



CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM

TO: REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

FROM: TONY FABRIZIO

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM TARGET DISTRICTS SURVEY – 2ND WAVE

DATE: OCTOBER 4, 2002

Methodology:

This represents the second wave in FMA's tracking program among voters from the top 40 targeted House Districts as defined by The Cook Political Report.

Again as a reminder, an equal number of interviews were conducted in each of the top 40 targeted congressional districts on September 28 and 29, 2002, yielding an overall sample of N=1,000 registered and "likely" voters. The margin of error associated with a sample of this type is $\pm 3.1\%$ at the 95% confidence interval. The individual target congressional districts, as defined by *The Cook Political Report*, utilized to make up this universe are listed at the back of this memorandum.

Key Points:

The most important aspects of any tracking program are the shifts in voter opinion from one wave to the next. In the case of the targeted House districts, there has been some significant shifts of opinion to bring us to where these races stand today.

As of the first wave, congressional Republicans looked to hold a statistically significant advantage over the Democrats. The generic congressional Republican held a five (5) point edge over the generic Democrat in the generic ballot - - 43% to 38%. More importantly, the generic Republican's lead was further confirmed and stretched slightly to +6 among the "High Propensity voters" - - 47% to 41%.

The generic Republican's advantage in these races was anchored by a reasonably optimistic electorate; a "friendly" issue environment; solid congressional approval ratings and image; and a very popular President.

Still the findings in the first wave of our tracking program represent “what was” not by any means “what will be.” This being the case we start the discussion of the findings from this second wave where we left off in the first wave:

*“It cannot be over emphasized, however, that these findings do not represent a trend among voters in these districts as much as it marks a point in time. Republicans can certainly take solace in the fact that the current issue matrix, Congressional job approval, image of Republicans in Congress and President Bush’s job approval are currently in their favor. However, the generic Republican vote is being driven more by optimism of these voters than by these other measures. **It is imperative Republicans remain cognizant that as the mood of these voters goes so goes the generic ballot. Any significant erosion in the optimism of these voters or appreciable increase in the pessimism will have a significant effect on the generic ballot.**”*

Further we described the political landscape as it related to these districts using a football analogy:

It is early in the 4th Quarter

Republicans have:

- The lead in the game (Ballot Lead)
- Home field (Mood of Country)
- The ball (Issue Matrix)
- The momentum (Congressional Job Approval and GOP in Congress Image)
- A winning coach (President Bush)

Democrats need:

- A turnover (Mood of the country)
- To get their offense back on to the field (Issue matrix)
- At least a touchdown to win (Net six (6) seats)

Continuing with the football analogy to describe where the political landscape is with respect to these districts now:

- Republicans have lost the lead. What was a five (5) point edge for the generic congressional Republican in the first wave (43% to 38%) is now a dead heat between the generic Republican and the generic Democrat - - at 41% each.
- Democrats got a turnover. The mood of these voters has gone from one of optimism (49% Right direction to 31% Wrong track) to complete ambivalence. Voters in these districts are as likely to view the country as “off on the wrong track” as they are to see it as “headed in the right direction” - - 41% to 40%.

- Democrats are poised to bring their offense back on to the field. While not a wholesale change in the overall issue matrix, the issue cluster Republicans enjoyed in the first wave has been replaced by one that largely favors Democrats. Namely the Economic-focused voters and specifically those who cite “economy/jobs” as the most important issue in their vote.
- The momentum has stalled for Republicans, and has definitely not progressed from where it was in the first wave. More specifically President Bush has had better weeks measured by public opinion than what he experienced between our first and second waves. His image has declined a net -13 points while his approval rating has declined a net -15 points since the first wave.

Still having said all that, a majority of the voters in these districts approve (52%) of the job Congress is doing and have a favorable impression of congressional Republicans - - 55%. And while President Bush’s ratings took some hits these past two weeks, better than two-thirds of the voters still approve (69%) of the job he is doing and have a favorable impression of him - - 68%.

As of this wave the race that is most in doubt is the one between Denny Hastert and Dick Gephardt for Speaker of the House. A generic ballot that shows a dead heat between the generic Republican and Democrat yields very little instructive insight other than to say the battle for the House is very tight. Obviously we did not need a survey to tell us this. However as an assessment, not a prediction, of these findings it is reasonable to say Republicans would likely maintain control of the House if the election were held tomorrow. This is not to suggest Republicans are in much better shape than Democrats, but simply that Democrats have a larger burden than do Republicans in this election cycle due to the fact that Democrats need to pick up six (6) seats to regain control.

Generic Congressional Ballot Trend Line

	First Wave Sept 17-18	Second Wave Sept. 28-29	Net Change
Generic Republican	43%	41%	-2
Undecided	19%	18%	-1
Generic Democrat	38%	41%	+3
Net Diff.	+5	- -	

Again what was a five (5) point advantage for the generic Republican two weeks ago has since been erased to where the generic Republican and Democrat are tied at 41%. The generic Republican still holds a slim lead in terms of vote intensity as 29% of voters say they would “definitely vote” for the generic Republican versus 26% who say the same for the generic Democrat.

And despite the net shift of five (5) points away from the generic Republican, many of the fundamentals in the generic ballot have not been altered significantly from the first wave:

- The generic Republican extends its lead among the “High Propensity voters” from +6 in the first wave to +11 in this wave - - 51% to 40%.
- The generic Republican vote continues to be driven primarily by voter optimism as among “Right direction” voters the generic Republican is winning 63% - - +5 from 58% in the first wave.

Still there has been a net shift of five (5) points toward the generic Democrat; some of which can simply be attributed to greater party intensity among affiliated Democrats (+5 to 82%) and Democrat voters (+4 to 88%) for the generic Democrat. By the same token, the generic Republican has shaved the generic Democrat’s lead among both Independents and Ticketsplitters.

	First Wave			Second Wave		
	All Voters	Ind.	T/S	All Voters	Ind.	T/S
Generic Republican	43%	27%	29%	41%	30%	32%
Undecided	19%	36%	37%	18%	37%	35%
Generic Democrat	38%	37%	35%	41%	33%	33%
Net diff.	+5	-10	-6	--	-3	-1

Clearly the most significant change in the generic ballot and where most of the net five (5) point shift can be accounted for occurs within the issue clusters. In the first wave, the generic Republican maintained an edge among the issue cluster equal to 54% of voters in these districts: Economic, Foreign Affairs, Moral, and Societal breakdown.

The generic Republican still maintains the lead among the “Foreign Affairs,” “Moral,” and “Societal Breakdown” voters. However, there has been a complete reversal among the “Economic” voters to where the generic Democrat now leads by 11 points (47% to 36%) versus the 11-point lead the generic Republican held among these voters in the first wave - - a swing of 22 points.

Subsequently the generic Democrat now maintains statistically-significant leads among an issue cluster equal to 49% of these voters: Economic, Social, and Equality issues. This leaves the Republican with a statistically significant lead among an issue cluster of just 36% of voters.

Social issues – 21% Such as education, health care, Social Security, and the environment	Moral issues – 8% Such as abortion, school prayer, or pornography
Economic issues – 25% Such as taxes, government spending or creating jobs and economic growth	Societal Breakdown issues – 6% Such as crime, drugs, or welfare
Foreign Affairs issues – 22% Such as dealing with Iraq, winning the war on Terrorism and strengthening our defenses	Human Equality issues – 3% Such as ending racial discrimination, hunger, or poverty

**Generic Congressional Ballot
By Issue Clusters**

	Economic Issues	Foreign Affairs	Moral Issues	Societal Break	Social Issues	Equality Issues	All Equal
Generic Republican	36% (47)	58% (51)	56% (68)	48% (43)	25% (25)	10% (23)	40% (39)
Undecided	17% (17)	17% (18)	16% (11)	28% (22)	16% (19)	13% (19)	22% (24)
Generic Democrat	47% (36)	25% (31)	28% (20%)	24% (35)	58% (50)	77% (58)	38% (36)
Net Difference	-11(+11)	+33 (+20)	+28 (+48)	+24 (+8)	-33 (-20)	-67 (-35)	+2(+3)

NOTE: the numbers in parenthesis represent the figures from the first wave.

As the above chart illustrates, not only has there been a reversal of support among “Economic” voters from the first ballot (in parenthesis), but “Social” voters and “Equality” voters have increased their margin of support for the generic Democrat as well. And, while the generic Republican leads among “Moral” voters by 28-points, this lead has diminished from 48-points two weeks ago. Only among “Foreign Affairs” voters has the generic Republican increased the lead, from 20-points to 33-points.

Mood of the Country

	All Voters	Lean Democrat Districts	Toss Up Districts	Lean Republican Districts	Generic Undecideds
Right direction	41% (49)	44% (49)	39% (50)	40% (45)	30% (45)
DK/Refused	19% (20)	19% (17)	19% (19)	18% (22)	30% (26)
Wrong track	40% (31)	36% (33)	42% (31)	41% (30)	40% (30)
Net Difference	+1 (+18)	+8(+16)	-3 (+19)	-1 (+15)	-10 (+15)

As mentioned after the first survey two weeks ago, much of the strength in the generic Republican's performance could be traced to voters' mood in these targeted districts. Then, nearly half (49%) of the voters said the country was "headed in the right direction" versus less than a third (31%) who viewed the country as "off on the wrong track."

The snapshot from the first wave showed voters were more optimistic than pessimistic about the direction of the country by an 18-point margin and the generic Republican held a 5-point lead on the ballot. Today, with voters in these targeted districts evenly split on mood of the country the generic ballot is essentially tied. If voters in these districts move into a plurality or majority "wrong track" mood, we can expect, as the perceived party in power, to suffer on the generic ballot as a result.

Since the first wave of our tracking program, President Bush's ratings have clearly suffered as a result of the political shots fired as we see a net -15 shift from his approval ratings between the two waves.

President Bush Job Approval Trend Line

	First Wave Sept 17-18	Second Wave Sept. 28-29	Net Change
Approve of Bush	75%	69%	-7
No opinion	4%	3%	-1
Disapprove of Bush	19%	27%	+8
Net Diff.	+56	+42	

Despite the slide in the President's approval rating, he is still seen as doing a "good job" by these voters as better than two-thirds (69%) approve of the job he is doing and 41% "strongly approve" of the job he is doing.

Similar to what we see in the generic ballot, much of the slide in the President's approval rating can be attributed specifically to the "Economic" voters. Among whom we see a 22-point decline in the President's approval rating from the first wave to where now 64% (-10) approve and 32% (+12) disapprove of his performance. However, unlike what we

see among all these voters, “Economic” voters do show some intensity in their disapproval as about a third (32%) disapprove and 17% “strongly disapprove” of his performance.

The President’s approval rating and the President, himself, can still play a crucial role in these races. With the ebb and flow in how voters rate the President’s performance down the stretch it is important to note that among those who only “somewhat approve” of the job he is doing the generic Democrat maintains an advantage - - 43% to 32%.

President Bush’s Job Approval

	All Voters	Generic Undecideds	Lean Democrat Districts	Toss Up Districts	Lean Republican Districts
Approve	69%	72%	74%	67%	67%
Disapprove	27%	19%	22%	29%	28%
No Opinion	3%	5%	4%	4%	5%
Net Difference	+42	+53	+52	+38	+39

What’s more, a third (31%) of these voters still fall into the category of those who approve of the job the President is doing, but are not supporting the generic Republican. Currently these voters (approve Bush not vote for generic Republican) can be viewed as potential for Republicans, but with each day that passes it becomes more suspect as to whether Republicans will be able to convert this “unrealized potential” to support.

What percentage drop off we see and more importantly where these voters, who are largely Republican voters (45%), end up will most certainly have a significant impact on the issue matrix. An issue matrix, that at present, is trending towards the generic Democrat.

Conclusion:

In that much of what is reported in this second wave comes as a result of the shift in the issue matrix, yesterday’s announcement on the Iraq resolution puts much of we see in this wave pretty much “on hold until further notice.”

Still as we laid out in the first wave “as the mood of voters goes, so goes the generic ballot.” Clearly this has been borne out as the mood has changed from one of optimism in the first wave to one of ambivalence in the second wave among these voters. Subsequently the generic ballot is now tied between the generic Republican and generic Democrat.

Still it is not clear where the issue matrix will stand and specifically what effect the agreement between the U.S. Senate and the President on a resolution authorizing force will have on the focus among these voters with Foreign Affairs. While the issue of Iraq is being addressed by Congress, obviously much of what actually occurs with respect to Iraq has yet to happen.

Thus the most important question right now, as it relates to these races and control over the U.S. House, is what issue focus dominate these voters' issue matrix? Our tracking program would suggest that if the concern over Foreign Affairs wanes and is replaced by a greater focus on Economic issues and specifically "economy/jobs" that Democrats have an edge. If the focus on Foreign Affairs is sustained, if not rising, Republicans have a clear edge over Democrats. And remember that it is the Democrats who have the greater burden in this race as they are six (6) shy of the majority.

Demographics and Districts

Age:

18-25	4%
26-40	18%
41-54	28%
55-64	19%
65+	29%
Refused	3%

Party:

Republican	35%
Democrat	37%
Independent	22%
Other (volunteered)	2%
DK/Refused (vol.)	4%

Ideology:

Liberal	18%
Moderate	39%
Conservative	39%
DK/Refused (vol.)	5%

Race:

Hispanic	3%
African-American/ Black	6%
Asian	1%
White	83%
Other (Specify) (vol)	4%
Refused (vol)	3%

Gender:

Male	48%
Female	52%
Working woman	25%
Homemaker	27%

The Cook Political Report Congressional Race Rating (As of August 7, 2002)

Lean Democrat Seats (12)	Toss Up Seats (11)	Lean Republican Seats (17)
CA 18 Condit Open	DEM Seats (3)	AL 3 Riley Open
FL 5 Thurman	IN 2 Roemer Open	CT 2 Simmons
GA 3 New CD	ME 2 Baldacci Open	FL 22 Shaw
GA 11 New CD	MN 2 Luther	FL 24 New CD
IN 7 Carson		IL 19 Shimkus/Phelps
IA 3 Boswell	GOP Seats (4)	IA 1 Nussle
KS 3 Moore	MD 8 Morella	IA 4 Latham
KY 4 Lucas	NH 1 Sununu Open	KY 3 Northup
MD 2 Ehrlich Open	NM 2 Skeen Open	LA 5 Cooksey Open
ND AL Pomeroy	SD AL Thune Open	MS 3 Pickering/Shows
TN 4 Hilleary Open		NV 3 New CD
UT 2 Matheson		NH 2 Bass
	New CDs (4)	NJ 5 Roukema Open
	AZ 1 New CD	NM 1 Wilson
	CT 5 Maloney/Johnson	NC 8 Hayes
	CO 7 New CD	TX 5 Sessions Open
	PA 17 Gekas/Holden	WV 2 Capito

Definition of the High Propensity Voter

Each respondent is given a rating based on their responses to specific questions in this questionnaire instrument each of which relates to the likelihood of their turning out to vote this election cycle. Those respondents who score in a certain range, based on these specific questions, are then dropped into the category of “High Propensity Voter.”

The questions used to determine the propensity to vote include:

- **Likelihood to vote this November** - - Those who say they are “Definitely voting” are given a stronger weight versus those responding “Probably voting.”
- **Interest level in the race for U.S. House in their district** - - Those who are “Extremely interested” are given a stronger weight than those who say “Very interested” who in turn are given a stronger weight than those who respond “Somewhat interested” or “Not that interested.”
- **Generic congressional ballot test** - - Those respondents who say they are “definitely voting” for either the generic Republican or generic Democrat are given a stronger weight than those who are “probably voting” or “lean toward” the generic Republican or Democrat.
- **Age of voters** - - By a gradual scale the older respondents are the greater the weight they are given up to the age of 55.