

# THE TARRANCE GROUP

## MEMORANDUM

**TO: INTERESTED PARTIES**

**FROM: THE TARRANCE GROUP**

**RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY OF YOUNG ADULTS**

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### Introduction and Overview

As the nation approaches what looks to be another Presidential election that will be decided by the thinnest of margins, this survey provides intriguing data about a demographic that has shown tremendous enthusiasm for the electoral process so far this cycle – those voters under age 30. These voters are engaged in the process and their concerns and interests mirror the electorate as a whole. In addition, these voters can be reached via methods like websites and e-mails that most campaigns already employ.

While the Democratic Party currently enjoys a significant advantage with these voters, there are considerable opportunities for the Republican Party and its candidates to make gains with voters under age 30.

### Strong Enthusiasm for the Process

In a series of questions gauging the enthusiasm and interest of young voters about the November elections, these voters showed a strong interest in the election and a high level of enthusiasm for the process. Overwhelming majorities of these voters believe their age

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group has the power to make changes (88%) and believe their vote is going to make more of a difference than normal (75%).

More than three-in-four (78%) indicate that they are registered to vote and a majority of those not registered say they plan to be registered in time for the fall elections. In addition, more than eight-in-ten (81%) say they are extremely (62%) or very (19%) likely to vote.

In terms of engagement, more than two-fifths (42%) of voters under age 30 say they are following the Presidential elections extremely (17%) or very (35%) closely.

## **Concerns Mirror Overall Electorate**

While many commentators suggest that young voters have interests that are unique and different, this data indicates that young voters actually have interests and concerns that closely match those of the overall electorate.

Their top issue concerns are jobs/economy, the War in Iraq, health care, and education. These anxieties match the top concerns seen in the overall electorate in the most recent George Washington University Battleground Poll.

When asked to select their top economic concern, the top mentions are finding a good paying job, health care costs, and their expenses. Like the older voters, the top economic concerns of these young voters center on basic issues like being able to find a stable, good paying job that can provide a decent lifestyle and having health coverage.

In a similar way, these voters have mixed views on Iraq. Just over a third (36%) of these voters want to withdrawal all troops from Iraq while another one-third (33%) wanting to

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withdrawal some troops. However, just over a quarter (26%) of these voters want to keep the same number of troops there (20%) or add more troops (6%).

## **Contacting These Voters**

In examining the means by which these voters are gathering information about the elections, it should be comforting for campaigns to learn that not only are these voters following the same key issues as the whole electorate but also that these voters can be reached through very cost effective means.

The top sources of electoral information for these voters are discussions with friends, watching online videos, visiting campaign websites, and exchanging e-mails with friends. This is a strong indicator that these voters are easy to reach through existing means and that reaching them has a strong multiplier effect since these voters enjoy having political discussions and exchanging political e-mails.

## **Opportunities for GOP gains**

By any measure, the Republican Party is at a disadvantage with these voters. Just 28% identify themselves as Republican versus 47% who identify themselves as Democrats. On the generic Congressional ballot, a majority (52%) select the Democrats while just 27% select the Republicans. \_On trial ballots, McCain is at a 12-point disadvantage to Hillary Clinton (35%-47%) and a 30-point disadvantage to Barack Obama (27%-57%). In addition, his voters are notably less excited about his candidacy than supporters of Clinton or Obama. On a qualities comparison with Hillary Clinton, McCain has an advantage on just two qualities – being honest and trustworthy (35%-33%) and being a typical politician (32%-29%), in which his 7-point deficit is a positive. On a qualities comparison with Barack Obama, McCain has an advantage on just one issue – having the

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right experience to be President (48%-28%). In addition, McCain has a lower favorable rating (44%) than Congress (46%), Hillary Clinton (51%), and Obama (69%).

However, there are opportunities for McCain and Republicans to make gains with these voters. Only 15% of young voter are strongly unfavorable to McCain and nearly one-quarter of voters have (24%) have no image of him. This offers a considerable number of targets for persuasion about the merits of McCain as a candidate. In a similar way, on the McCain-Clinton ballot, only 35% of young voters are “strong” Clinton supporters while 43% are “strong” Obama supporters on the McCain-Obama ballot. In either case, more than half of the young electorate has not yet made a definitive choice.

## **Conclusions**

These voters are engaged in the electoral process and open to persuasion through cost effective means. Republican candidates would be well served to locate and communicate with potential Republican voters under age 30. These voters are supportive of Republican policies and candidates. In addition, most of them view talking and e-mailing with their friends as a key source of communication about elections.