



A Study of Swing Congressional Districts

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Methodology Statement

The following survey was conducted by OnMessage Inc. Telephone interviews were conducted November 5th and 6th by professionally trained interviewers. The survey consists of a sample of 100 likely voters in 12 swing Congressional Districts held by a Republican member, for a total sample of 1200 likely voters. Within each Congressional District, interviews were stratified by county to accurately reflect historic voter turnout. All interviews were screened for likely participation in the November 7th election.

All 12 Congressional Districts were chosen by the following criteria:

- CD’s rated toss-up by national political publications such as the Rothenberg Political Report and the Cook Political Report.
- No CD’s were included in which President Bush received less than 48% of the vote in 2004. President Bush won these 12 CD’s by an average of 53% to 47%.
- No CD’s were included where the results could be easily explained by extraordinary circumstances, such as Texas 22 and Florida 16.

The following table details the 12 Congressional Districts included in this study.

State	District	Candidate	Incumbent/Open	2004 Pres Results (Bush/Kerry)
CT	4	Shays	Incumbent	49/49
PA	6	Gerlach	Incumbent	48/51
PA	8	Fitzpatrick	Incumbent	48/51
NY	24	Boehlert (Open)	Open	53/47
IN	9	Sodrel	Incumbent	59/40
IN	2	Chocola	Incumbent	56/43
OH	15	Pryce	Incumbent	50/50
OH	1	Chabot	Incumbent	51/49
MN	6	Kennedy (Open)	Open	57/42
WI	8	Green (Open)	Open	55/44
FL	13	Harris (Open)	Open	56/43
NM	1	Wilson	Incumbent	48/51
Total				53/47

In each of the 12 districts the participants were asked their preference on the Congressional ballot (ballot test) and their opinions of the Republican and Democrat candidates by name (favorable/unfavorable opinion). The results were then aggregated for all 12 districts.

Key Findings

In the face of the worst Republican Congressional defeat in a generation, the Republican Party must find the courage to look critically at the political dynamic that led to this defeat and at the current health of the Republican brand. In pursuit of that goal, OnMessage, Inc. conducted a comprehensive 1,200-sample pre-election survey across 12 swing congressional districts.

This diagnostic survey, along with our work conducted throughout the 2005-2006 cycle in target senate races, form the foundation for an assessment of the condition of the Republican brand and prescriptions for how Republican leaders can find the path back to electoral health.

It will be tempting for many Republican leaders to discount Tuesday's defeat as a function of the President's unpopularity alone. Others will point to tactical mistakes in individual races. Numerous media and Democratic pundits are already trying to frame the election as an ideological rejection of conservatism in general. Our findings demonstrate that all three of these theories are well off the mark.

The first step to health is admitting that you have a problem. Everyone realizes that the war in Iraq is unpopular and was a significant detriment to Republican candidates this year. But there is much more to the story. The simple fact is this – if the war in Iraq was brought to a successful and triumphal conclusion tomorrow, the Republican brand would still be in trouble.

Instead, Republicans should look at a problem on the macro level, realize the judgment of the voters, and take corrective steps to address the following realities in public opinion:

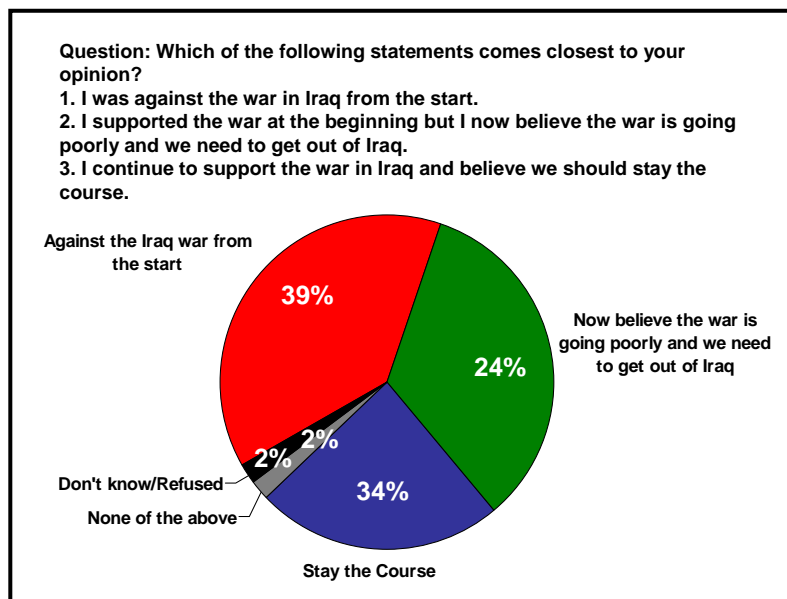
- Republicans failed to deliver on fiscal conservatism
- Republicans failed to be the champion of middle class economics
- Republicans failed to be reformers, particularly on ethical matters
- Republicans became the party of big corporations

WARNING: The following report is not for the weak, read it on a full stomach, and ignore it at your own peril.

**RADIOLOGY REPORT:
Iraq was in fact a big issue and it hurt Republicans badly.**

Just as the popularity of the Bush Administration’s foreign policy played a significant factor in Republican gains in the 2002 and 2004 elections, the perceived lack of progress in Iraq put numerous Republicans in jeopardy in 2006.

While the Iraq War and Bush foreign policy were enough to put many Republicans in competitive races – and it became the dominant attack in most Democratic campaigns – it would be a massive mistake to ignore other problems that contributed to our defeat.



**PATHOLOGY REPORT:
Republicans have completely abdicated our advantage on fiscal issues.**

First among Republican problems beyond Iraq was the voters’ belief that the party has lost its adherence to fiscal discipline, reduction in government spending, and a commitment to lowering federal taxes. While Republicans in Congress point to “tighter” budgets in each of the last two years, those actions did not sway voters who became angry at Republican spending habits. The bill came due this year.

Voters trust Democrats more on fiscal issues – cutting taxes, controlling spending, reducing the deficit. This may have happened sometime before in modern history, but we are too young to remember it.

- When asked which Party they believe would cut taxes for the middle-class 42% said the Democrats while only 29% chose the Republicans.
- When asked which Party will work toward reducing the deficit 47% chose the Democrats while only 22% chose the Republicans.
- Again, when asked who will keep government spending under control the Democrats held a 17 point edge (38% Democrats, 21% Republicans).

Between the Democrat and the Republican parties, which is best described by each of the following phrases?

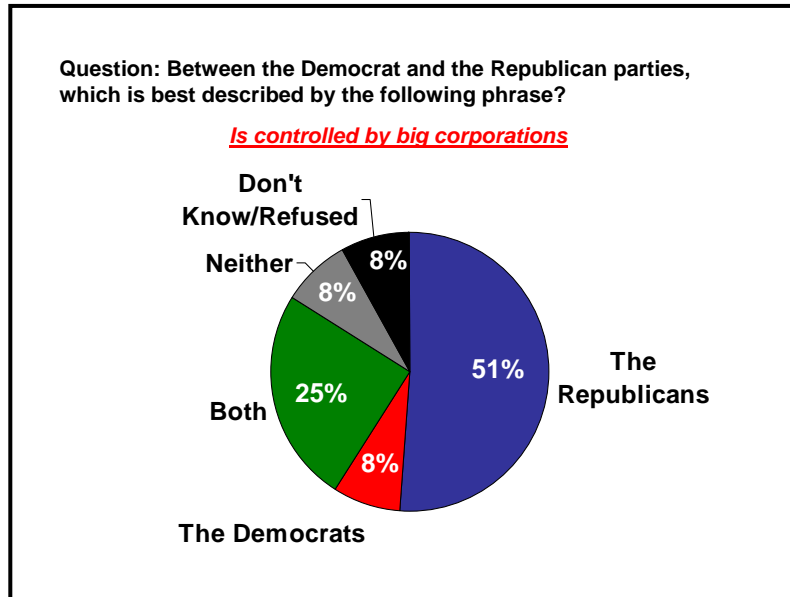
	<i>The Democrats</i>	<i>The Republicans</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>DK/Refused</i>
<i>Will cut taxes for the middle class</i>	42%	29%	4%	18%	7%
<i>Will work towards reducing the deficit</i>	47%	22%	7%	18%	6%
<i>Will keep Government spending under control</i>	38%	21%	5%	31%	5%

It will not be possible for Republicans to regain the majority in either house until these three metrics are completely reversed.

**IMMUNOLOGY REPORT:
Voters see Republicans as too close to corporate interests
and D.C. corruption.**

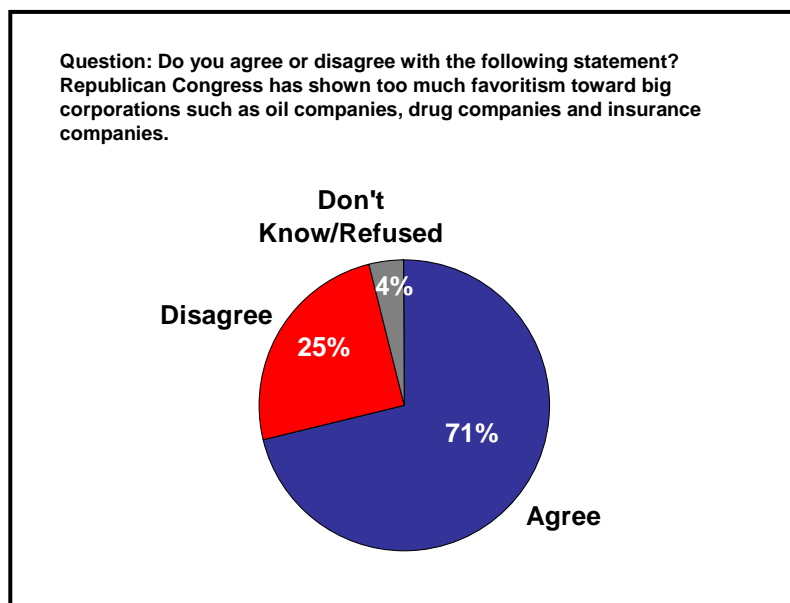
When Republicans gave up our long-held advantage on pocketbook issues of taxes and government spending, we left our candidates exposed to questions about our motivations.

Voters came to believe that we were not solving middle class economic problems like the cost of housing, health care, education, energy and taxes – and they saw not just inaction, but coziness with what they perceive to be the “villains” of middle class economic security – big corporations.



Two years of headlines about the Abramoff scandals, a relentless Democratic campaign to link Republican candidates to unpopular industries, and perceived Republican failure to confront these industries took their toll.

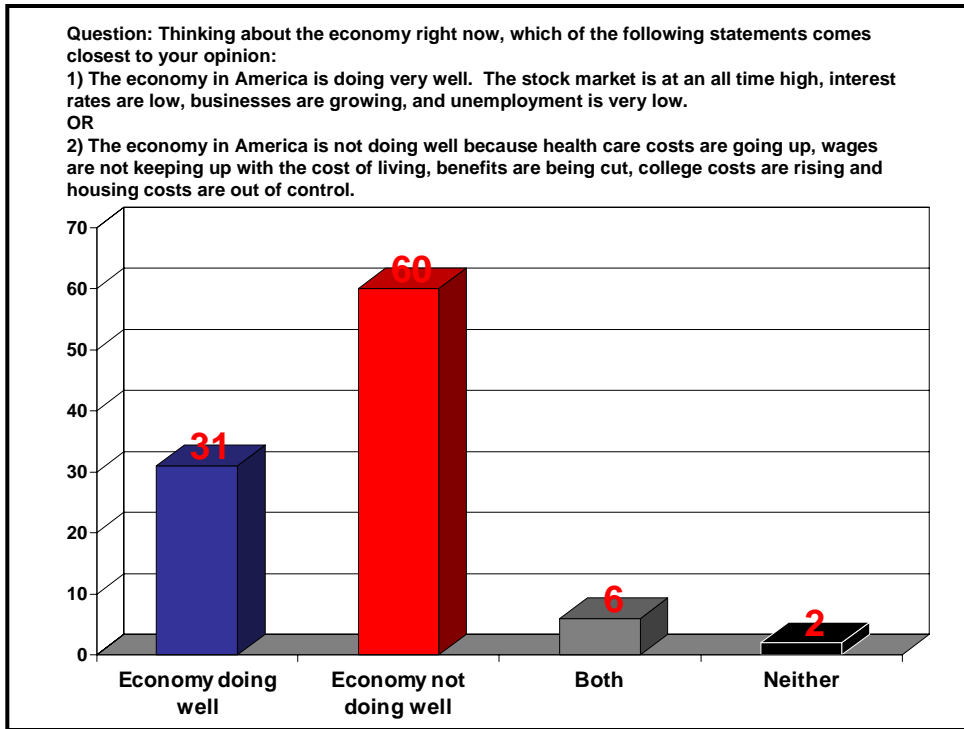
Rebuilding the trust of middle class voters will require that Republicans continue to be the party of free enterprise and growth while at the same time becoming more confrontational in our advocacy for consumers and small businesses.



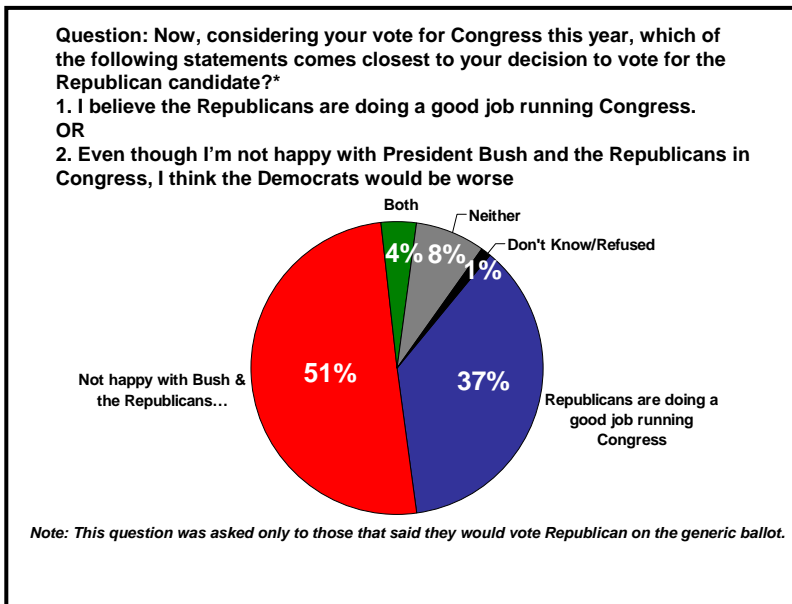
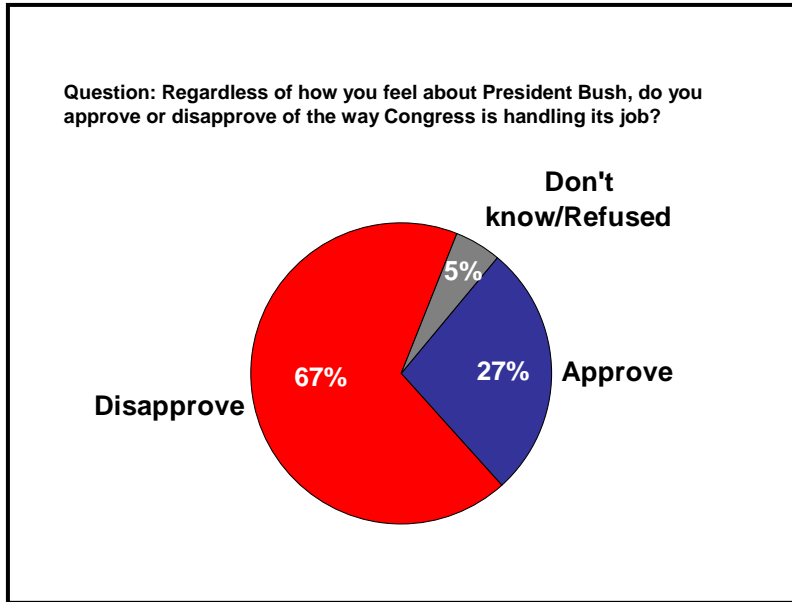
Voters see the typical Republican definition of a thriving economy as being at odds with their own economic reality.

No amount of economists talking on cable news about the great condition of the American economy can change the voters' view of the problems they face.

The only economic condition swing voters care about is the condition they find at their own kitchen table – and any effort by Republicans inside or outside the administration to frame the economy by any other metric is a significant mistake.



Voters are unhappy with the job performance of Congress and a majority of Republican voters are less than satisfied with the job performance of the President or the Republican Congress.



OnMessage Inc. is a national Republican political firm providing opinion research, media and strategic consulting services for candidates, associations and Republican state and national Committees. For more information visit us at www.onmessageinc.com or call us at (410) 721-2180.