

THE TARRANCE GROUP

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: ED GOEAS – PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE TARRANCE GROUP

RE: TURNOUT SHIFTS FROM YOUTH VOTE TO SENIORS IN NON PRESIDENTIAL YEAR ELECTIONS

DATE: FEBRUARY 25, 2010

The continuing efforts by the Obama Administration and Democrat controlled Congress to pass their version of health care reform is angering older voters. This is one especially important group to watch because they historically account for more than a quarter of the congressional midterm voting electorate. For seniors, those ages 60+, the number one concern is the state of the economy, and when it comes to health care, they are concerned about reducing costs. On both fronts, the Democrat effort to expand coverage appears to be at their expense, and angry seniors are poised to vent their frustration on Democrat incumbents at the polls in November.

It is no surprise that Republicans benefit when senior voters account for a higher percentage of the electorate. In 2010, however, we anticipate that the GOP advantage among seniors will only be more pronounced, as political environment measures indicate a very disgruntled older voting electorate.

The latest national GWU Battleground survey finds that among senior voters, thirty-one percent (31%) think the country is headed in the right direction, while fifty-nine percent (59%) say wrong track. In addition, seniors prefer the Republican candidate on the generic congressional ballot test by a four point spread (42% Rep, 38% Dem, 20% Und). On the congressional job approval measure, just twenty-one percent (21%) approve of the job being done in congress, while seventy-three percent (73%) disapprove. Barack Obama's job approval is upside down among seniors, with forty-five percent (45%) approving and forty-eight percent (48%) disapproving.

This is even worse news for the Democrats considering we are in a midterm election. Not only is there a significant drop-off in turnout from a Presidential to a midterm (55% down to just over 35% of Voting Age Population if recent history is any guide), but there are shifts in the contribution of age cohorts. Seniors are a much larger share of the electorate in midterm elections.

Young voters (18-29 year olds) represent a larger percentage of the total turnout in presidential elections than during midterm cycles. The total turnout contribution by age experiences a significant drop off among young voters from presidential to midterm years. In 2004, 18-29 year old voters represented seventeen percent (17%) of the total voting electorate by age. This dipped to twelve

percent (12%) in 2006 and went back up to eighteen percent (18%) in 2008. At the same time, senior voters (60+) represent a larger percent contribution of the votes cast in midterm election compared to presidential years. Senior voters (60+) accounted for twenty-four percent (24%) of total vote contribution in 2004. This number increased to twenty-nine percent (29%) in 2006 and decreased to twenty-three percent (23%) in 2008. Overall, the change in the electorate composition from presidential years to midterm cycles among 18-29 year old voters and seniors account for approximately a ten to twelve point net shift.

Age	Presidential 2004 Contribution	Midterm 2006 Contribution	Presidential 2008 Contribution
18-29 Year Olds	17%	12%	18%
60+ Seniors	24%	29%	23%

Obama nearly closed the gap with seniors against McCain in the 2008 presidential race. Fifty-one percent (51%) of seniors voted for McCain, while forty-seven percent (47%) chose Obama. However, the proposed health care legislation of the White House and Democrats in Congress has had a reverse effect among seniors. The health care reform bill turns seniors away due to their concern of rising costs and cuts to Medicare/Medicaid. This, paired with historical trends indicating that voters 60 years of age and older will represent a larger portion of the electorate in November, spells trouble for Democrat incumbents and could quite possibly make 2010 the year of the angry senior voter.

###