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Full Survey:

www.firstviewsurvey.com

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Voters Sought Change In Leadership, But No Ideological Realignment Emerged, FirstView Election Night Survey Finds

Voters' Hope for Future Generations and Trust in Government Surpassed Economic and War Concerns

Washington, D.C. – While voters were primarily concerned about the economy, they did not vote their pocketbooks, according to *FirstView*, a national public opinion survey released today by *Roll Call*, Strat@comm and Fleishman-Hillard Public Affairs. Instead, the survey indicates voters were motivated to change the world for future generations and to restore trust in government.

FirstView was conducted by former White House pollsters Dr. Dee Allsop and Mr. Mike Dabadie. It goes beyond exit polls by delving into a wide scope of attitudinal and behavioral questions that motivated voters to elect Barack Obama and the 111th Congress.

“Looking behind the headlines, *FirstView*’s election night survey tells us that voters who secured Barack Obama’s place in history were not motivated by traditional coalitions, geography or demographics, but rather by their hopes, dreams and aspirations,” said Dr. Dee Allsop, Strat@comm senior research consultant and *FirstView*’s lead researcher. “Conventional wisdom might suggest that the election turned on the economy and the war, but the data indicate that making the world better for future generations and restoring trust were the true driving forces behind the vote for change.”

Non-traditional influencers also helped shape voter opinions. “The “Saturday Night Live” effect’ absolutely impacted the election,” said Mike Dabadie, *FirstView* researcher. “We saw that 10 percent of voters said they were influenced by the skits. At the same time, the data shows that 59 percent of those who saw the skits voted for Obama and 39 percent voted for McCain.”

Three themes paved the way for the Obama victory:

1. A historically pessimistic electorate in 2008

- 84 percent of voters feel the country is pretty seriously on the wrong track
- 81 percent of voters are “worried”
- 78 percent of voters are “frustrated”
- 72 percent of voters do not “trust elected officials in Washington to do what’s right”
- 64 percent of voters are unhappy with Congress

2. The economic crisis accentuated the need for change, but making the world better for future generations, the desire for new hope and opportunity, and restoring trust in the government were the real forces behind the decisions voters made at the polls

- The strongest guiding motivation for voters was the “desire to make the world a better place for future generations” (32 percent)
- Notably, the “desire to increase financial security for me or my family” was the strongest guiding motivation for only 23 percent of voters, despite the fact that 45 percent felt “getting the economy back on track” was the most important determining issue for their vote

3. In the end, hope won out over ideology, as there does not appear to be a coalition or geographic realignment

- 74 percent of voters are “hopeful” and 67 percent are “proud”
- Despite the landslide democratic victory, 49 percent of survey respondents identified themselves as “conservative,” compared to 35 percent “liberal” and 16 percent “moderate.” These numbers represent a slight decrease in self-identified conservatives and liberals compared to previous elections, and a quadrupling of moderate voters.
- There was no overwhelming political realignment. An assessment of Kerry’s voter groups in 2004 compared to Obama’s in 2008 shows that Obama for the most part extended traditional Democratic voter coalitions, but did not bring in newer groups, as has occurred in past presidential elections.
- Of those voting for Obama, 77 percent said they voted FOR Obama as opposed to against McCain, Palin, etc., while 48 percent of McCain voters voted FOR McCain as opposed to against Obama, Biden, etc.
- Intensity of Hispanic support: up 27 percent from Kerry’s 2004 vote advantage over Bush, compared to Obama’s 2008 advantage over McCain
- Intensity of working women support: up 24 percent from Kerry’s 2004 vote advantage over Bush, compared to Obama’s 2008 advantage over McCain
- Intensity of African American support: up 15 percent from Kerry’s 2004 vote advantage over Bush, compared to Obama’s 2008 advantage over McCain
- The surge in turnout of the youth vote (ages 18 to 29 years) never materialized. Young people voted overwhelmingly for Obama (up 25 percent from Kerry’s youth vote advantage over Bush), but as a percentage of the voting public, youth voters weren’t significantly a larger share than they were in the 2004 election.

As Americans move forward from this election, their priorities and expectations for government action will shape the nation’s political agenda:

- Voters believe divided government will be better for the country (55 percent), despite electing a one-party government among the White House, Senate and House of Representatives
- Voters are expecting “government spending will go up” a little (39 percent) or a lot (33 percent)
- Voters are expecting “everyone’s taxes will go up” a little (28 percent) or a lot (33 percent)
- Voters believe we can achieve both economic growth and environmental protection at the same time (81 percent)
- 67 percent of voters agree government should not “continue to spend money to boost the economy if it will increase size of the national deficit”

- Voters believe jobs will be less plentiful (53 percent) and hard to get (28 percent)
- Voters support government action to help green energy production (41 percent) and the housing and construction industry (22 percent)

“We’ve observed that candidates like Obama who are elected based on their ability to connect with voter aspirations are able to build broad support for their governing agendas,” said Dr. Allsop.

FirstView surveyed 1,000 voters through a phone and online survey. Respondents were triple-screened for age, voter registration and participation in the 2008 election. The data was stratified by census region to represent the U.S. population’s actual ratios for gender, education and ethnicity. These measures assure a valid national probability sample. The scientific survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

FirstView pollsters Dr. Dee Allsop and Mike Dabadie are available for media interviews to provide analysis and context for voter motivations. Contact John Fitzpatrick at 202.289.2001 or JFitzpatrick@stratacomm.net.

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