

TO: Ken Mehlman
FROM: Fred Steeper
RE: Base Mobilization Survey Findings and Conclusions
DATE: August 2, 2006

The survey was commissioned by the Republican National Committee to identify the most effective messages to mobilize the Republican Base for the 2006 elections and determine where the Base stands on important issues in this election cycle. It follows similar studies of the Base completed in 2002 and 2003.

Overall support for President Bush and congressional Republicans from the Republican Base is very strong. The generic congressional vote from Republicans is an overwhelming 84% to 6%, within sampling error of what we found for the 2004 elections. An equally impressive 88% to 11% majority of Republicans approve of the way the President is handling his job.

Intended *turnout* from the Base also is extremely high. Eighty-one percent (81%) say they are “almost certain” to vote this November, and another 14% say they are “very likely” to vote. This, too, is within sampling error of the intended turnout of Republicans for the 2004 elections.

In our test of 50 issues to mobilize the Republican Base for the 2006 elections, we identified 18 of them, falling into seven general message areas, as having the best potential. Three additional issues also have good potential for mobilizing the Base. Seven of the issues concern the Global War on Terror and are viewed by Republicans as falling into three distinct message areas. Eleven of the issues concern domestic policy issues and are viewed by Republicans as falling into four message areas.

Global War on Terror

Foreign Threats. Ranking at the top of what will motivate Republicans in 2006 is dealing with the foreign threats to our national security and supporting the President’s leadership in the War on Terror. Large majorities report satisfaction with the President’s commitment to defeat the terrorists in Iraq and his leadership in the War on Terror, in general. In addition to Iraq, concerns about other foreign threats are included here. For example, Republicans are very concerned both about *Iran’s* sponsorship of terrorism, and its potential of developing nuclear weapons. A huge 87% of the Base expresses *extremely* strong feelings about one or more of these issues.

Domestic Fight Against Terrorism. Republicans see the renewal of the Patriot Act, better protection of our borders, and NSA surveillance of terrorist phone calls and phone records as an interrelated set of issues. Fully 80% of the Base expresses *extremely* strong feelings about at least one of these steps to enhance our national security.

Democrats Weakening the Global War on Terror. Of the five issues on which we tested Democratic Party positions, its position on the War on Terror causes the strongest negative feelings, on average, from Republicans. A 56% majority of the Base has *extremely* strong feelings about the Democratic Party's WOT position. Republicans, also, tend to view this as an independent issue from their feelings about foreign threats and the domestic fight against terrorism. As such, it can provide an important reinforcement to the *other* War on Terror messages to mobilize the Republican Base.

For these three global War on Terror message areas, 93% of the Republican Base holds *extremely* strong feelings about one or more of them.

Domestic Policy Issues

Bush Tax Cuts. The Republican effort to make the Bush tax cuts permanent generates strongly held feelings from the Base, more so than for any other *domestic* initiative tested in the survey. Proposals to erase the Bush tax cuts generate considerable anger from the Base. The two issues together cover 69% of the Base with *extremely* strong feelings about at least one of them.

Cultural Values. This non-economic component in our coalition continues to demonstrate its importance. Included in this message cluster is the Base's satisfaction with the passage of the ban on partial birth abortions. While the Base's satisfaction with the confirmations of Justices Roberts and Alito is separate from the cultural issues, those confirmations can be used as part of this motivating message area. An impressive 86% of the Base has *extremely* strong feelings about issues dealing with cultural issues – second in coverage to only the global War on Terror.

Health Care Reform. A message on health care to motivate the Base can be constructed from the Base's feelings about medical liability lawsuits and its support of Health Savings Accounts. About 80% of the Base expresses some degree of approval of reforms to reduce frivolous lawsuits against doctors and hospitals or anger over the current existence of such lawsuits. Similarly, 82% of the Base expresses some degree of approval of Health Savings Accounts. Combined, 78% of the Base has *extremely* strong feelings about one or more of these issues.

Democrat Health Care Proposals. Framing Democrat health care proposals as “placing a government bureaucrat between patients and doctors” or as “creating big government-run health care” can be very effective in mobilizing the Republican Base, especially in tandem with the motivating messages on health care reform. Two-thirds of the Base has *extremely* strong feelings about one or both of these ways of describing the Democrat approach to health care.

For these four domestic policy areas, 96% of the Republican Base holds *extremely* strong feelings about one or more of them.

Other Strong Issues and Messages

Media Coverage of Iraq. One of the strongest issues in the survey is “the media never reporting good news from Iraq.” Almost 60% of the Base expresses *extremely* high dissatisfaction with the media coverage of the situation in Iraq. Moreover, these negative feelings toward the media are independent of their general feelings about the War on Terror.

Democrat Impeachment/Censorship of President Bush. Democrat talk of impeaching or censoring President Bush causes significant anger in the Republican Base. About three-in-four Republicans express some degree of anger toward each of these Democratic threats. Sixty percent (60%) of the Base has *extremely* negative feelings about the Democrat’s impeachment threats – placing it among the strongest in the survey.

Democrat Position on Medicare Prescription Drug Program. The Republican Base separates this issue from the other health care issues and singles it out with a significant level of disapproval. This is especially the case for seniors in our Base. A 55% majority of our seniors have *extremely* strong feelings about “Democrats who want to take the Medicare prescription drug benefit away from seniors.” Seventy-two percent (72%) of the Republican seniors express varying degrees of anger with this Democrat position.

These results are based on a national sample of 1,305 past Republican voters conducted by telephone, June 26-29, 2006. The sample is proportionate to size by gender within eight regions.