

From the National Director

The pundits are agreed that the 2000 presidential election may be the closest since Kennedy squeaked by Nixon in 1960. They also agree that the closer it gets, the dirtier the campaign will become. The Bush campaign has consultants who revel in negativity.

We are already seeing ominous signs of gutter politics in House and Senate races where conservative Republicans are under heavy pressure from Democratic challengers. Republican Campaign Committee consultants are advising candidates to charge Democrats with being "soft on national defense", "Chinese apologists" and "tax and spend liberals." Over the summer the language has grown more and more shrill.

It is unfortunate that one must respond to lies and underhanded tactics but it is a cardinal rule of politics that if negative charges are not answered as quickly as possible they tend to take on a life of their own.

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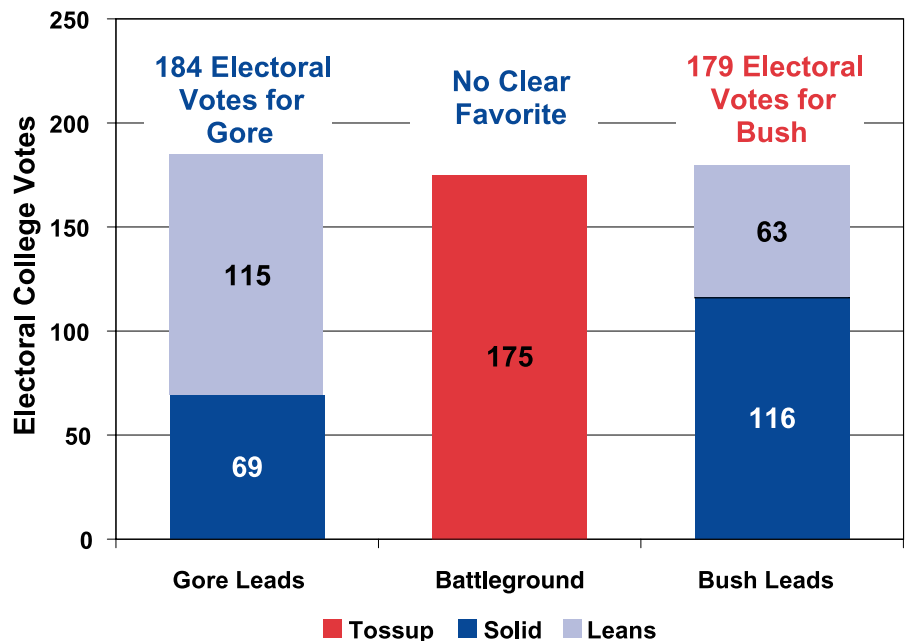
The Stakes in November — All the Marbles

As we come to the last 50 days of campaign 2000 it is clear that the election will go down to the wire. No matter how we read the opinion polls, their methodology and the cross tabulations, we can reach only one conclusion: the presidential race is a dead heat. 90% of the electorate appears to have made up their mind between Bush and Gore. This 90% figure will probably not change barring a development that we don't anticipate.

There may be more margin for play in Senate and House races but we assume that the percentage of remaining persuadable voters is shrinking rapidly. This leaves two remaining major accomplishments for the candidates who will win, 50 days from now.

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Gore and Bush Are Neck-and-Neck



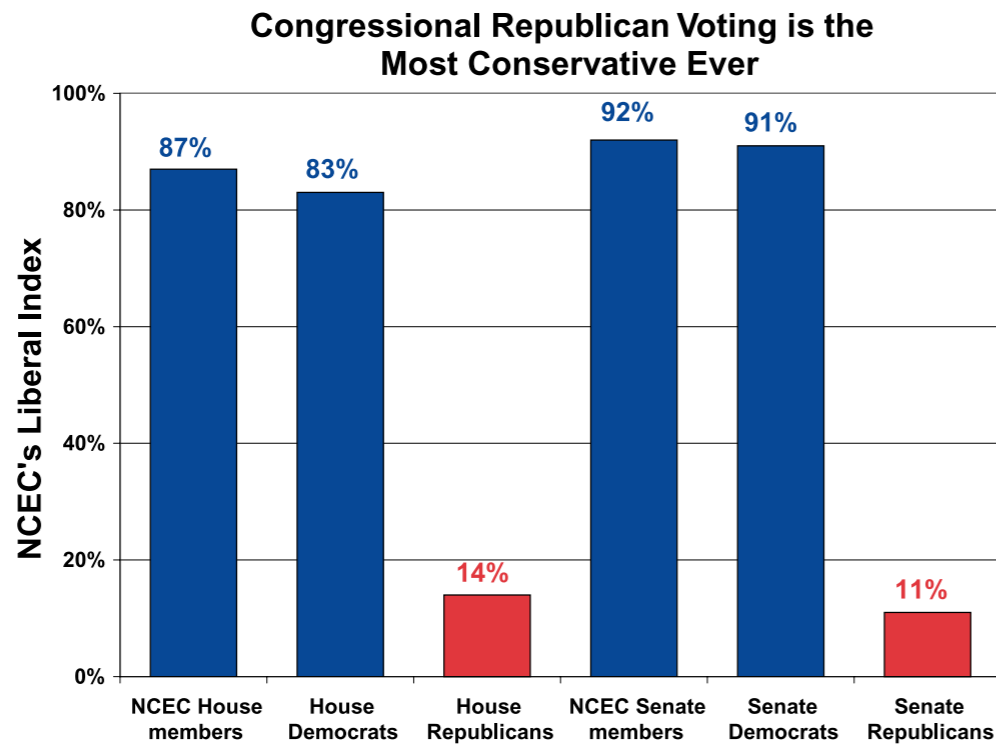
The Government in Balance

If George W. Bush is elected, the Christian Coalition, the NRA and corporate oligarchs will lead him around by the nose. The only check on his extremism will be a Democratic

Congressional majority. We must gain a net of seven House seats to oust Dick Arme, Tom DeLay and their know-nothing allies.

The appointment of Zell Miller to fill the Coverdell vacancy in Georgia brings us to within four seats of US Senate majority control. Delaware, Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, and Pennsylvania are all ripe for Democratic pickups. But we must hold the Democratic seats under strong challenges. It will be close but definitely possible. Taking the reigns of power from Trent Lott,

Jesse Helms and Orrin Hatch would justify all the struggle of this campaign. Majority control is the goal. But



Congress in the Balance: Party Control of Key Committees at Stake

Senate Committee	Republican Chairman	Democratic Chairman
Appropriations	Ted Stevens (15%)	Robert Byrd (80%)
Armed Services	John Warner (15%)	Carl Levin (95%)
Banking and Urban Affairs	Phil Gramm (0%)	Paul Sarbanes (100%)
Foreign Relations	Jesse Helms (5%)	Joseph Biden (90%)
Judiciary	Orrin Hatch (10%)	Patrick Leahy (95%)
Labor and Human Resources	Jim Jeffords (40%)	Ted Kennedy (100%)
Rules and Administration	Mitch McConnell (5%)	Christopher Dodd (90%)

House Committee	Republican Chairman	Democratic Chairman
Appropriations	C.W. Young (15%)	David Obey (90%)
Armed Services	Floyd Spence (10%)	Ike Skelton (60%)
Commerce	Thomas Bliley (10%)	John Dingell (80%)
Government Reform	Dan Burton (5%)	Henry Waxman (95%)
International Relations	Benjamin Gilman (40%)	Sam Gejdenson (90%)
Judiciary	Henry Hyde (15%)	John Conyers (95%)
Rules	David Dreier (10%)	Joe Moakley (90%)

NCEC's Liberal Score in parentheses

Tilting the Scales of Justice

In recent years, 5-4 rulings by the Supreme Court have been commonplace. On issues ranging from abortion rights to federal regulatory control to affirmative action, to the devolution of federal authority, the margin has been one vote.

With three justices over 70 it is likely that the next president will appoint Justices who will determine the direction of the Court for years to come. Justice John Paul Stevens, the oldest member of the Court, has a history of consistently progressive rulings. Chief Justice Rehnquist, on the other hand, is a committed conservative. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor is widely recognized as a centrist on the Court. She has proved to be the swing vote on many watershed issues. One should be cautious to categorize Justices narrowly as either liberal or conservative, as it is not only simplistic but many Justices turn out to be other than they are first perceived.

The present Court voided the Violence Against Women Act and blocked the regulation of big tobacco by a single vote. Women's right to choose was upheld by a 5-4 margin. Equal protection for homosexuals and other minorities was denied when a 5-4 decision rendered impotent a New Jersey anti-discrimination law.

A small change in the composition of the Court could affect decisions on separation of church and state, gay rights, euthanasia, affirmative action, campaign finance reform, environmental protection and laws which go to the very core of our democracy. President Clinton said, "...there is absolutely no question that whether Roe vs. Wade is preserved or scrapped depends on what happens in the presidential vote."

Americans concerned about a civil society must worry about the next President who appoints and the next US Senate that confirms members of the federal court.

every single election we can win and every progressive vote we can bring to the Congress may decide the direction of the nation. Razor thin margins often make the difference on crucial legislation.

In the Senate, an amendment that would require background checks for gun show purchases passed by a single vote. An amendment that would have increased education funding for teacher development and class size reduction was rejected 207 to 217. The House Republicans blocked the Food and Drug Administration's funding to test and develop the French abortion pill RU486 by just 3 votes, 217 to 214.

The infamous School of the Americas used to train Latin American elements like the Contras was kept in operation by the slim margin of 204 to 214. Key environmental protection legislation often failed by a handful of votes. A Republican amendment to prevent the Treasury from funding the repair of environmental damage done by offshore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico passed by a vote of 216 to 208.

Day after day, time after time, assaults on our democracy and our precious freedoms succeed or are defeated by small groups of legislators. We need more men and women of character and high purpose in public life if our 200 year old experiment in democracy is to continue.

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First, they must not ignore their base vote but must concentrate their efforts on those precincts, identified by NCEC's electoral and demographic targeting analyses, that contain the largest number of persuadable voters. Secondly, they must implement NCEC's get-out-the-vote strategies. Some elections will be determined by the success of voter turnout efforts on Election Day.

Supreme Court in the Balance: Three Retirements Possible Under Next President

Liberals	Centrists	Conservatives
John Paul Stevens (80)	Sandra Day O'Connor (70)	William Rehnquist (75)
Ruth Bader Ginsburg (67)	Anthony Kennedy (63)	Antonin Scalia (64)
David Souter (60)	Stephen Breyer (61)	Clarence Thomas (52)

Bold indicates possible retirement. Age in parentheses.

Congressional Redistricting

The Key to Our Future

The outcome of the congressional elections will determine control of Congress for the next two years but the outcome of state legislative elections could alter the balance of power for the next decade. After the national election, state legislatures and governors will hold important roles in redrawing congressional districts based on the new census figures. The battle to control Congress has been exceptionally close in every recent election, and is likely to remain so in the future. If redistricting favors the GOP, Democrats could win control of the House in this election but lose it shortly thereafter and face a steep uphill battle for years to come, winning the battle but losing the war. On the other hand, with victories in a few dozen state legislative races, Democrats could influence the redrawing of congressional maps to ensure victory far into the future.

Currently, Democrats control the redistricting process in states containing 144 congressional districts and Republicans hold the advantage in 113 districts. 178 districts are in states with divided control, at-large districts, or non-partisan redistricting systems.

Redistricting will not occur until after the November elections, and a few key victories could make all the difference. By gaining control of the right 35 state legislative seats and one governor's mansion, Democrats would control the process in 169 congressional districts, compared to only 60 districts where Republicans would draw the maps. But a few Republican victories at the state level could prove devastating. With the pickup of 17 state legislative seats and two governorships, Republicans would redraw 182 districts and leave Democrats with control of only 116. It is imperative to retake control of Congress and elect the President, but if we forget about these critical state races we may be left with a pyrrhic victory and a very temporary majority.

Elections provide citizens with a unique opportunity to participate in the democratic process, to voice their concerns, and to help determine the policies that shape a nation. Every election is significant, but the coming election will have an extraordinary impact on the future. With the Supreme Court, Congress, and the redistricting process hanging in the balance, the 2000 election may go down as one of the most important in our history.

“ NCEC has provided invaluable technical assistance to my reelection effort. Their expertise has made a major difference not only in my race, but in countless races across the country. Without a doubt, the NCEC has led the fight for progressive candidates and won many of the most important battles. ”

-Senator Edward Kennedy
Democrat, Massachusetts

National Director, continued

That is what happened in 1994 when Democrats lost majority control of Congress. In the last two weeks of the campaign special interest and corporate money flooded into all the close congressional contests to pay for negative television and radio spot advertising. Most of the Democrats had run out of money and were unable to answer the outlandish charges made against them. The result, alas, is a Congress controlled by Trent Lott, Jesse Helms, Tom DeLay, Dick Armey and some of the most reactionary elements of American politics.

We must defeat them in November.