democrat		2012 Incumbent Republican	
	Approve	Disapprove	Approve	Disapprove	Approve	Disapprove
Strongly	14	18	19	24	16	23
Total	38	33	40	38	37	35
Net	+5		+2		+2	

And on our thermometer scale, these incumbents look very similar to their 2008 predecessors.

	2008 Incumbent Democrat		2012 Incumbent Republican	
	Warm	Cool	Warm	Cool
	28	31	29	33
Net	-3		-4	

In 2006, 2008, and 2010, incumbents were brought down, at least in part, by overall negativity toward the parties they represented. If the pattern holds true, on this measure, too, these incumbents are in trouble. The Republican Party's thermometer scale is now identical to where it was in 2006 and 2008, when the party's image reached its nadir.

The Republican Party						
	2006		2008		2012	
	Warm	Cool	Warm	Cool	Warm	Cool
	38	44	32	48	35	49
Net	-14		-16		-14	

And when we ask about the incumbents' party in Congress, the net result is identical to 2008.



The Republican Congress				
	2008		2012	
	Warm	Cool	Warm	Cool
	24	42	32	50
Net	-18		-18	

Finally, the incumbents look endangered on the traditional test of whether they deserve to be re-elected. On our surveys, voters choose between a pair of statements:

I CAN'T vote to reelect (HOUSE INCUMBENT) in November because we need new people that will fix Washington and get things done.

OR

I WILL vote to reelect (HOUSE INCUMBENT) in November because (he/she) is doing a good job and addressing the issues that are important to us.

Half of battleground voters now say they can't re-elect these incumbents, 35 percent strongly. These numbers are slightly short of 2010 but comparable to 2008.

	2008 Incumbent Republican		2010 Incumbent Democrat		2012 Incumbent Republican	
	Will Reelect	Can't Reelect	Will Reelect	Can't Reelect	Will Reelect	Can't Reelect
Strongly	26	36	23	40	28	35
Total	39	47	36	56	40	50
Net	-8		-20		-10	

But at this point in 2010, on our then-Democratic House battleground survey, Republican challengers held a 5-point advantage over Democratic incumbents (42 to 47). In May 2008, battleground Republicans trailed by 7 points—and went on to lose a net 21 seats. And in July 2006, before Republicans lost 31 seats, the then-floundering Republican incumbents trailed their opponents by 6 points.

By comparison, the current ballot looks much different. The 2012 Republican incumbents are winning by an average of 2 points, 47 to 45 percent—a 7-point difference over 2010, a 9-point difference over 2008, and an 8-point difference over 2006.

Their vulnerability has yet to be translated into a wave, but there is plenty of reason in this survey to see why late crystallization from the presidential race and Ryan budget may be making that happen. Unlike the prior waves, these incumbents are slipping right now in the summer with an uncertain destination. The operative forces are increasing the prospects of a political crystallization at the expense of these incumbents.



CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT				
	2006	2008	2010	2012
Incumbent	43	43	42	47
Challenger	49	50	47	45
Net	-6	-7	-5	+2

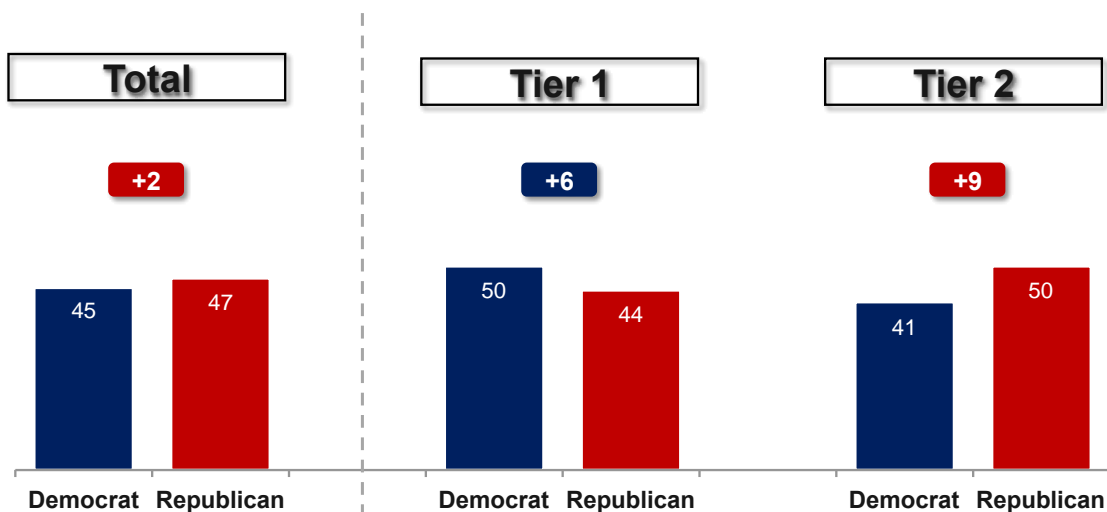
Tier 1: Big Republican losses ahead?

In the large bloc of the 27 most competitive seats, the incumbents trail their opponents by 6 points, with the challenger at 50 percent. Obama has a slightly bigger lead here—these are mostly districts he carried in 2008. This is where the incumbents are taking their biggest losses and where Romney's unpopularity can become a bigger factor.

These members – as well as those in the suburban districts – are not looking for a member to defeat Obama's agenda.

The Republican House battleground is tied – with the incumbent at only 47 percent

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



*Note: Incumbent names were inserted with party identification. Generic challengers were inserted as "The Democratic Candidate" or "The Republican Candidate."



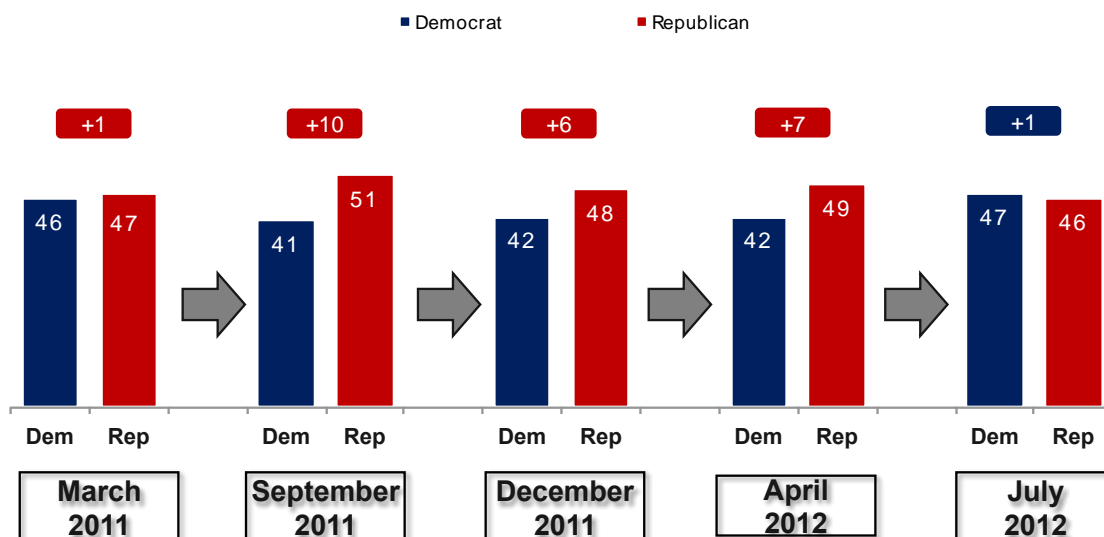
Republican vote falling

The Republican incumbents are losing support right now in the bulk of the districts that were largely unchanged in reapportionment. They have lost 5 points since September.²

In September 2011, Republican incumbents in these districts held a 10-point lead (41 to 51). The unnamed Democratic challenger now marginally edges (47 to 45) the named incumbent Republican.

100 days out, Republicans have lost the lead they built up in the comparable districts

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



*Note: Incumbent names were inserted with party identification. Generic challengers were inserted as "The Democratic Candidate." In new, vacant, or open seats, "the Republican candidate" was used in place of the incumbent name.

Republican incumbents out of touch with districts

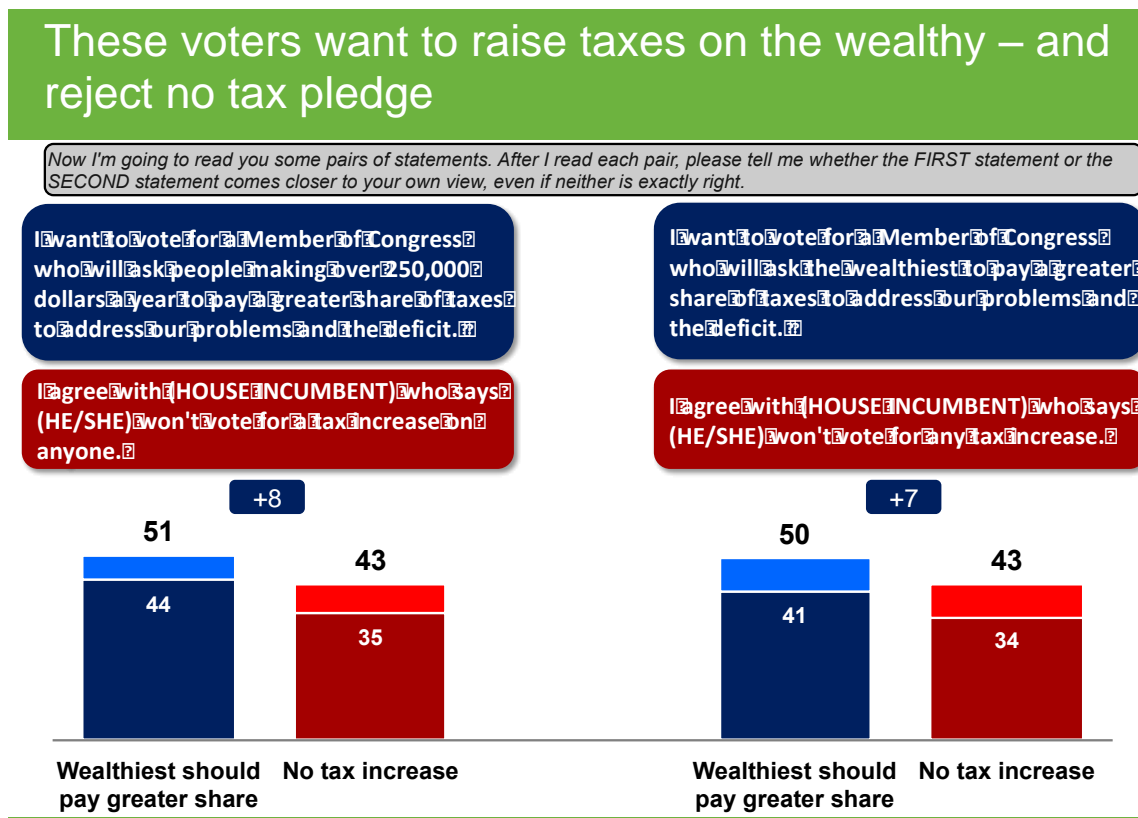
First, they are out of touch on the president. He is now winning this battleground by 2 points and is just 2 points behind his margin in 2008. The President is ahead by 8 points in the 27 Tier 1 seats, where his approval rating is over 50 percent.

² The districts in this survey reflect reapportionment and we dialed voters in all newly redrawn districts. Nonetheless, we can make accurate comparisons by filtering the results to reflect only the two-thirds of districts that are 70 percent or more similar to the old (2001-2010) districts.



Importantly, a strong majority of voters in these districts—54 to 41 percent—say they want their representatives to *work with the President* to address our problems, not try to stop his agenda.

Second, these members are out of touch on taxes – an issue that has not yet played out. Just 40 percent say their representative “has the right approach to taxes.” Half of all voters in the battleground say they want to vote for a member of Congress who will ask the wealthiest to pay a greater share of taxes. The no-tax pledge is a minority position.



Republican members are as weak as members of Congress

On candidate attributes that predict the vote, these individual incumbents are weak in their own districts. Just four in ten say that their representative is “for the right kind of change.” Just 43 percent believe their representative is “for the middle class” and “fights for people here.” In the whole battleground, only 39 percent of voters believe their incumbent is on their side. These are not reelection numbers.

When we look at the time series districts, we see significant erosion, even just since April. Four months ago, 45 percent of voters in these districts said their incumbents were on their side—now just 35 percent say their incumbents are on their side. In April, 34 percent of voters in these dis-



tricts said their incumbents were part of the problem in Washington. Now that number is 40 percent.

Republicans now lose the health care debate

Republicans are running hard against ObamaCare but constituents in these districts now favor Democrats on health care by a 5-point margin (47 to 42 percent). This margin widens in the most competitive districts, where Democrats have an 11-point advantage on this issue. On the big debate—encompassing the two sides’ core positions—Democrats emerge with a clear advantage. By a 6-point margin, these voters prefer the Democrats’ position:

Democrats say: The most important thing is to cut costs for middle and working class people. People and small businesses with their own plans keep their policies and doctors, but will get tax credits to make premiums more affordable, and insurance companies can no longer drop your insurance if you get sick or have a pre-existing condition. We should make improvements that reduce health care costs, but our main focus should be on the economy and jobs, not re-fighting the same old health care political battles.

over the Republican alternative:

Republicans say: The health care reform law is killing jobs and the economy and will raise, not lower, our health care costs. This law cuts 500 billion dollars from Medicare, hurting millions of seniors, and it increases taxes on small businesses and the middle class who cannot afford health insurance by thousands of dollars a year. This law was a bad idea and still is a bad idea. The federal government has no business telling American citizens what to do with their own money, including health insurance.

Half of all voters in these Republican districts select the Democratic statement on health care over the Republican offer. And in the Tier 1 seats, more than half (53 percent) side with the Democratic statement, giving the position a 10-point margin over the Republican alternative.

Democrats win the health care debate by emphasizing affordability for the middle class and working people, talking about the benefits, as well as changes that reduce costs. Voters want us to prioritize the economy and not refight health care battles.

The Ryan Budget: Vulnerability

The Ryan budget starts in a weakened position. Even described in John Boehner’s language—and without debate back and forth—the plan just scrapes majority approval (52 percent). And this budget is very vulnerable to attack—voters do not like the individual elements and a debate back and forth works to Democrats’ advantage.



After hearing facts about the budget and even messaging on both sides, Democrats emerge ahead the end of the survey—drawing the vote to 47-46 in the full battleground and cutting the margin by two-thirds in the Tier 2 districts—making many of these less winnable districts potentially within reach for Democrats.

The Democrats have the better case on the Ryan budget, and in regression analysis, three themes drive the Congressional vote at the end of the debate. These are: allowing low-income tax credits to expire, cutting taxes for the wealthiest while cutting programs that middle and working class people rely on, and making cuts and changes to Medicare.

The Ryan Budget: Medicare

Before even hearing about the Ryan budget, voters give Democrats a 6-point edge on which party would do a better job on Medicare. Nearly half of all voters in Tier 1 (48 percent) say they trust Democrats more on Medicare—and this advantage expands even further when voters hear an even debate on the Ryan budget.

Two-thirds of all battleground voters say they have serious doubts about a budget that privatizes and cuts funding for Medicare, forcing seniors to pay an average of 6 thousand dollars more a year for health care. This was a strong predictor of the vote at the end of the survey, driving voters away from Republicans.

This raises serious doubts for 72 percent of seniors. As we found with last year’s Ryan budget, seniors are especially receptive to attacks on the Ryan budget and are willing to punish Republicans for touching Medicare.³

MEDICARE							
	Total	Independents	Unmarried Women	White non-college	Seniors	Youth	Minority
Total serious doubts	66	60	78	65	72	62	68
Very serious	35	30	39	36	44	30	32

And when we tested thematic attacks against individual Republican incumbents, the Medicare message was the strongest driver of the vote at the end of the survey and the strongest driver of shifting the outcome from the initial vote to the vote at the end of the survey. In fact, this Medi-

³ For the first two nights, this question was asked as “please tell me how concerning it is to you -- very concerning, somewhat concerning, not that concerning, or not at all concerning.” After the first two nights, the question was asked “Does this raise very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about (HOUSE INCUMBENT)?” In the three districts in this survey that are either new or have a vacant seat (MI-11, CA-21 and AZ-1), respondents were offered the generic “the Republican candidate” instead of the named incumbent.



care attack is a better predictor of the vote at the end of the survey than a respondent's party identification.

(MEDICARE) (HOUSE INCUMBENT) voted to slash and privatize Medicare, massively cut health care spending for seniors, and freeze spending under inflation, which will force seniors to pay 6 thousand dollars more a year for their health care.

This attack is especially strong in the broad progressive base—three-quarters of unmarried women say this raises serious doubts about the Republican incumbent and 63 percent of young people say this as well. Not surprisingly, it is also strong among seniors. Two-thirds of seniors say this raises serious doubts, 38 percent very serious doubts.

Medicare is a key reason why voters reject the Ryan plan—but while Medicare is a potent and predictive element in the Ryan budget, it is hardly the only concern voters have about the Republican plan.

The Ryan Budget: Pushing 2 million families back into poverty

The strongest predictor of the vote at the end of the survey is the fact that the Ryan budget would allow the extension of the refundable child tax credit to expire. The Ryan budget allows the tax credit's threshold to increase, making millions of families ineligible to receive it, effectively pushing the families of 2 million children back into poverty. Nearly two-thirds of all battleground voters (64 percent) said this raises serious doubts about the Ryan plan and more than half of those (35 percent) have very serious doubts.

This is critical for the new progressive base, the Rising American Electorate in particular, and these are voters who have not engaged in 2012 the way they did in 2008. This kind of potent attack against Republicans could well give these voters a reason to turn out in November.

RAISE TAXES ON VULNERABLE, PUSH FAMILIES OF 2 MILLION CHILDREN BACK INTO POVERTY						
	Total	Unmarried women	Seniors	Youth	Rising American Electorate	Minority
Total serious doubts	64	71	64	70	69	77
Very serious doubts	35	34	40	37	38	37

When we test this as a thematic attack against Republican incumbents, it was very potent, underscoring our recent national results on this issue. Voters are deeply concerned about an economy that punishes the most vulnerable, which could include themselves. This attack raises serious doubts about the named incumbent for 59 percent and it is even stronger in Tier 1, where 61 percent agree.



(PUSH BACK INTO POVERTY) (HOUSE INCUMBENT) voted to let tax cuts for low-income Americans expire, pushing the families of 2 million children back into poverty by giving some a tax increase of up to 1,400 dollars, while millionaires actually get a tax cut of a quarter million dollars.

Pushing families back into poverty is a powerful image that drives voters away from Republicans and underscores voters' central concerns about the Republican budget—that it screws working families. This attack was a strong driver of the congressional re-vote, as well as which party would do a better job on taxes.

PUSH BACK INTO POVERTY						
	Total	Independent	Unmarried Women	Seniors	Youth	Rising American Electorate
Total serious doubts	59	63	68	62	63	63
Very serious doubts	36	33	40	32	35	40

The Ryan Budget: Tax cuts at the top, investment cuts for everyone else

Finally, 61 percent of all battleground voters have doubts about the Ryan plan when they learn that it gives those making over a million dollars a year an average tax cut of more than 150,000 dollars, while cutting programs that middle and working class families depend on. This is also a strong predictor of the congressional vote at the end of the survey—voters are already against Republicans on taxes and this contrast sets up a clear difference between the two parties' priorities.

This is especially potent among unmarried women—three-quarters (74 percent) say this raises serious doubts about the Ryan budget, as do 65 percent of seniors.

CUT TAXES FOR MILLIONAIRES, CUT PROGRAMS FOR MIDDLE CLASS						
	Total	Unmarried women	White non-college	Seniors	Rising American Electorate	Minority
Total serious doubts	61	74	60	65	65	66
Very serious doubts	34	40	34	36	35	35

As a thematic attack message, the charge that the Republican incumbent voted to raise taxes on middle and working class families in order to pay for loopholes and tax breaks for the wealthiest raises serious doubts for 58 percent of all battleground voters, very serious doubts for 38 percent.



And framing the tax debate as a clear choice in this way is very strong in driving the shift in the congressional vote.

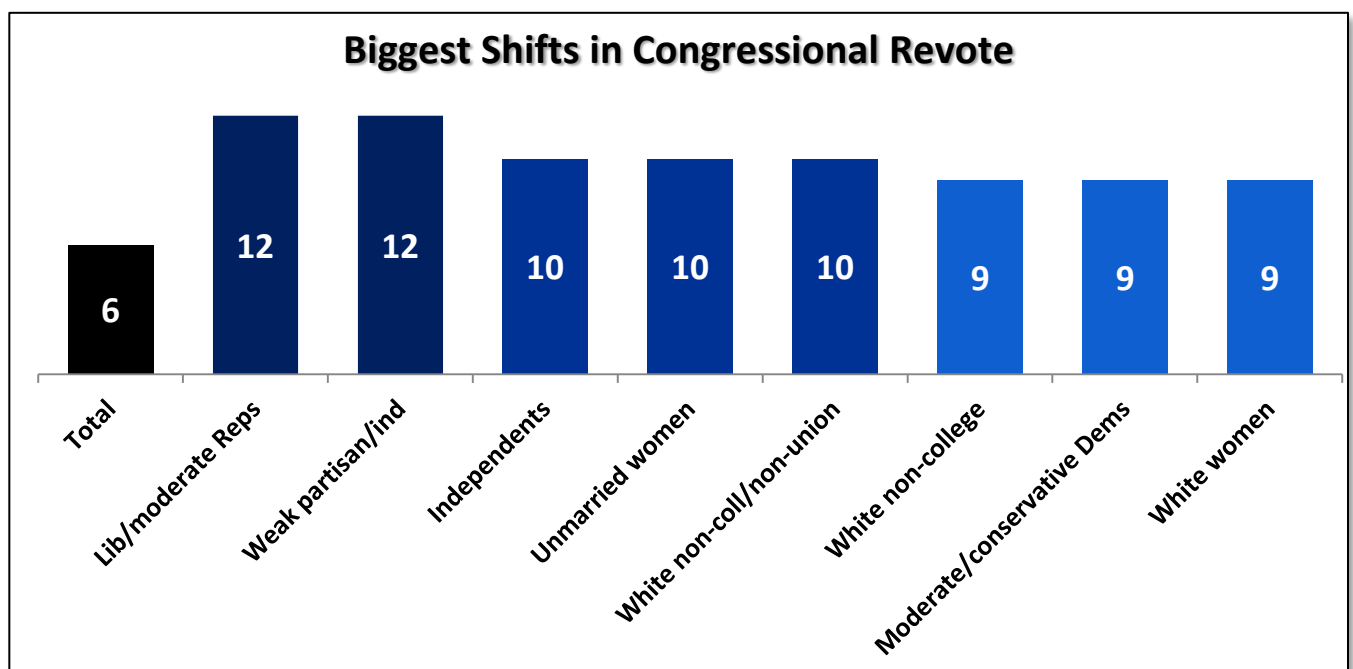
(MIDDLE CLASS TAX) (HOUSE INCUMBENT) voted to raise taxes on middle class and working families in order to pay for tax cuts for CEOs, big corporations that outsource jobs, big oil companies that are more profitable than ever, and millionaires and billionaires, giving them a tax break of 265,000 dollars on top of the Bush tax cuts.

This attack is most potent among swing voters. Two-thirds of seniors (64 percent) and independents (67 percent) have serious doubts about the incumbent after hearing this attack.

Vulnerable to attack

After hearing about the elements of the Ryan budget and an even debate, voters move away from these incumbents, shifting the edge on the vote to Democrats' advantage—47 percent to 46 percent. In Tier 2 districts, the Republican advantage narrows to 3 points from an initial 9-point advantage.

To get from serious vulnerability to a wave election, progressives need to make these incumbents pay the price for the positions they have taken. In the graph below are the independents, moderates, working-class whites and unmarried women who gave Democrats a significant advantage in 2008.





2012 Battleground Methodology

- The 2012 Democracy Corps Congressional battleground research focuses intensely on the Republican-Obama districts; 35 of the 54 districts were won by Barack Obama in 2008 but claimed by Republicans in the 2010 midterm.
- This is the first Battleground survey conducted entirely in new, redrawn districts after the 2010 reapportionment, which provides a unique and realistic view of the current state of the most vulnerable Republican seats heading into November.
- The Republican districts are divided into 2 tiers. Tier 1 includes the 27 most competitive districts; Tier 2 is composed of 27 secondary targets.
- The vast majority of the districts dialed in this survey are currently held by a Republican incumbent – which we name throughout the survey. But our battleground also includes two completely new -- Arizona 1st and California 21st, as well as one currently vacant seat (Michigan 11th). Respondents in these seats were not asked incumbent approval or thermometer questions, and were presented with a generic, rather than named Congressional vote.
- Approximately half of our battleground can be tracked from previous surveys. To qualify in the trend data, a new district must comprise at least 70 percent of its old lines, in addition to new districts we asked in our last survey. While this survey comprises our first new-district only battleground, the trend data gives us a unique ability to track changes in public mood and opinion over time in these crucial swing districts. The trend data in this presentation represents these common districts.



2012 Battleground Districts: Tier 1

District	Incumbent	2008 Presidential vote margin
AZ-1	NEW	McCain +3
CA-10	Jeff Denham	Obama +3
CA-26	Elton Gallegly	Obama +15
CA-52	Brian Bilbray	Obama +12
CA-7	Dan Lungren	Obama +5
CO-6	Mike Coffman	Obama +9
FL-18	Allen West	Obama +3
IL-10	Robert Dold	Obama +27
IL-11	Judy Biggert	Obama +24
IL-13	Tim Johnson	Obama +11
IL-17	Bobby Schilling	Obama +22
IL-8	Joe Walsh	Obama +24
MD-6	Roscoe Bartlett	Obama +14
MI-1	Dan Benishek	Obama +2
MN-8	Chip Cravaack	Obama +8
NH-1	Frank Guinta	Obama +7
NH-2	Charlie Bass	Obama +13
NJ-3	Jon Runyan	Obama +3
NV-3	Joe Heck	Obama +9
NY-18	Nan Hayworth	Obama +5
NY-19	Chris Gibson	Obama +8
NY-24	Ann Marie Buerkle	Obama +14
OH-16	Jim Renacci	McCain +4
PA-8	Mike Fitzpatrick	Obama +7
TX-23	Francisco Canseco	Obama +1
WI-7	Sean Duffy	Obama +8
WI-8	Reid Ribble	Obama +9



2012 Battleground Districts: Tier 2

District	Incumbent	2008 Presidential vote margin
CA-21		Obama +6
CA-36	Mary Bono Mack	Obama +3
CO-3	Scott Tipton	McCain +2
FL-10	Dan Webster	McCain +5
FL-13	C.W. Bill Young	Obama +4
FL-16	Vern Buchanan	McCain +3
FL-2	Steve Southerland	McCain +5
FL-26	David Rivera	McCain +1
IA-4	Steve King	McCain +2
IN-8	Larry Bucshon	McCain +3
MI-11		Obama +2
MI-3	Justin Amash	Obama +1
MN-2	John Kline	Obama +2
MN-6	Michele Bachmann	McCain +12
MT-AL		McCain +3
ND-AL		McCain +8
NY-11	Michael Grimm	McCain +3
NY-22	Richard Hanna	McCain +0
NY-23	Tom Reed	Obama +1
OH-6	Bill Johnson	McCain +8
OH-7	Bob Gibbs	McCain +4
PA-18	Tim Murphy	McCain +11
PA-6	Jim Gerlach	Obama +7
PA-7	Pat Meehan	Obama +3
TX-14		McCain +15
VA-2	Scott Rigell	Obama +1



2012 Battleground Districts: Typology

Rural	Exurban	Suburban	Metro	Urban
Upscale New Hampshire-2 New York-19 Downscale Arkansas-1 Iowa-4 Michigan-1 Minnesota-8 Montana-AL North Dakota-AL Ohio-6 Wisconsin-7	Upscale New York-23 Downscale Arizona-1 Illinois-13 Indiana-8 Colorado-3 New York-22 Texas-14 Wisconsin-8	Upscale California-7 California-26 Colorado-6 Florida-16 Florida-26 Illinois-8 Illinois-10 Illinois-11 Maryland-6 Michigan-11 Minnesota-2 Minnesota-6 New Hampshire-1 New Jersey-3 Nevada-3 New York-18 Pennsylvania-6 Pennsylvania-7 Pennsylvania-8 Pennsylvania-18 Downscale California-21 California-36 Florida-13 Florida-18 Ohio-7 Ohio-16	Upscale California-10 California-52 Florida-10 Michigan-3 New York-24 Downscale Illinois-17 Texas-23 Florida-2	Upscale New York-11 Virginia-2