



A Study of Swing Congressional Districts

MEMO 3

Diagnosis: A Shattered Brand

**Prescription: Change Our Ways Now
or
Expect More of the Same.**

**Conducted By OnMessage Inc.
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Diagnosis: A Shattered Brand

Just five short years ago, the Republican Brand was about as sound as it's ever been. In November 2001, less than one year into President Bush's first term, we had success in round one of the ongoing tax fight. We had won the presidency on the premise that we would restore fiscal sanity to the budget process and that we would right the perceived ethical lapses of the Clinton administration. And of course, in the wake of 9/11 the voters turned to us as the party of security to lead us to victory through a suddenly very dangerous worldwide threat of terror.

That was then.

This is now -- The GOP Brand lies shattered in the wake of the 2006 mid-term elections.

Prescription: Strong Medicine and Clean Living

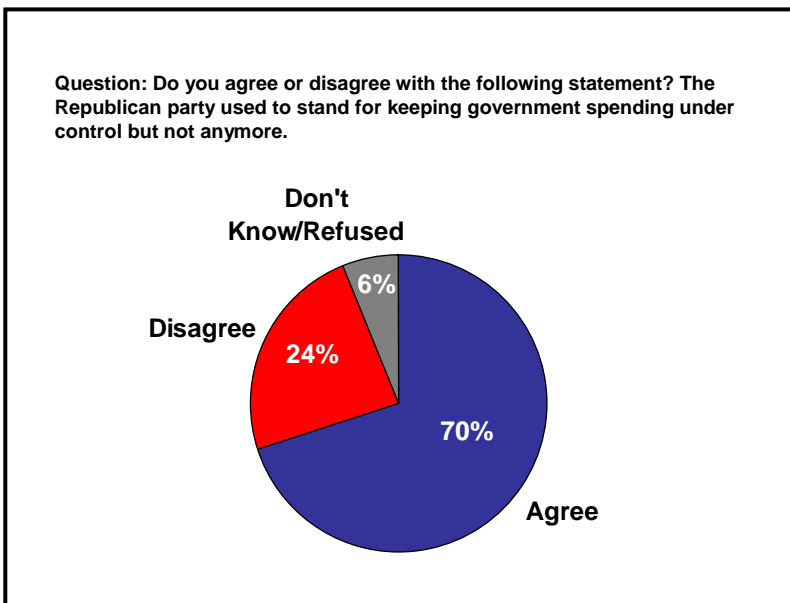
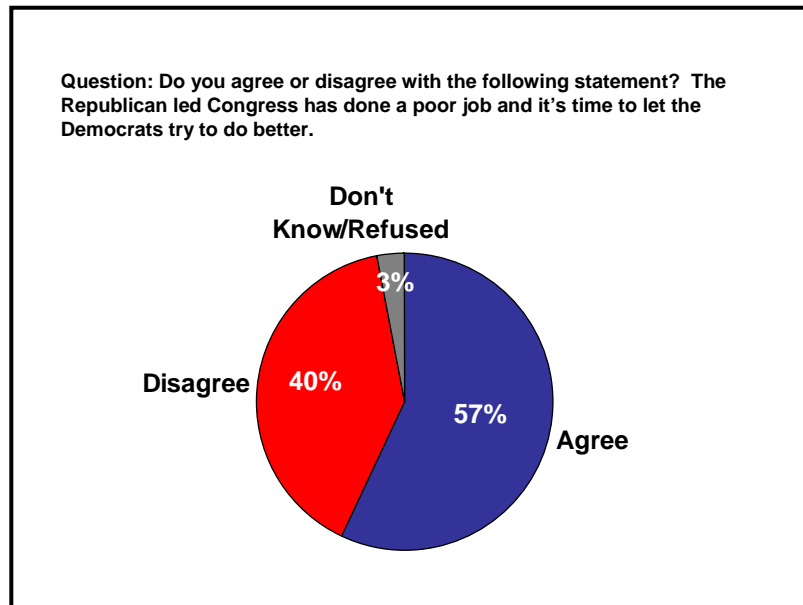
- **Lose Weight**
Reclaim our rightful title as the Party of fiscal conservatism. Job 1 – attack runaway federal spending.
- **Cut Back on the Caffeine**
Reclaim the initiative on taxes. Fight for lower taxes across the board. Don't play in the margins, become the champions of system-wide tax reform.
- **Quit Smoking and Cut Back on the Drinking**
Remember our wild-eyed reformers of 1994? If not, dust off the old clips. Time to get off the corporate gravy train and become the champions of the American entrepreneur. Time to again become the party of small business and the middle class. While we are doing that, put on a full court press for extensive ethics reform.

- **Get Some Exercise**
Stand up for our principles and do not shy away from the fight. There is no evidence that the voters have moved left.
- **Take Our Medicine**
Pursue a vigorous strategy for a conclusion to the Iraq war.

General State of GOP Brand Integrity

The simple fact is that we got fired. This election had almost nothing to do with ideology. The voters' judgment on the GOP was based almost entirely on job performance.

Unfortunately, it's not just one area in which the voters believe we came up short. No, the damage spans the entire Brand.



Spending

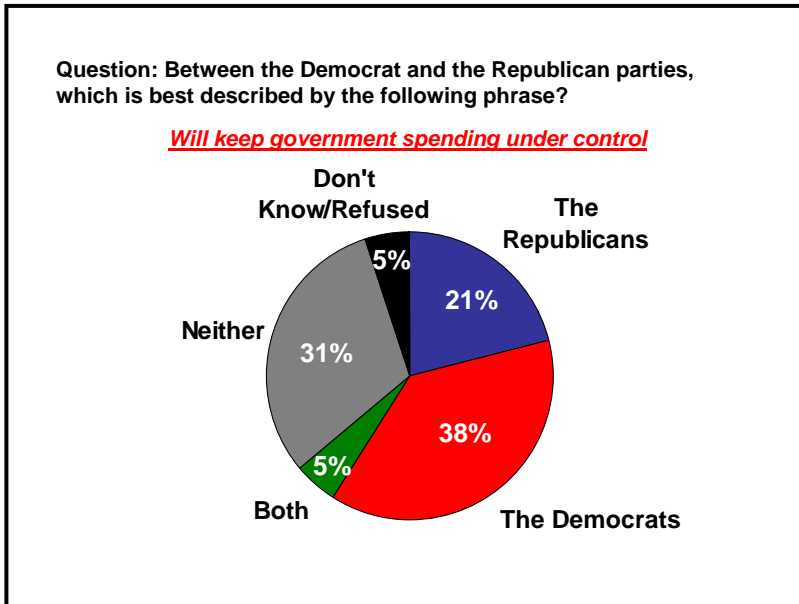
In 2000, if someone had bet us that by 2006 swing voters would believe that the Republican Party no longer stands for controlling government spending we would have taken that bet – and lost. If only swing voters and Democrats believed that Republicans no

longer stand for controlling government spending that would be bad enough. Unfortunately, this problem goes much deeper. This issue is so fundamental

to our Brand that it is very hard to see how we can hope to regain a majority of either House until we reclaim the mantle of fiscal responsibility.

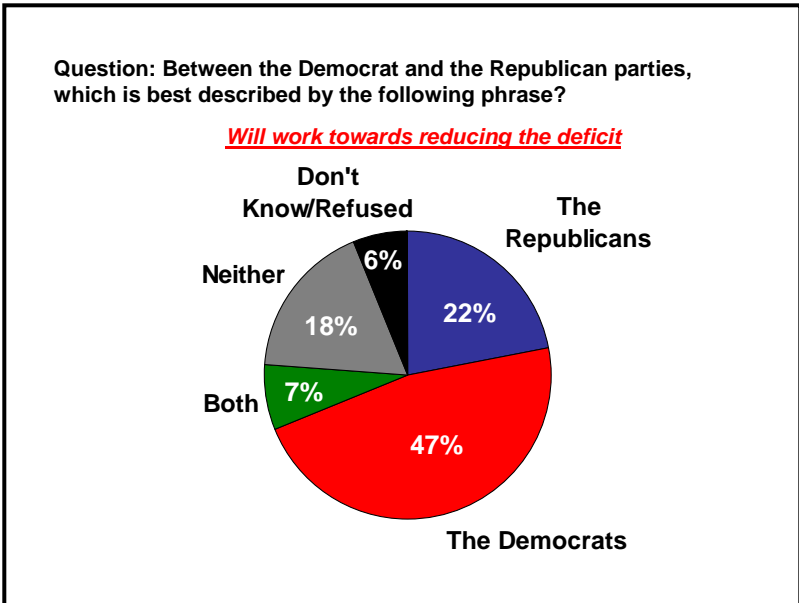
Republicans no longer stand for controlling government spending	Total	GOP	Swing	Dem
Agree	70%	51%	71%	85%
Disagree	24%	42%	22%	11%
Don't Know/Refused	6%	7%	7%	4%

As any good corporate Brand manager will tell you, rebuilding a Brand is more difficult than building a brand. It may be that the Democrats help us out by going on a spending spree but counting on our opponent's actions is no strategy for long term success.



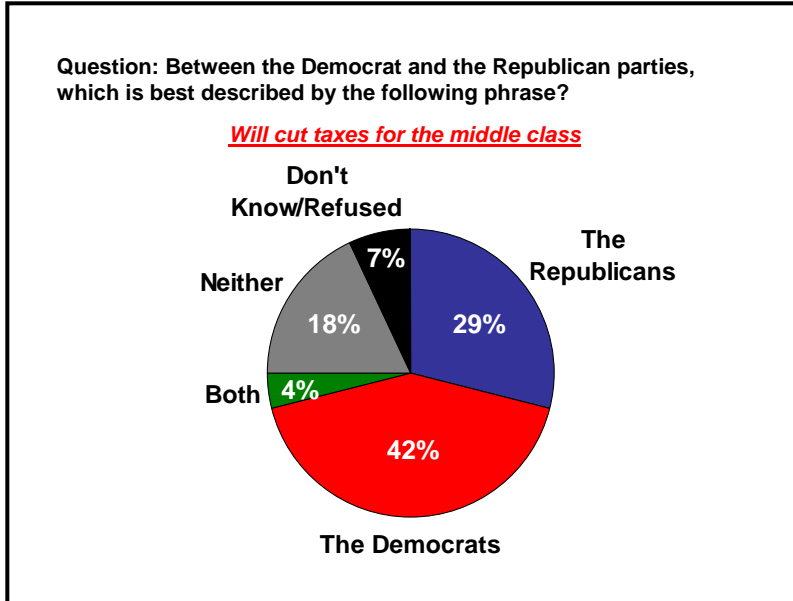
Deficit Reduction

Given that most voters no longer think Republicans stand for reduced government spending it should come as no surprise that a plurality of voters believe the Democrats will do a better job of reducing the federal deficit – but it still does.



Taxes

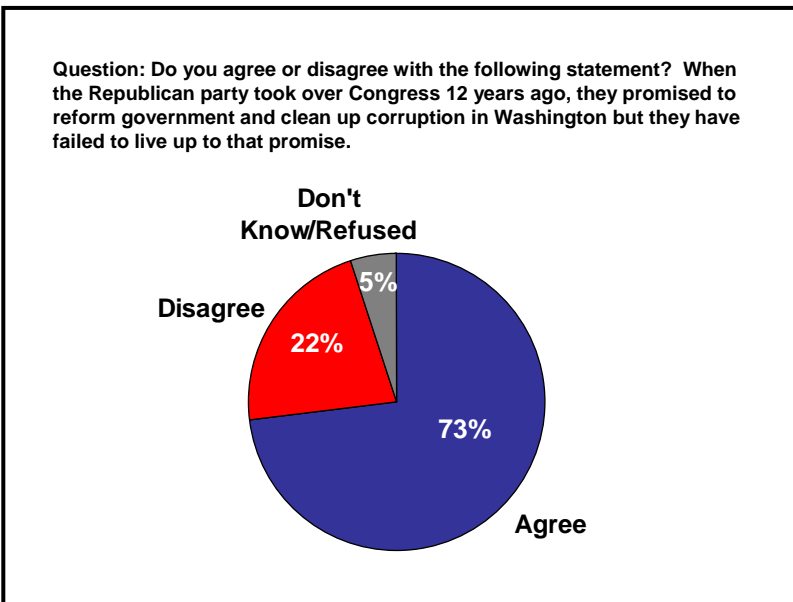
Just like spending, tax policy strikes at the heart of our Brand. One may argue with our use of the term “middle-class” in our question but any attempt



to deny framing the issue in those terms is to deny reality. That is where the voters are and they have no interest in moving to another framework. If fixing our spending problem in job 1, reclaiming the initiative on taxes is a very close second.

Ethics/Government Reform

When we took over control of Congress in 1994, it was an article of faith in the Republican Party that we would do things differently. We were bound and determined to look out for the little guy, to be certain that special interests

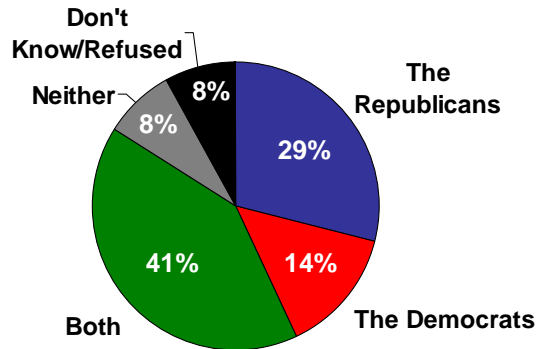


did not have too big a voice in the process, and above all to bring substantial reform to government.

Well...as the following results show...the party is now mal-positioned on all these fronts. In the minds of the voters, we have become what we sought to replace.

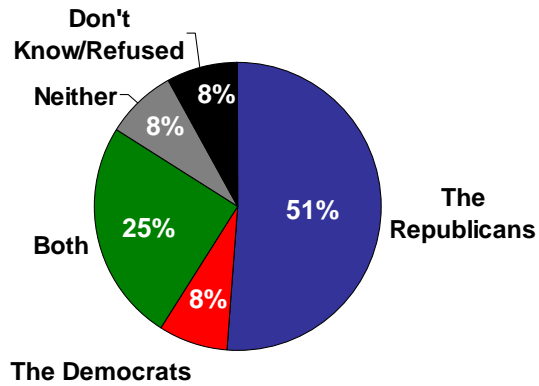
Question: Between the Democrat and the Republican parties, which is best described by the following phrase?

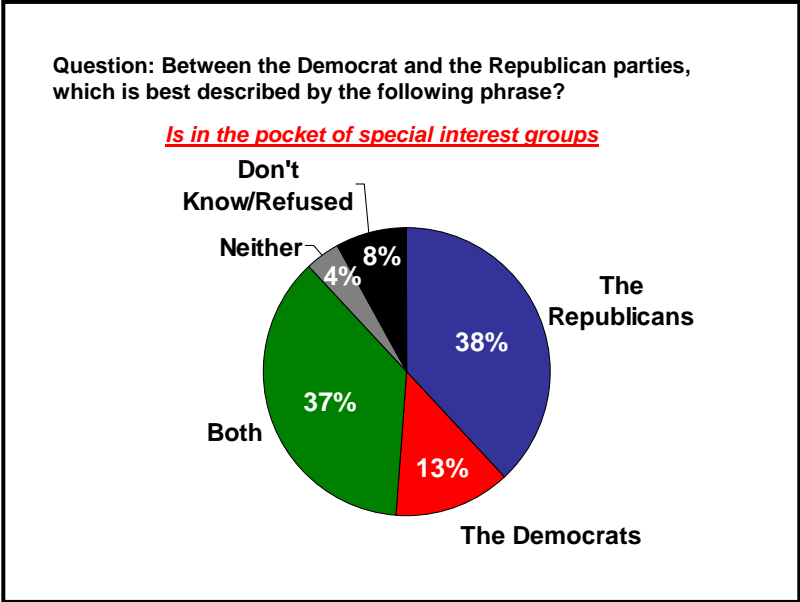
Is corrupt



Question: Between the Democrat and the Republican parties, which is best described by the following phrase?

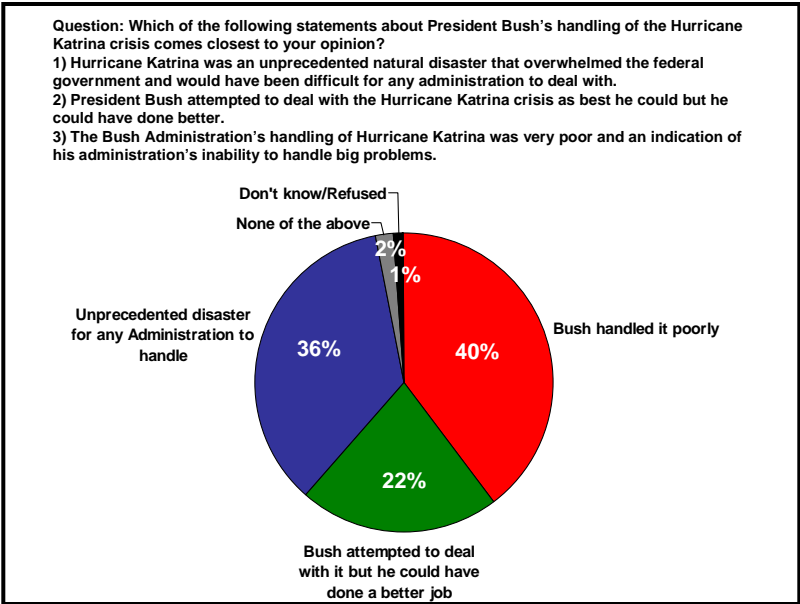
Is controlled by big corporations





Katrina

In last Presidential election a slim majority of swing voters looked at the two candidates and the Parties they represent and concluded that even with all our



faults, President Bush and Republicans in general were better equipped to deal with a very dangerous and uncertain world. It's easy to blame the Iraq war for the erosion of the security element of our Party's Brand but that would not tell the full story. We cannot fully understand the voters' concerns over our Party's ability to

handle security issues without taking a closer look at attitudes and perceptions of President Bush's handling of hurricane Katrina.

It should come as no surprise that 40% of swing district voters think the President handled Katrina poorly. The real problem is that swing voters saw that event as one more indication that Republicans may not be best equipped to handle dangerous and complex issues. After all, voters watched with horror as basic societal structure melted down in the middle of a major American city.

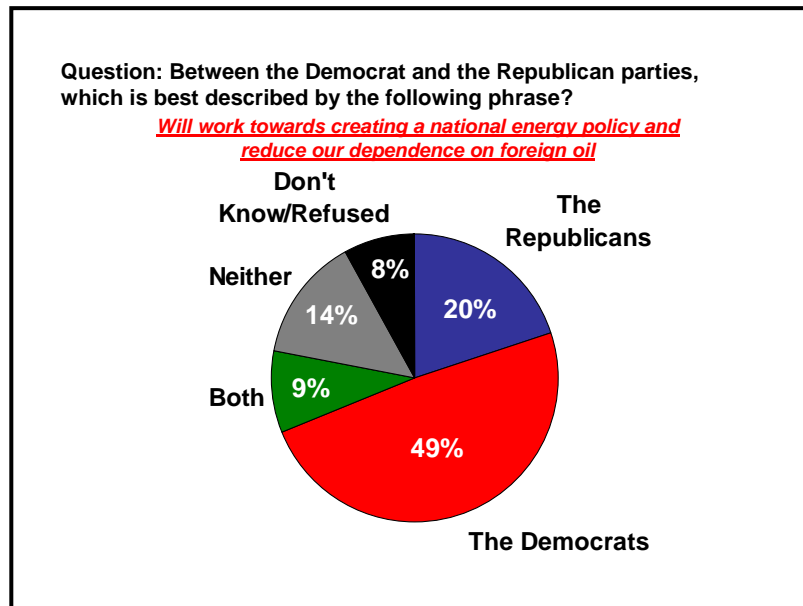
Katrina added another layer of complexity as it quickly evolved into questions of race and class. While it is likely that the handling of the Katrina disaster set us back with African American voters, this data strongly suggests that it also did significant damage to our Brand among white, middle-class voters.

Bush's Handling of Katrina	Total	GOP	Swing	Dem
Bush Handled Poorly	40%	7%	37%	71%
Could have Done Better	22%	24%	29%	14%
Unprecedented	36%	67%	30%	12%

Energy

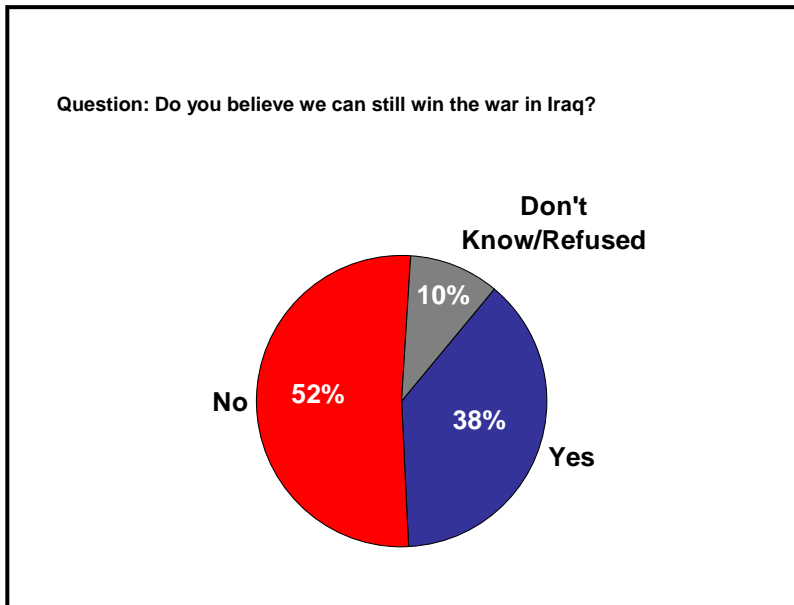
The war in Iraq, increasing instability in the Middle East, and rising gas prices have forced the voters to once again focus on our national energy policy or lack thereof. The question is which Party do they trust to lead us toward energy independence? Swing voters answered that question loud and

clear, they choose the Democrats by a 45% to 10% margin. The ugly truth is that a majority of swing voters believe that the Republican Party is too close to big oil to do the job.



While national energy policy has ebbed and flowed as a vote determinative issue it is difficult to see how it could subside in the near future. In fact, we believe it is likely to be an even bigger factor in the next election.

Work toward national energy policy / reduce dependence on foreign oil	Total	GOP	Swing	Dem
Republicans	20%	48%	10%	4%
Democrats	49%	16%	45%	81%
Neither	14%	15%	26%	6%
Both	9%	14%	8%	3%

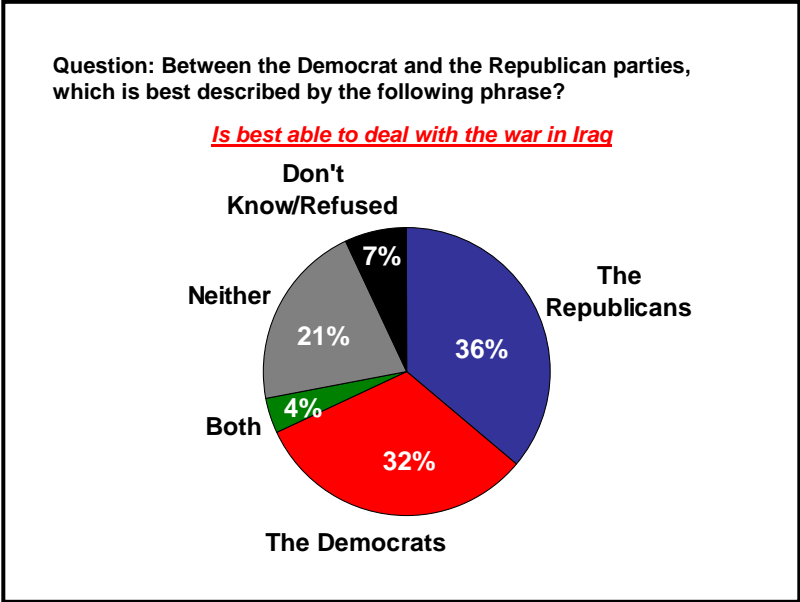


Security

Security has been a core element of the Republican Brand for generations. When the world turns dangerous and bad people work to do us harm the voters have turned to Republicans to man the wall and lead us through tough times. That was before the war in Iraq.

The loss of confidence in our ability to win in Iraq is all you need to know about voter discontent over the war. Whether or not we can win is less important in elections than the voters' confidence in our ability to win. This question clearly demonstrates the corrosive nature of this war.

Do you believe we can still win the war in Iraq?	Total	GOP	Swing	Dem
Yes	38%	71%	33%	13%
No	52%	17%	57%	80%



Is best able to deal with the war in Iraq	Total	GOP	Swing	Dem
Republicans	36%	80%	24%	6%
Democrats	32%	4%	27%	61%
Neither	21%	9%	32%	24%
Both	4%	4%	6%	3%

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.

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.