

New Lake-Goeas Poll Analysis Shows Iraq, Pocketbook Issues & Candidate Contact Spurred Large 2006 Youth Vote

- Youth Voter Turnout Increases for Second Election in a Row -

**Key Democratic support from young African-Americans, Hispanics, women;
Strong Republican support from married and religious youth**

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Washington, D.C. –The war in Iraq, education, the economy, and health care were the primary issues driving young voters in 2006, as well as an overall desire for a change in the governing country's direction, according to a new analysis of Young Voter Strategies' post-election poll of 18-30-year-olds, conducted by the bipartisan polling team of Ed Goeas and Celinda Lake. In addition, the new analysis shows that, while young adults overall voted in favor of Democrats by 20 points, both political parties have potential base voters among youth subsets: African-Americans, Hispanics, and women for Democrats, and young religious and married adults for Republicans. The full report, *Polling Young Voters*, is available at www.youngvoterstrategies.org, under "Polling."

A separate analysis showed turnout among 18-29-year-olds increased for the second major election in a row, growing to approximately 24 percent, up at least 2 points over 2002 levels, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE).¹ In addition, CIRCLE's analysis of the 2006 National Election Pool's Exit Poll shows that young adults voted for the Democratic candidate over the Republican candidate in races for the House of Representatives (58% vs. 38%), the Senate (60% vs. 33%) and governor (55% vs. 34%).

"Young voters made clear on Election Day 2006 that they're a powerful electorate that's here to stay," said Heather Smith, director of Young Voter Strategies. "Generation Y voters are big in number today and on track to be one-third of the electorate by 2015. Both political parties must pay attention to this electorate if they hope to win close elections today and hold power in the long run."

"Young people led the way in this election. While voter turnout overall grew only slightly, youth turnout rose substantially," said Peter Levine, director of CIRCLE. "Young voters have witnessed the largest increase in support of Democratic congressional candidates since 2000—nine percentage points. Their shift in voting behavior and their increased turnout clearly had an effect on the 2006 election results."

The Young Voter Strategies' poll surveyed 500 18-30 year olds and has a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percent. Key findings include:

- Young people listed education and college costs, the war in Iraq, and the economy as the top issues Congress should address. When asked what issue was most important in deciding for whom to vote in 2006, 43% said Iraq, 37% health care, 36% homeland security & terrorism, and 36% creating jobs.
 - Young Republicans, 30% of the sample, cited homeland security & terrorism (42%), moral and values-based issues (40%), Iraq (34%), and creating jobs (28%) as their top election issues.
 - Young Democrats, 40% of the sample, cited Iraq (48%), creating jobs (39%), health care (37%), and college affordability (34%) as their top election issues.
- Young Republicans were 12 points more likely than young Democrats to say they were "almost certain" to vote on November 7th; young African-Americans were 12 and 19 points more likely to say they were "almost certain" to vote than either young whites or young Hispanics, respectively.

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¹ Exit poll turnout figures are not yet available for subgroups; the U.S. Census Bureau's turnout figures will be available in spring 2007.

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- On the generic ballot, support for Democrats came from African-Americans (74-16), Hispanics (69-28) and women (52-34). These groups also identified as Democrats: women (42-27), African-Americans (62-10), Hispanics (48-21).
- On the generic ballot, Republican support came from married adults (47-37), Born-Again Christians (54-37), and youth citing immigration as a top issue (59-27). These groups, as well as white men who voted Democratic by 8 points, also identified as Republicans: married (40-29), white men (39-34), and Born-Again Christian (46-30).

Additional findings of CIRCLE's 2006 election analysis of young voters (ages 18-29) can be viewed at www.civicyouth.org. They include:

- Young voters are more racially and ethnically diverse than older voters.
 - Eleven percent classified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (larger than the proportion in the electorate as a whole 6%). Young Latinos have increased their voter share by eight percentage points since 1992, more than any other minority racial/ethnic group.
 - Thirteen percent self-identified as Black, compared to 10% of all the voters
 - Five percent identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, compared to 3% of the whole electorate.
 - The share of young white voters has decreased from 84% in 1992 to 71% in 2006.
- Young voters were the most likely age group to make their voting decision on Election Day. Forty-four percent of young voters decided for whom to vote in the U.S. House election within a week of Election Day, compared to 28% of the electorate as a whole.
- Thirty-nine percent of young respondents said their vote for Congress was meant to express opposition to George W. Bush.
- Young people were more likely than any other age group to support an increase in the minimum wage (74% of under-30 voters supported an increase compared to 66% of all voters)
- On the issue of same-sex marriage, about two-thirds of voters of all ages, including young voters, voted to ban same-sex marriage.

"We saw on November 7th that reaching out to young voters is a winning strategy for Democrats," said Celinda Lake of Lake Research Partners. "Not only did young adults show up at the polls in large numbers, but this is the second major election in a row that Democrats won the youth vote, leading to some major upsets and helping to shift control of Congress. Studies show that voters decide which party is for them when they're young, and then can be loyal voters for life – looking ahead, Democrats must invest resources in turning out young voters, both to win in 2008 and to build our base to be the party in power for years to come."

"The 2006 elections show that Republican campaigns must mobilize their base of young voters to win," said Ed Goetas of The Tarrance Group. "November 7th proved that young voters can and will be a force in elections. As Republicans look ahead to 2008 in an environment where many of the incoming Democrats won with less than 55% of the vote, they should look seriously at continuing to engage and energize GOP voters under 30. Young Republicans are very party-loyal, concerned with core GOP issues, and will turn out to vote if we ask them."

Organizations supported by Young Voter Strategies this past cycle demonstrated that if you target the youth vote, you will get results. Also, according to the poll, young adults who were contacted by a candidate or campaign were 10 points more likely to be "almost certain" they would vote or to have already voted compared to those who had not been contacted. For the second major election in a row, young voters were mobilized and made their voices heard at the polls on November 7, 2006. At 42 million strong and growing, this generation has arrived as a force in politics and will only grow in importance as more and more vote in each election. Just as the Republican Party invested resources in winning the Evangelical vote and the Democratic Party courted the African-American voting bloc, both political parties can and must implement a strategy to target and win young voters—both to win close elections today and to build political power for the future.

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CIRCLE, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, promotes research on the civic and political engagement of young Americans. Since 2001, CIRCLE has conducted, collected, and funded research on the civic and political participation of young Americans. CIRCLE is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy and is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and other foundations. Additional information on youth and voting (nationally and by state) is available on the CIRCLE website at www.civicyouth.org.

Young Voter Strategies, a project of the Graduate School of Political Management at The George Washington University, with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides the public, parties, candidates, consultants, and nonprofits with data on the youth vote and tools to effectively mobilize this electorate for upcoming elections. We are committed to making the targeting of young voters a more permanent part of electoral strategies. Additional information and the full poll results and analyses are available at www.youngvoterstrategies.org