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To: Interested Parties
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Women Push Back in the Battleground

Democrats Gain Ground Among Women Voters in Republican Held Districts

In 2010, Republicans won the women's vote for the first time in 30 years. Republicans rewarded this support with a raft of legislation hostile to the interests of women, beginning with one of their first pieces of legislation, H.R. 3, which attempted to redefine rape to deny emergency contraceptive services to crime victims. For much of 2011, women did not seem to notice. This may be changing.

The Republicans' more recent decision to reignite the culture war, boorish comments by a radio talk show host, and a budget proposal and debate that aims dead-square against the economic interests of many women in this country may have awakened the women's vote. Women are starting to push back.

A recent Democracy Corps/Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund survey in the Congressional battleground shows Democrats making significant gains among women in districts held by Republican incumbents.¹ In the Republican-held districts where we have data from last year, Democrats picked up a net 10 points among women since December and now lead by 4 points. Among unmarried women, Democrats lead by 20 points in Republican held districts. In the entire battleground represented in this survey – including both Republican and Democratic districts – Democrats hold a 51 to 41 lead over Republicans among women.

The controversy over contraception plays an important role in this movement, but this is not entirely about reproductive and health care freedom. It is also about budget choices that undermine the economic prospects of women and a broader economic narrative that, in their

¹ This memo is based on a unique survey of 1000 likely 2012 voters in 56 Republican-held battleground districts and 500 likely 2012 voters in 23 Democratic-held battleground districts conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for Democracy Corps and Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund from March 29 – April 4, 2012. For questions asked in both Democratic and Republican districts, the margin of error = +/- 2.53% at 95% confidence. For questions asked just in Republican districts, the margin of error = +/- 3.1% at 95% confidence.

***Note: The time series data represents the common 33 districts originally selected in March 2011 and still in the battleground for this survey. All other data, where noted, represents either the 56 Republican-held districts, 23 Democratic-held districts, or the 79 total districts in the battleground.*



eyes, leaves the middle class and middle-class women behind. Driving that broader narrative will amplify the Democratic margin among women.

For Democrats, there is still work to do. Progress among younger women—and younger voters overall—is less promising. While Democrats enjoy a healthy margin among unmarried women, these women do not show the same enthusiasm for voting in the 2012 election as married women. Historically, progressives have left many votes on the table because of their failure to turn out unmarried women. Evidence in this survey suggests this could happen again. Importantly, the Republican record on women can play a significant role not only in the margin, but also in energizing participation among traditionally under-represented groups.

Women Push Back in the Trial Heat

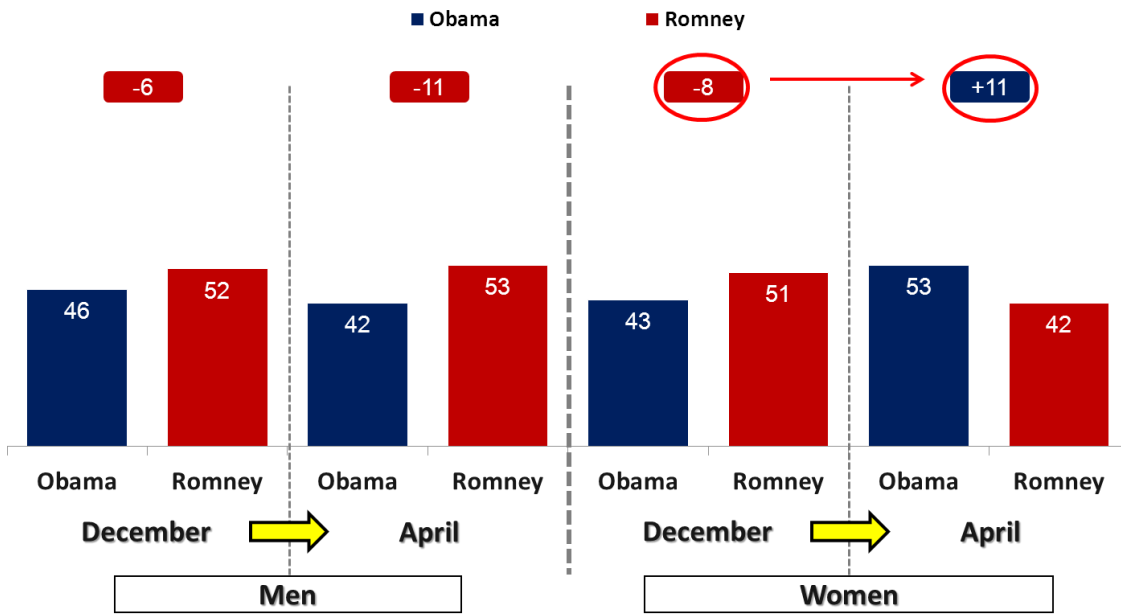
In the seats in this survey held by Republican incumbents, Republicans fail to reach 50 percent vote share, leading 49 percent to 43 percent. This is a precarious position for Republican incumbents and Democrats owe their opportunity to women voters.

Several recent national surveys have shown Barack Obama gaining ground among women voters. Few have shown similar gains in congressional balloting. This survey, which looks only at incumbents in targeted districts and employs a named trial heat, shows Obama picking up a net 19 points among women in Republican seats compared to last December and Congressional Democratic challengers picking up a net 10 points. Both the President and Congressional Democrats lose support among men.

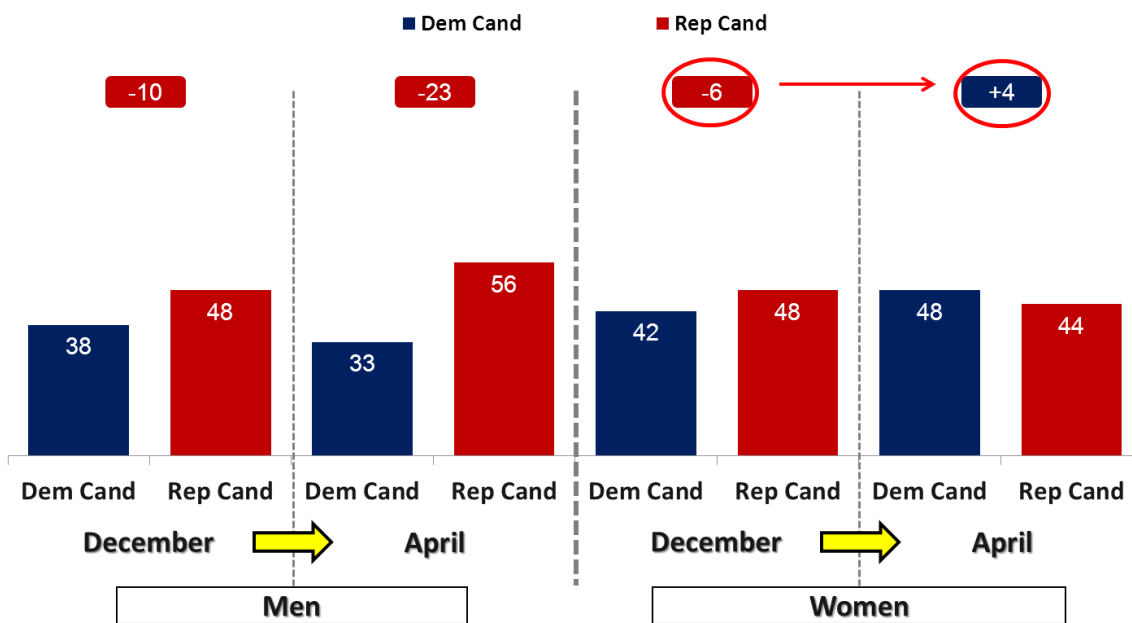


Table 1: Democrats and Obama Lose Support Among Men, Gain Support Among Women (data reflect 33 Republican held districts also surveyed last year)

I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the presidential election in 2012, if the election for president were held today and the candidates were Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney, for whom would you vote?



I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for Congress this November, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for -- The Democratic candidate or Republican (HOUSE INCUMBENT)?

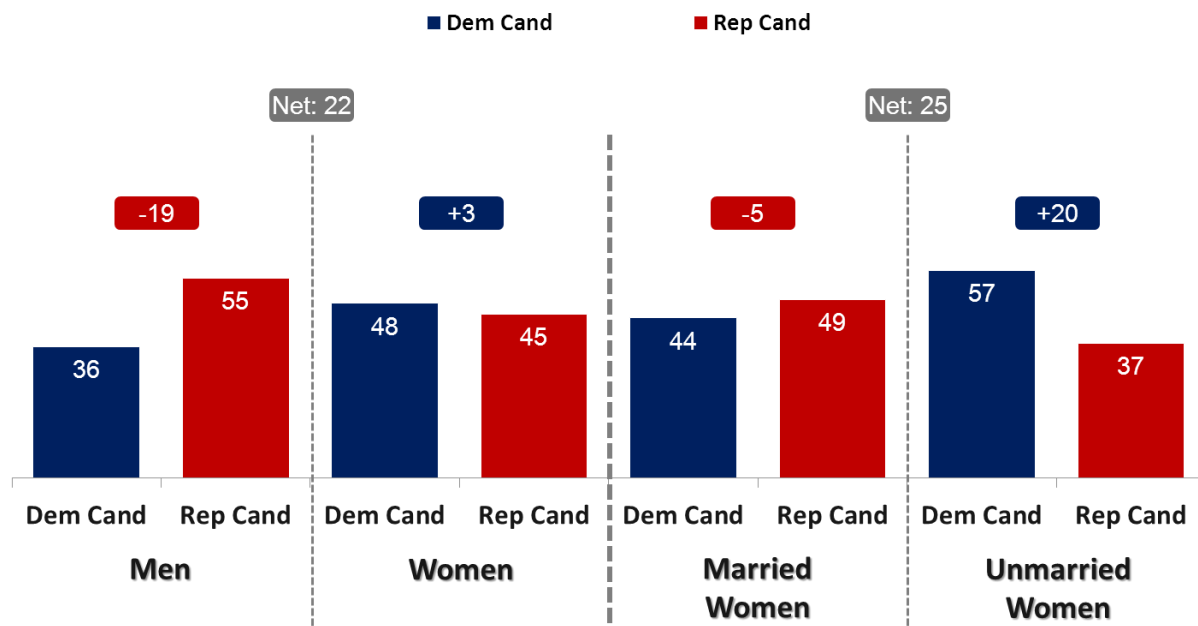




For progressives, the data show that the “women’s vote” is anything but monolithic. Again, Democrats lost women in 2010. Democrats owe their lead among women in congressional balloting to the huge margin they see among unmarried women. In the entire congressional battleground, even in this hyper-polarized environment, the “marriage gap”—the difference in margin between unmarried women and married women—is bigger than the “gender gap.”

■ **Table 2:** “Marriage gap” more polarizing than the “gender gap” in Republican-held districts (data reflect the 56 districts in the battleground held by Republicans).

I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for Congress this November, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for -- The Democratic candidate or Republican (HOUSE INCUMBENT)?



In Republican-held districts, Congressional Democrats also fall short among younger women (46 percent Democratic candidate, 46 percent Republican candidate among younger women, compared to 51 percent Democratic candidate, 43 percent Republican candidate among women 50 and over). This likely reflects Democrats’ ongoing struggle to reclaim the youth vote of both sexes (46 percent Democratic candidate, 47 percent Republican candidate among voters under 30). In addition, Democrats struggle among blue collar women in the Republican battleground (41 percent Democratic candidate, 51 percent Republican candidate among white non-college women).

Absent the support of women or, more specifically, the support of unmarried women, the Congressional battleground would likely look entirely different. Democrats trail by 19 points among men and trail 10 points among white married women. A key reason why Democrats do



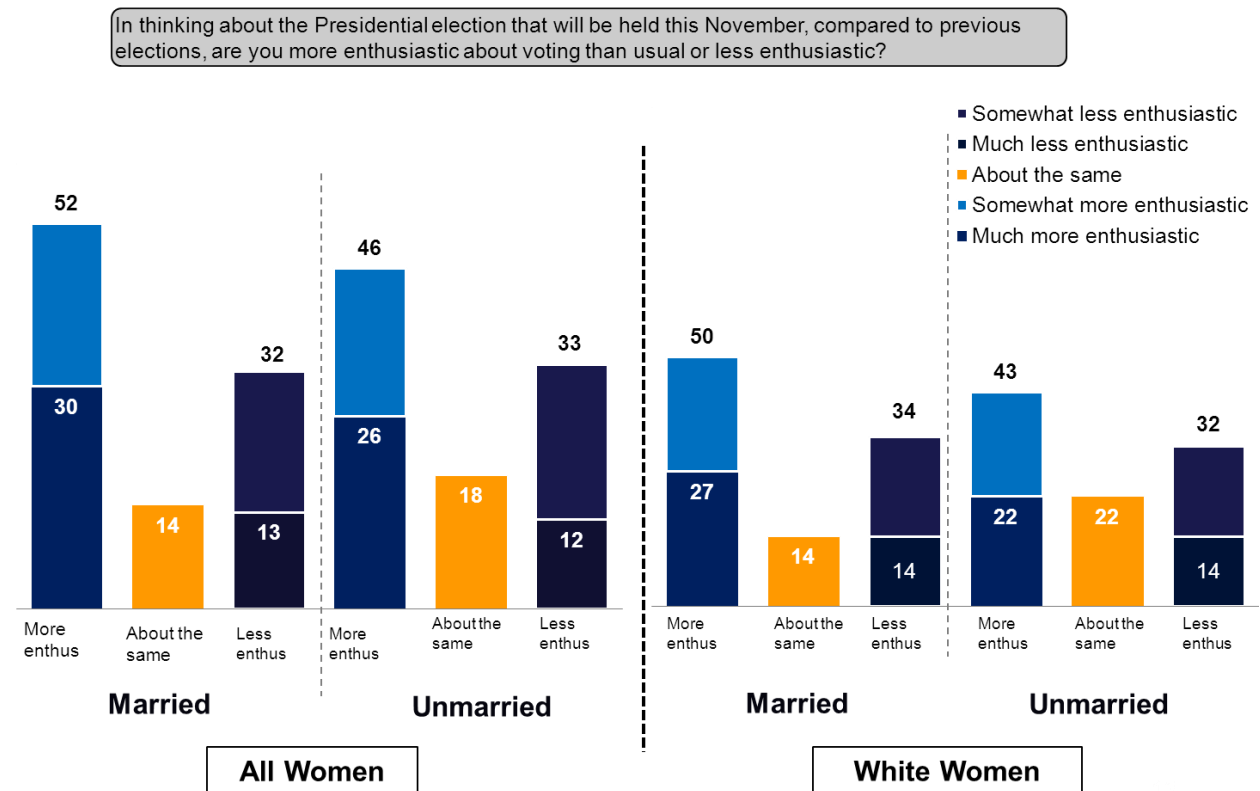
not enjoy an overall advantage in these seats is the Republican margin among men exceeds the Democratic margin among women.

Exploiting this opportunity means increasing Democratic support among women, particularly younger women, and making sure progressive women turn out in sufficient numbers.

Lower Levels of Voter Enthusiasm Among Progressives in the Battleground

While Democrats have all but erased the enthusiasm gap in national surveys, this battleground survey still shows Democrats lagging behind Republicans. Overall, 55 percent of voters describe themselves as more enthusiastic about voting for President this November, 30 percent as less enthusiastic. Among Republicans, 61 percent describe themselves as more enthusiastic, compared to just 52 percent among Democrats. Progressives also face a gap in enthusiasm among married women and unmarried women, particularly white unmarried women.

■ **Table 3:** Enthusiasm among married and unmarried women





Near the conclusion of the survey, after voters heard messaging focused on the Republican record on women’s issues, we asked voters whether they are more committed to voting. A 67 percent majority of unmarried women describe themselves as *much* more committed, 55 percent among younger women.

Part of the challenge Democrats face in the battleground is changing the margin, running up the score among women voters to compensate for almost certain deficits among men. But the other half of the battle is making sure women who are supporting Democrats make it to their polling places. These results suggest the Republican record on women can be a powerful incentive for these women to turn out and vote.

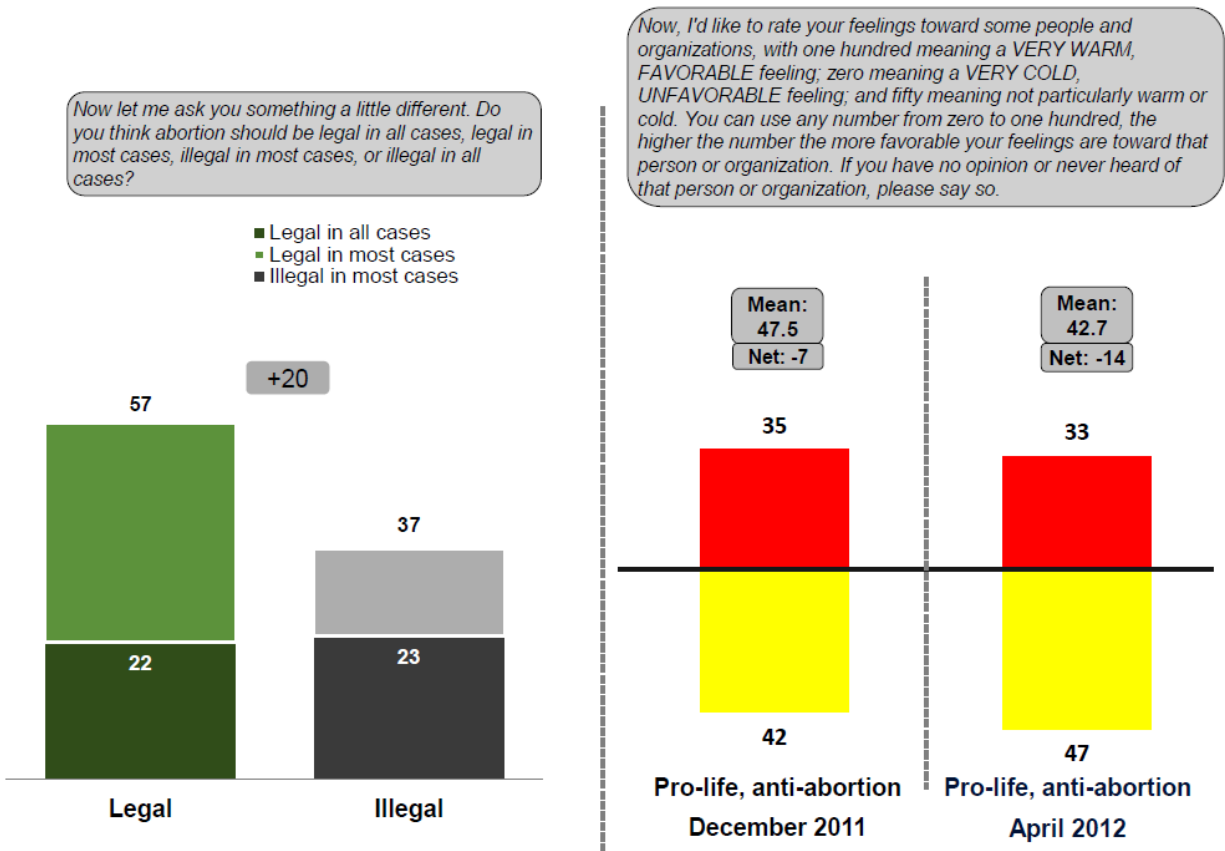
The War on Women

The Republicans’ record on women’s issues may finally be catching up with them. In Congressional research and other research projects conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, we have consistently found voters reacting well to arguments focusing on the Republican women’s record, particularly around contraception and the Blunt Amendment; this often emerges as the most powerful argument tested against a Republican incumbent. While these arguments do not prove the most convincing in this survey—Medicare cuts and middle class taxes emerge as the most powerful statements—arguments framed around the Republican record draw real blood. Despite desperate Republican push-back, this is not a “made up” issue in the eyes of voters, particularly women voters.

Notably, a 57 percent majority of voters in these Republican-held districts are pro-choice and believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Reaction to pro-life groups is mixed and declining compared to previous data.



■ **Table 4:** Views on abortion and pro-life groups



However, this issue is not only about choice and contraception. It is also about the economy and middle class. The choice issue is important, particularly in this battleground, but it does not constitute the entire litany of anti-women Republican votes and should not be the only aspect of this narrative. Some of the strongest anti-incumbent arguments do not involve choice or contraception at all, but focus more broadly on the Republican record on economic issues.



■ **Table 5:** Strongest anti-incumbent arguments for women are focused on health care coverage and raising taxes on the middle class

<i>Now I am going to read you some of the things critics are saying about (HOUSE INCUMBENT) and the Republican Congress. After I read each one, please tell me whether this raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about Republicans in Congress and (HOUSE INCUMBENT).</i>	Women (Very Serious Doubts)	Unmarried Women (Very Serious Doubts)	Total (Very Serious Doubts)
Voted to end Medicare as we know it and instead give seniors a voucher to pay for traditional Medicare or a private plan that is not guaranteed to keep pace with the rising costs of health insurance and inflation, forcing seniors to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket	39	39	34
Voted to eliminate health insurance coverage for 33 million people who lack coverage now, allowing health insurance companies to deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, charge women the higher rates than men and eliminate coverage for millions of young people who can currently join their parents' plan	37	43	34
Voted to cut Medicaid by almost half-- 1.7 trillion dollars over the next ten years-- including coverage for seniors, the disabled, and the poor, leaving 19 million people without guaranteed health care and shifting the costs to states already strapped for cash	37	47	33
Voted to raise taxes on middle class and working families in order to pay for tax cuts for CEOs, big corporations that outsource jobs, big oil companies that are more profitable than ever, and millionaires and billionaires, giving them a tax break of 265,000 dollars on top of the Bush tax cuts	36	46	35
Sponsored an amendment that discriminated against women by allowing any employer to deny health care coverage for birth control	35	47	33
Voted to cut funding for food and drug safety by almost 20 percent, which will cause the Food Inspection Service to lay-off thousands of its inspectors meant to prevent foodborne illnesses such as E. coli and Salmonella from contaminating American's food supply	30	36	29
Supported a measure that redefined rape in order to deny access to abortion services for crime victims	30	33	28
Voted to repeal common-sense financial reforms put in place to make sure the big banks on Wall Street can't bring down our economy again and blocked rules curbing huge bonuses for Wall Street CEOs as they continue to rake in millions of dollars.	30	33	28



Voted for the largest cuts ever for education programs, including cuts to classroom technology and Pell Grants, that many Americans need to move into the middle class and voted to weaken legislation prohibiting sex discrimination in federally funded education programs.	28	31	28
Voted to leave our most vulnerable citizens out in the cold during hard times, with 62 percent of the cuts coming from programs for lower-income Americans who are struggling most during the recession, including food stamps, aid for college education, federal housing aid and health care	26	32	24
Voted against a jobs bill that would have saved or created millions of jobs around the country and prevented thousands of layoffs of teachers, nurses and other public employees	25	31	25

Conclusion

The Republican incumbents in this battleground are vulnerable because they have advanced a narrative that is hostile to middle class economic concerns, support a budget proposal that is extreme and because they have amassed a record that is offensive to many women in these districts. The result is that they are under 50 percent of the vote share and, if the election were held today, more than few would face early retirement.

That said, there is risk here for progressives as well. The relative lack of enthusiasm for voting among unmarried women is a problem that can cost Democrats dearly in close elections. A gender gap can be a good thing for Democrats, but only if the Democratic margin among women is equal to the Republican margin among men. That is not the case now in the Congressional ballot. Democrats still struggle among younger voters, including younger women.

The Republican record on women creates real problems for these incumbents electorally and may further help energize voters with a more mixed vote history to turn out in November.