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To: Friends of Democracy Corps and WWVAF

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Economic Agenda for Working Women and Men

The Difference in the Senate Battleground?

The culmination of a series of surveys and focus groups for Democracy Corps and Women's Voices Women Vote Action Fund, our new survey of the 12 states where control of the Senate is being contested shows that control of the Senate rests on a knife's edge, but that Democrats have a powerful weapon and a policy agenda and narrative centered around the needs of working women and men.

This Senate battleground is unique. All the respondents were 2006 or 2010 off-year voters and the vote question uses a named ballot in each state.¹

The Senate battleground, which Mitt Romney won by an average of 9 points in 2012, is evenly divided, stable and not breaking in either direction at this point. There are important dynamics that could shift the race. The president's ratings are stable but quite low with independents in this Republican-tilting battleground. But the two parties are at parity in their favorability, despite the heavy GOP tilt of the battleground. Regressions show House Republicans are a bigger driver of the Senate vote than Senate Republicans, who are extremely unpopular.

The breaking issues of the day divide the battleground evenly but animate their respective bases. The battleground is split evenly on implement vs repeal health care reform, but advocates of repeal feel that more strongly. The battleground is evenly divided on Hobby Lobby, but unmarried women and Millennials feel strongly about punishing supporters.

¹ The survey among 1,000 likely 2014 voters was conducted from July 12-16, 2014 using a list of 2006 voters, 2010 voters, and new registrants. Unless otherwise noted, the margin of error for the full sample is = +/- 3.10% at 95% confidence.



But most important, Democrats have a way to improve their fortunes. They are currently being held back by a serious underperformance with unmarried women, who give them just an 11-point advantage on the vote. But engaging in a populist economic debate and attacks with a strong emphasis on women's issues brings these critical voters back in the fold. It also may be the critical strategy in the open battleground Senate seats.

An "in your shoes" populist narrative about people's economic struggles, a policy agenda about finally helping mothers in the workplace and making sure those at the top are paying their fair share, and, most important, a critique of Republicans for their policies that hurt seniors and women, result in significant gains with unmarried women and other key targets when matched against the Republican agenda and could prove the difference between a majority and minority-leader Harry Reid come next January.

Key findings:

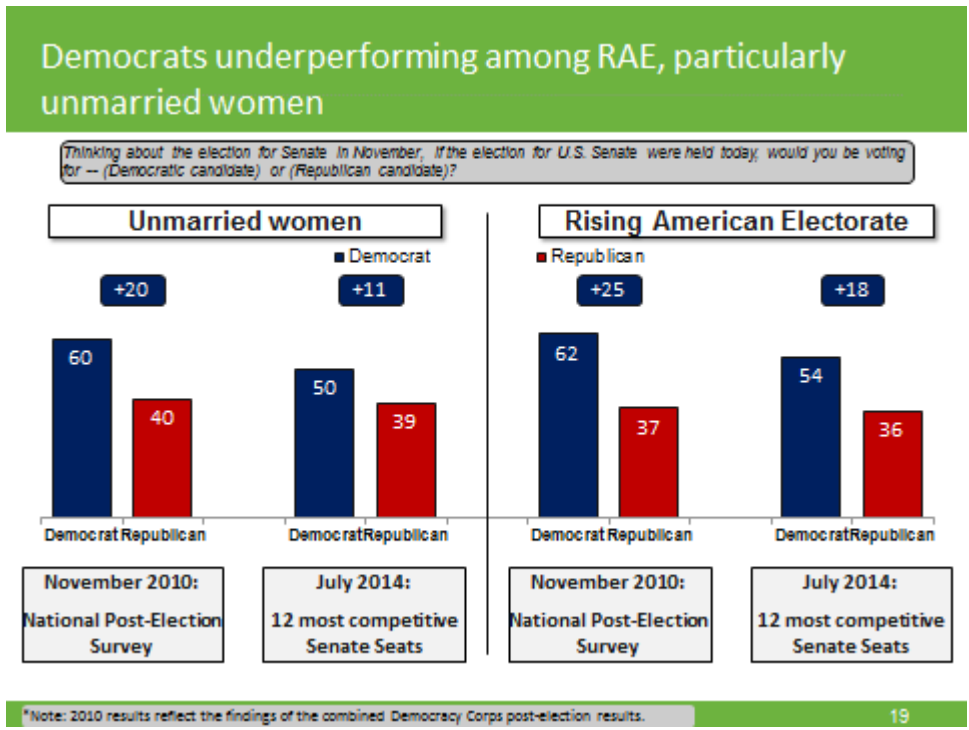
- Unmarried women are, perhaps, the most important target for Democrats across this Senate battleground.
- The senate race in this battleground is tied and stable, with Democrats held back by underperformance among base RAE voters and unmarried women.
- The Democratic incumbents in this battleground are much better liked than Obama and have significantly higher ratings than their Republican opponents. Their approval rating is 6 points above that for the president.
- Two dynamics could shift this race: the president's approval in these states is just 37 percent, but stable. Meanwhile, the Republican Party, and particularly the Republicans in the House, are extremely unpopular. And regressions show that sentiment about House Republicans drives the SENATE vote more strongly than sentiment about Senate Republicans.
- Democrats have a message that can move the vote. A populist economic narrative, including strong messaging around the women's economic agenda, moves the vote in Democrats' favor when matched against a Republican economic narrative with big gains in the open-seat race and the state that Obama won in 2012.
- A critique of Republicans for their positions on seniors, women's economic issues and women's health are powerful and help move the vote among younger voters and women, as well as help move the vote in some of the most competitive races in the battleground.
- And a debate about money in politics, particularly over a Constitutional Amendment to repeal Citizens United and a proposal to get big money out of our campaign system, results in further gains.
- Exposing unmarried women to the economic message shifts their support for Senate Democrats from +11 to +20.
- The economic agenda for working women and men includes a cluster of powerful policies on helping working mothers, equal pay and equal health insurance, and making sure that the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share.



- Unmarried women are the pivotal group of the debate, as Democrats currently underperform even their 2010 margin significantly, but these voters move strongly in response to the debate.
- Voters in this Republican-leaning district are split on the electoral impact of the Republican candidate supporting the Hobby Lobby decision, but the issue provides an opening for Democrats to make a powerful critique on Republicans on the issue of women’s health. The issue is very powerful with unmarried women and other key blocs of women.

Named Senate vote and state of the nation

The Senate battleground starts as a very tight race: the 44-46 lead for the Republican candidates is within the margin of error and unchanged from an NPR survey conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and Resurgent Republican in early June.² Democrats are, in large part, being held back by poor performance among some of their most critical groups: the Rising American Electorate and particularly unmarried women. Democrats are winning unmarried women by just 11 points, just half of the overall margin Senate Democrats enjoyed in 2010 (and even further below Obama’s 2012 margin).

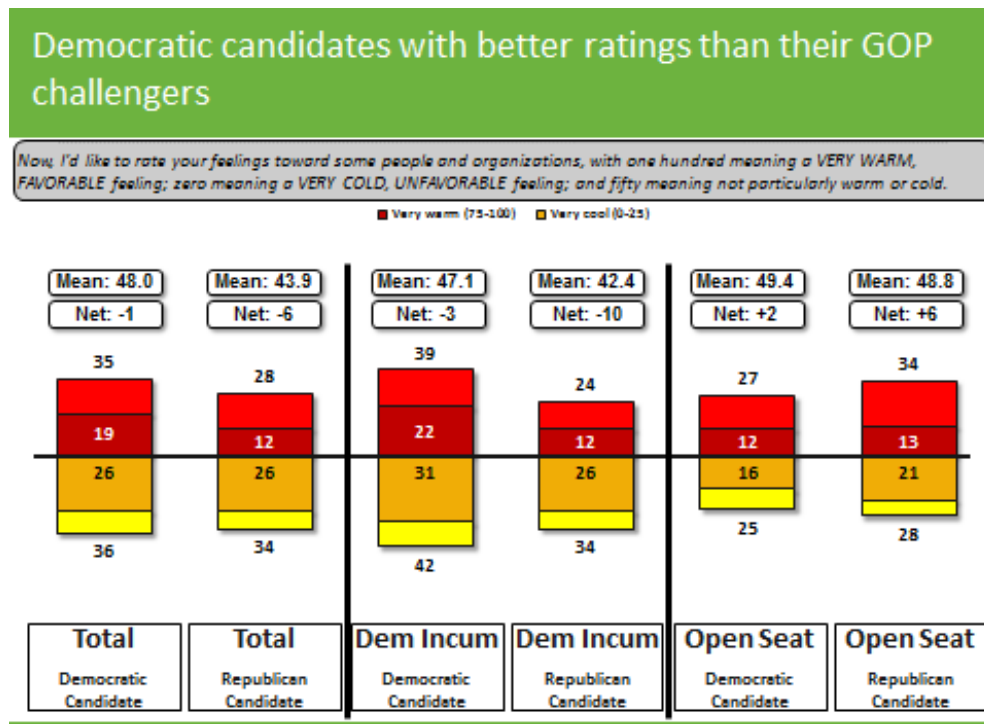


Democrats have a small, 3-point lead, in the four states carried by Obama, while they trail by 5 in the eight states carried by Romney. In the seven states with a Democratic incumbent, the vote is tied despite a 7-point partisan advantage for Republicans. The larger challenge for Democrats is instead in the four seats that have no incumbent: Democrats start down 8 points, here. How-

² The survey among 1,000 randomly dialed voters was conducted from June 6-11, 2014. Unless otherwise noted, the margin of error for the full sample is +/- 3.10% at 95% confidence.



ever, these are also the seats where we see some of the largest gains for Democrats over the course of the survey.



The immediate tendency may be to blame the President, and his numbers are clearly an issue for Democrats in these states, with just a 37 percent approval rating, and just 29 percent with independents. His personal favorability is also negative – no surprise considering 8 of the 12 battleground states went to Mitt Romney.

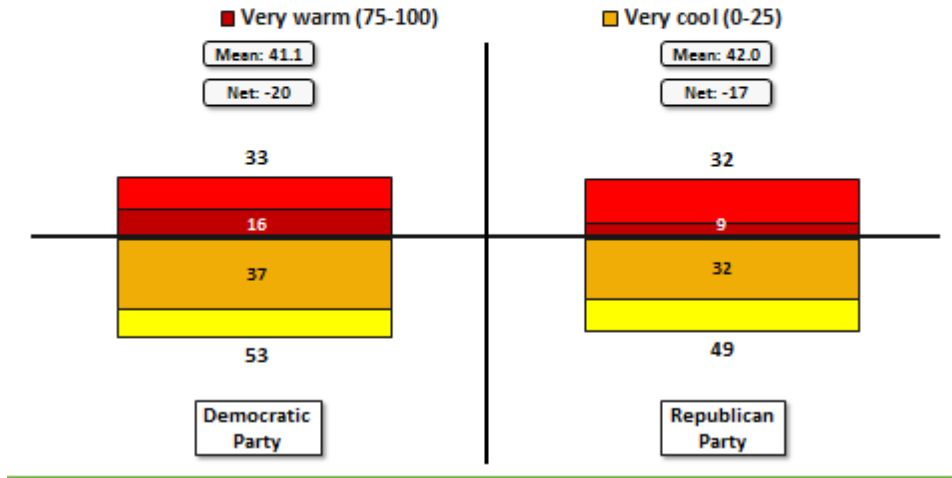
But the President is not running for office this year, and the Democratic candidates have much better ratings than the president. The sitting Democratic incumbents get solid, if unspectacular marks on job approval (43 percent approve, 43 percent disapprove), especially in the context of a very unpopular Congress. More important, the Democratic candidates across all 12 seats are better liked than their Republican opponents with a mean rating of 48.0 degrees for Democrats and just 43.9 for Republicans.

Moreover, the Republican brand remains a drag for the Republican candidates. Even though Romney won these states by 9 points, the Republican Party and Democratic Party get equal scores from voters. Both Harry Reid and Mitch McConnell, who is also a candidate in the battleground, are unsurprisingly unpopular as representatives of the Washington establishment. But this unpopularity extends to Republicans in the Senate, who are 19 points underwater, and Republicans in the House are even deeper with a net negative of 25 points. Importantly, regressions show that voters' views of House Republicans are actually a bigger driver of the Senate vote than their views of Senate Republicans – so John Boehner's unpopular agenda is holding back Republicans on both sides of the Capitol.



Republican and Democratic parties at parity, even though battleground went heavily for Romney

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.



Part of their problem is that Republicans are not finding as much traction on many of their favorite issues as they'd like. The Republican-leaning battleground is split on implementing and fixing vs. repealing and replacing Obamacare.

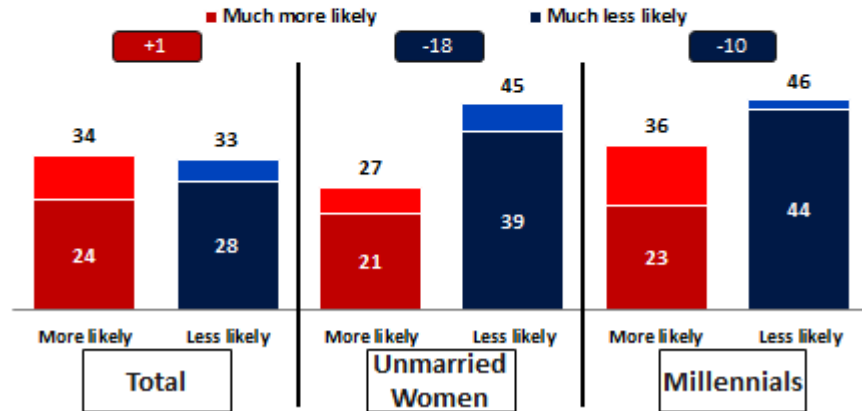
Meanwhile, Republicans supporting the recent Hobby Lobby ruling are just as likely to turn away voters as they are to gain them by broaching the subject – even in this conservative battleground. The issue becomes more dangerous when talking to key groups like Millennials, independent women and unmarried women, who say that support of the decision makes them less likely to support a candidate by an 18-point margin. More important, as discussed below, the issue provides an opening for Democrats to make a powerful critique on Republicans on the issue of women's health.



Battleground is divided on Republicans who support Hobby Lobby, but pay big price with unmarried women and Millennials

Before last week, all company-provided insurance plans had to provide prescriptions for contraceptives. Last week, the Supreme Court ruled that companies, including companies that employ thousands, are allowed to exclude covering certain types of contraceptives based on the religious views of the owners.

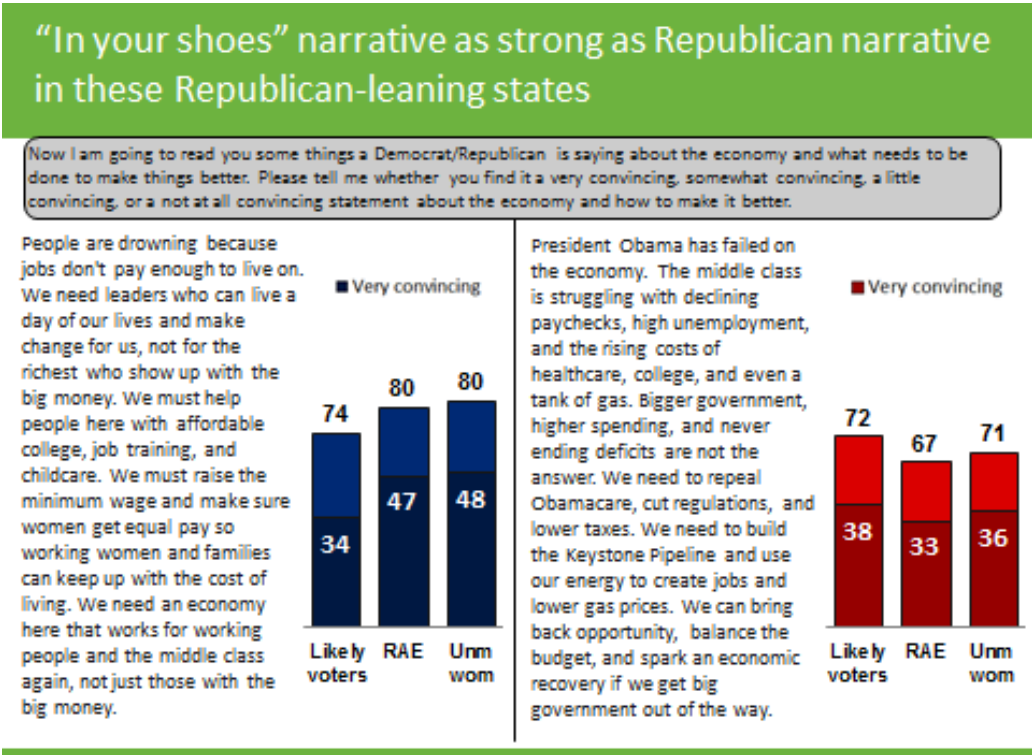
If a candidate for Senate this year SUPPORTED this ruling, would that make you more likely to support the candidate in the election this November, less likely, or would it make no difference?



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A Message that Matters to Voters

Our WWVAF focus groups and national survey last month showed that the best economic messaging speaks to voters on their level, and shows that candidates get that “people are drowning because jobs do not pay enough to live on.” A real “in your shoes” message draws a stark contrast between Democratic policies that help working men and women and Republican plans that help the wealthiest, especially when combined with voters’ very real concerns about the impact of Republican policies on seniors and women. The narrative is equal to a Republican message on Obama failing on the economy, no easy feat in this battleground. And it is significantly stronger with RAE voters and unmarried women.



At the heart of a relatable economic message are policies that speak to the basic needs of Americans: policies that help working mothers, equal pay and equal health insurance for women, and making sure that the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share. Putting women front and center is also key to this narrative, and the strongest policies protect pregnant women and give them the time off they need. Nearly 3 in 4 independent women highlight this policy as a priority, and it is the top performing policy among swing voters as well as being the largest driver of the vote in regressions.

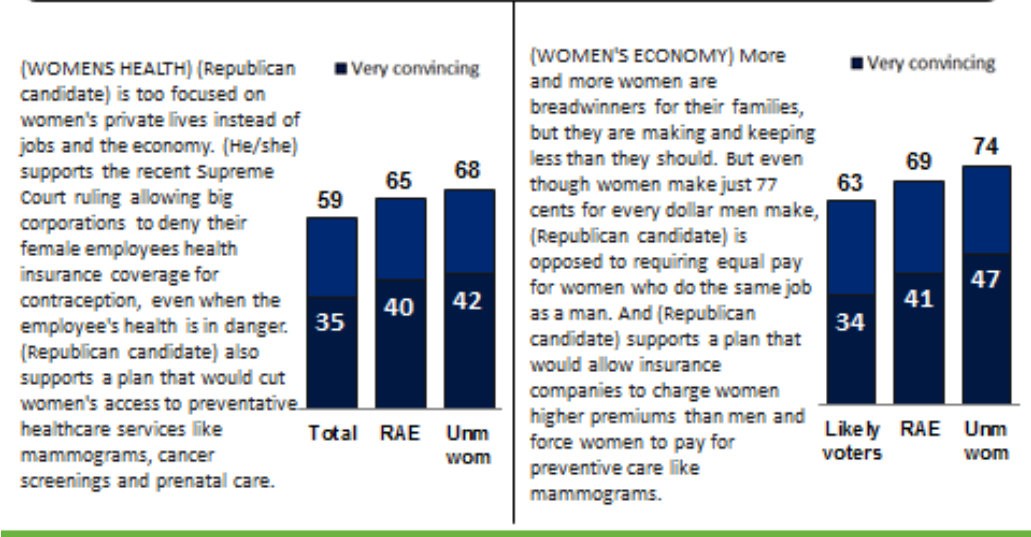
These policies set up a choice for voters, but it is attacks on Republican actions that ultimately push them. Critiques of the Republicans score very strongly and significantly higher than attacks on Democrats. Republican attempts to cut Medicare while privatizing social security provoke a strongly negative reaction from voters in both red and blue states.

But the attacks on Republicans on women’s health and on their opposition to pay equity are very powerful and show that women are an amazing vulnerability for Republican candidates. The following messages on women’s health (centered around Hobby Lobby) and women’s economic issues are also very powerful, with the women’s economic message is very potent with unmarried women, and both prove to be potent drivers in the regressions:



Attacks on Republicans on women’s health and economy are convincing reasons for unmarried women to vote

Now I’m going to read you some things that Republicans in Washington and in your state are trying to do. These could decide whether you vote in November. Please tell me whether it raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about the Republicans when you are thinking of voting in November.



Policies and Messages Move the Vote

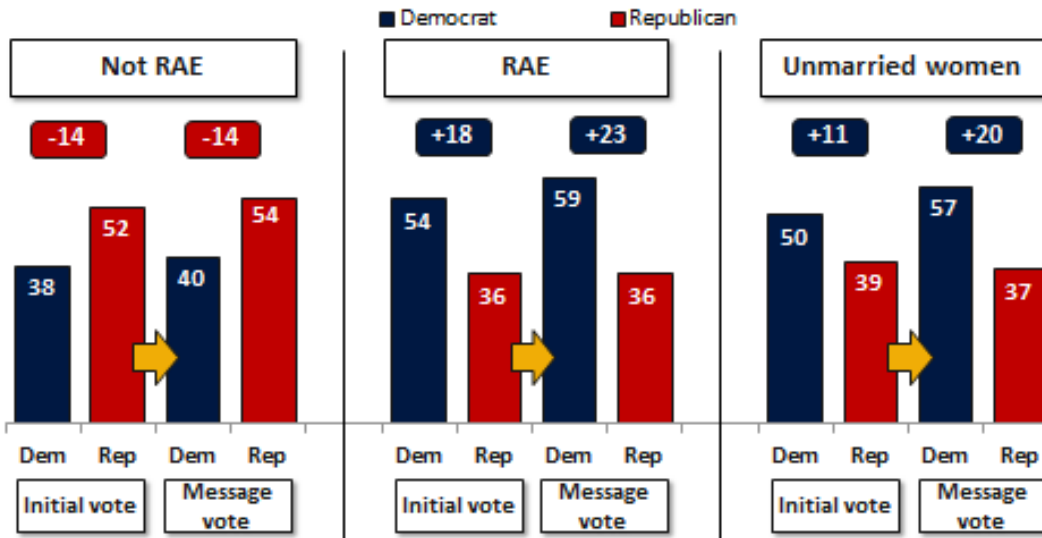
Right now, Democratic candidates are struggling with their base: unmarried women and younger voters are surprisingly competitive, even when accounting for the Republican tilt to these states. But the messages above, even when matched against policies and attacks from the right, offer a clear path forward for Democratic candidates.

After the debate, the vote moves from a 2-point disadvantage into a dead-tie. But these small gains mask important, larger movement among some key groups. At the heart of this shift are unmarried women, whose margin jumps from 11 to 20 points, matching the 2010 national margin (but still below 2012). Democrats also make big gains with Millennials and younger women. And importantly, they make real gains in the open-seat races where a 9-point deficit moves to an even race. These are powerful arguments that give Democrats the ammunition to go toe-to-toe in races that might otherwise be written off, and there is still ample opportunity to put these issues front-and-center for the fall debate.



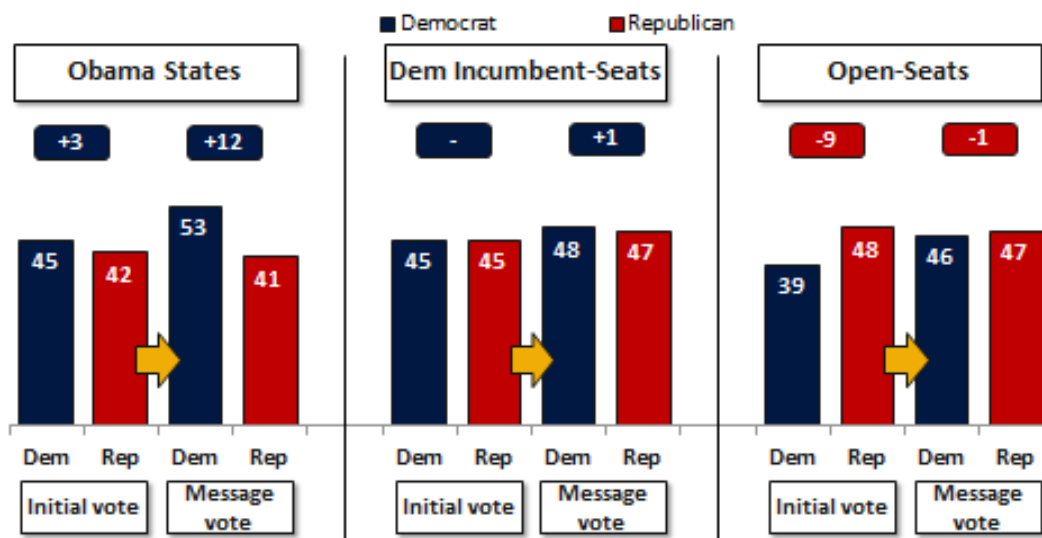
Big gains with unmarried women

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?



Competitive open seats and Obama-friendly districts respond best to economic message

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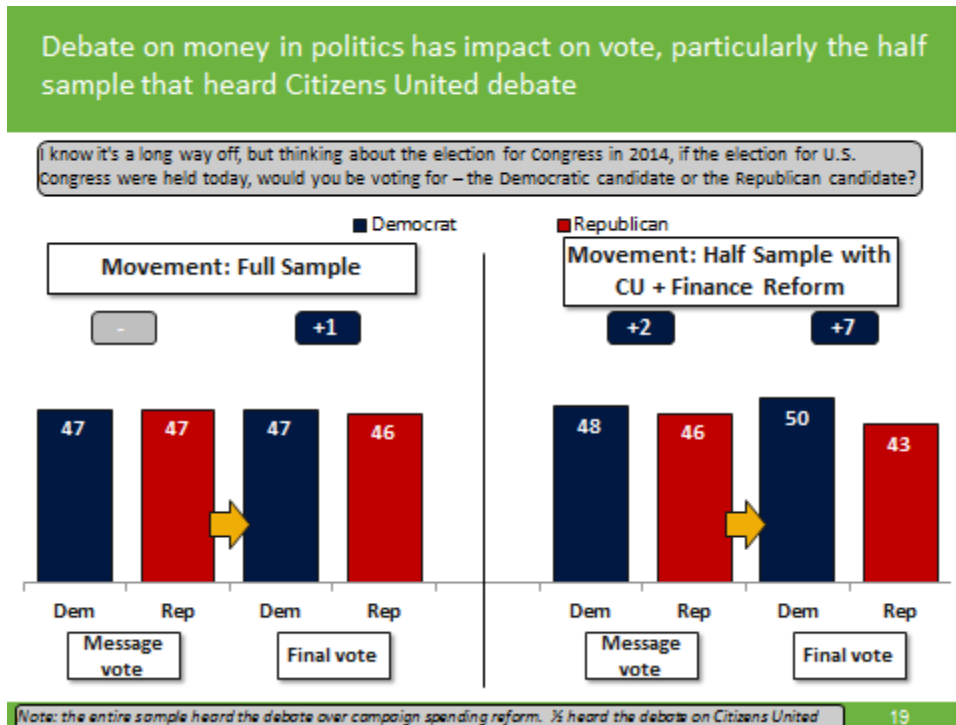


Debate Over Money in Politics, Citizens United, Moves Vote Further

In this survey we also explored the debate about money and politics and specifically over a Constitutional Amendment to overturn the *Citizens United* ruling. We will be delving into those results in a separate memo that will be released shortly, but we thought it important to note here that engaging in this debate, on top of the women’s economic agenda, can further boost Democratic support.

Voters support such an amendment by an overwhelming 73 to 24 percent margin, and also strongly support a plan to limit the influence of money in politics by providing public matching funds for small donations to candidates who swear off large donations (by a 66 to 27 percent margin).

A simulated debate over money in politics moves the vote by a further point toward the Democrats overall, but, most important, in a split-sample exercise, voters that heard messages about both the public financing and *Citizens United* (only half the sample hear the *Citizens United* portion) moved a net 5 points more.





Appendix A: Battleground State List and Definitions

Battleground States

States	Incumbent	2012 Presidential margin
Alaska	Mark Begich	Romney +14.0
Arkansas	Mark Pryor	Romney +23.6
Colorado	Mark Udall	Obama +4.7
Georgia	OPEN (Chambliss)	Romney +8.0
Iowa	OPEN (Harkin)	Obama +5.6
Kentucky	Mitch McConnell	Romney +22.7
Louisiana	Mary Landreiu	Romney +17.2
Michigan	OPEN (Levin)	Obama +9.5
Montana	John Walsh	Romney +13.5
New Hampshire	Jeanne Shaheen	Obama +5.8
North Carolina	Kay Hagan	Romney +2.2
West Virginia	OPEN (Rockefeller)	Romney +26.8

Regional	2012 Presidential Result	Competitive Tier
Midwest and East	Won by Romney	Tier 1 (Most Dem)
Iowa	Alaska	Colorado
Michigan	Arkansas	Michigan
New Hampshire	Georgia	New Hampshire
West Virginia	Kentucky	North Carolina
West	Louisiana	Tier 2
Alaska	Montana	Alaska
Colorado	North Carolina	Arkansas
Montana	West Virginia	Iowa
South	Won by Obama	Louisiana
Arkansas	Colorado	Tier 3 (Most Rep)
Georgia	Iowa	Georgia
Kentucky	Michigan	Montana
Louisiana	New Hampshire	Kentucky
North Carolina		West Virginia