

Young Voter Strategies November 2006 Poll

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Republican Strategic Analysis

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Introduction and Overview

Republicans faced one of the toughest political environments in history. The results of the 2006 elections certainly reflected these results as Republicans lost control of Congress. In examining the views of young voters, it is remarkable how similar their concerns are to the concerns of the overall electorate and in looking specifically at young GOP voters, the intensity and loyalty of these voters is remarkable. However, this survey indicates that while young voters were contacted by political campaigns, it seems clear that too much of this communication was through traditional means like phone and mail and not enough of this communication was through innovative and interactive means like e-mail and the internet.

This survey also offers interesting insights about the upcoming 2008 Presidential elections with young Republican voters showing strong support for Giuliani and McCain while Democratic voters show strong support for Clinton and Obama.

Political Environment – Young Voters Largely Mirror Overall Electorate

Young voters are asked to select their top reasons for voting. Their top two reasons are a spirit of civic responsibility – “because voting is the right thing to do” (36%) and political calculations – “to support a candidate who agrees with me on issues” (27%). Certainly almost all voters are driven by a similar mix of this feeling of responsibility and a desire for the success of their political views.

In their views of the political environment, young voters mirrored the negative views of the overall electorate with:

- 61% believing the country is on the wrong track,
- 58% holding an unfavorable view of President Bush,
- 51% holding an unfavorable view of the Republican Party, and
- 60% disapproving of the job performance of President Bush.

Regarding their view of Congress, young voters also mirrored a trend seen in the overall electorate. They held mixed views about the job performance of Congress with 46% approving and 45% disapproving. However, when asked about their Member of Congress, 55% approved and just 23% disapproved. While the Democrats certainly prevailed in a number of close races to win control of Congress, this is an additional indicator that these wins were due more to the negative political environment and not due to a pervasive anti-incumbent view in the electorate.

In looking at the key issues for young voters, it is remarkable how similar their concerns are to those of the overall electorate. Asked to select their most important issue for Congress to do something about, the top concerns of young voters are education/cost of college (15%), jobs/economy (13%), Iraq (12%), immigration (11%), and health care/prescription drugs (10%). With the exception of cost of college, these concerns are the same as one would see from the overall electorate.

Young voters are also asked a series of issues and asked to rate them as most important, one of the most important, somewhat important, a little important, or not at all important. On these rankings it is Iraq (43% most important), health care (37% most important), jobs and the economy (36% most important), and homeland security/terrorism (36% most important) that top the list of concerns. The remaining rankings are college affordability (31% most important), moral and value based issues (29% most important), global warming (22% most important), and immigration (21% most important).

Remarkable Loyalty Among GOP Young Voters

Continuing a trend seen on previous studies, young Republican voters are as intense and loyal as GOP voters in any age cohort. Their view of the national political environment is decidedly more optimistic with:

- 56% believing the country is headed in the right direction,
- 83% holding a favorable view of President Bush,
- 69% holding a favorable view of the Republican Party,
- 83% approving of the job performance of President Bush, and
- 87% selecting the GOP on the generic Congressional ballot.

The generic Congressional ballot illustrated one of the challenges Republican candidates face in dealing with these voters. While 87% of young Republican voters select the GOP on the generic ballot, the generic ballot overall is a 15-point deficit for Republicans (35%-50%).

Interest Level Mixed and Campaign Contact Was More Traditional than High Tech

The interest level of young voters in the elections was measured along with methods of campaign contact. Young voters provided mixed views about their level of interest in the elections. Just 35% say they followed the elections either “extremely closely” (13%) or “very closely” (22%). However, 58% say they discussed politics and political campaigns “a great deal” (29%) or “some” (29%) with their friend and family.

In terms of contact, while more than one-third (35%) of young voters name the internet as a source that they use for information about elections, the contact they actually received from campaigns was from much more traditional means.

However, looking the 46% of young voters who say they received some type of campaign contact, the top means of contact are direct mail (56%) and robo-calls (54%). Only 21% report receiving contact via e-mail or the internet. This puts electronic contact behind much more labor

intensive contact methods like live calls (28%) and in-person meetings (22%). This certainly appears to be a missed opportunity at inexpensive contact for many campaigns.

2008 – Republicans favor Giuliani and McCain; Democrats favor Clinton and Obama

Looking ahead to 2008, self-identified Republicans and Democrats are asked their current preferred candidate. For Republicans, the clear front-runners are Rudolph Giuliani (27%) and John McCain (20%). No other candidate has support above 6%.

For Democrats, the front-runners are tied with both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama at 29%. They are trailed by Al Gore at 12%. No other candidate has support above 8%.

At least among young voters, it appears that neither current front-runner can expect an immediate coronation.

Conclusions

While Republicans faced the same environmental challenges with young voters that they did with the overall electorate, it is clear that young Republican voters remain a valuable target for GOP candidates and campaigns. These young Republican voters are intensely loyal to the party and to President Bush.

In looking at the contacts for these voters, it is clear that many campaigns missed the opportunity to reach out to this internet dependent cohort through inexpensive means like e-mail and weblogs. This is certainly an area on which Republicans can look to improve contact methods with these voters.