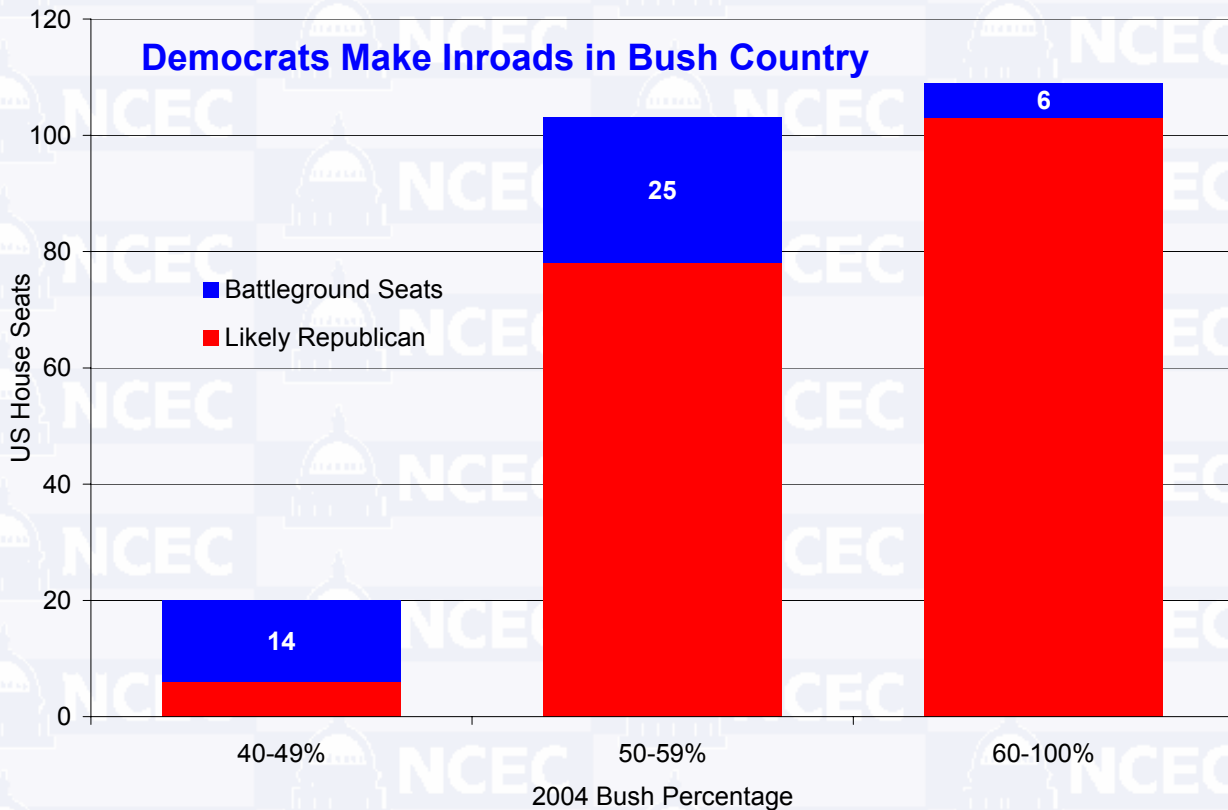


MEMO

TO: NCEC Board Members
FROM: Mark Gersh, NCEC Washington Director
DATE: September 26, 2006
SUBJECT: Democratic Congressional Control Within Reach

NCEC's Latest Congressional Analysis Shows Democrats with a Good Shot at Controlling Both Houses

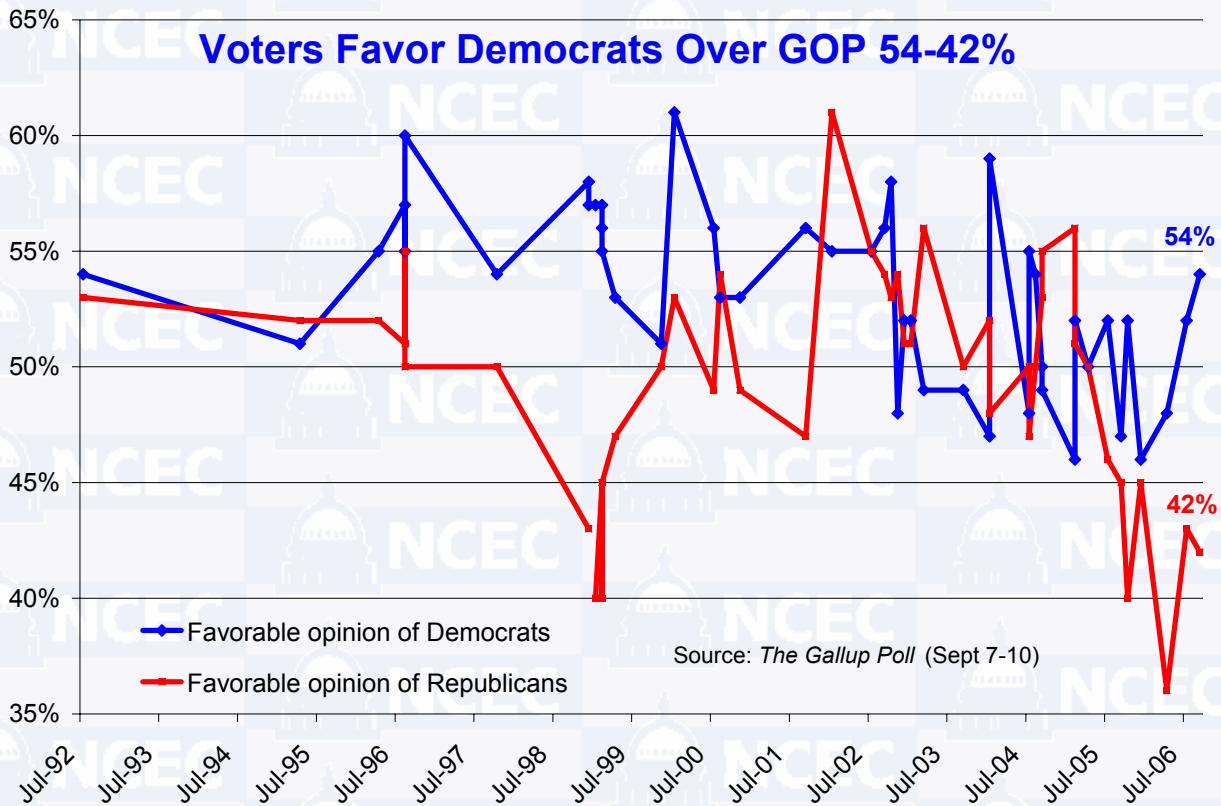
Month after month, poll after poll, a reoccurring theme continues to reverberate in every state. Voters are angry and tired of the Republicans' inability to pass significant legislation affecting the nation's most pressing problems. Many normally safe Republican incumbents are beginning to look over their shoulders. NCEC believes that there are more than 60 races that will be close in November, 44 of which are Republican seats. Therefore, the ratio of Republican to Democratic incumbents in danger of losing is nearly 4 to 1. Clearly, Democrats have a great chance to gain the 15 seats needed to take control of the House. In 2004, President Bush carried many of these districts by healthy margins, but voter attitudes have changed and in states like Indiana, Kentucky, and Wyoming, Democrats are expecting to pick up seats. There are many districts where Democrats have not fared well recently that appear on the brink of voting for Democrats in 2006. As the graph below illustrates, there are 31 districts where President Bush won more than 50 percent of the vote in 2004 that are considered battleground districts in November.



In fact, of the 40 GOP incumbent seats that are in NCEC's "toss-up" or "close Republican" categories, John Kerry won only 12 in 2004. There can be no clearer indication of voter displeasure than the fact that districts like KY-02, KY-04, NE-01, PA-10, TX-22, and WY-01, all places where John Kerry failed to gain 40 percent of the vote, are now very much in play. Control of the House will depend on our performance in districts where Bush received between 50 and 59 percent of the vote in 2004, such as IN-02, IN-09, MN-06, and VA-02. Additionally, there are six battleground seats in districts that went to Bush by more than 60 percent in 2004. This includes the at-large seat in WY, which is considered to be the quintessential Red state. Another opportunity of this magnitude may not arrive for decades. We must not lose this advantage.

Democrats Viewed More Favorably among the Public

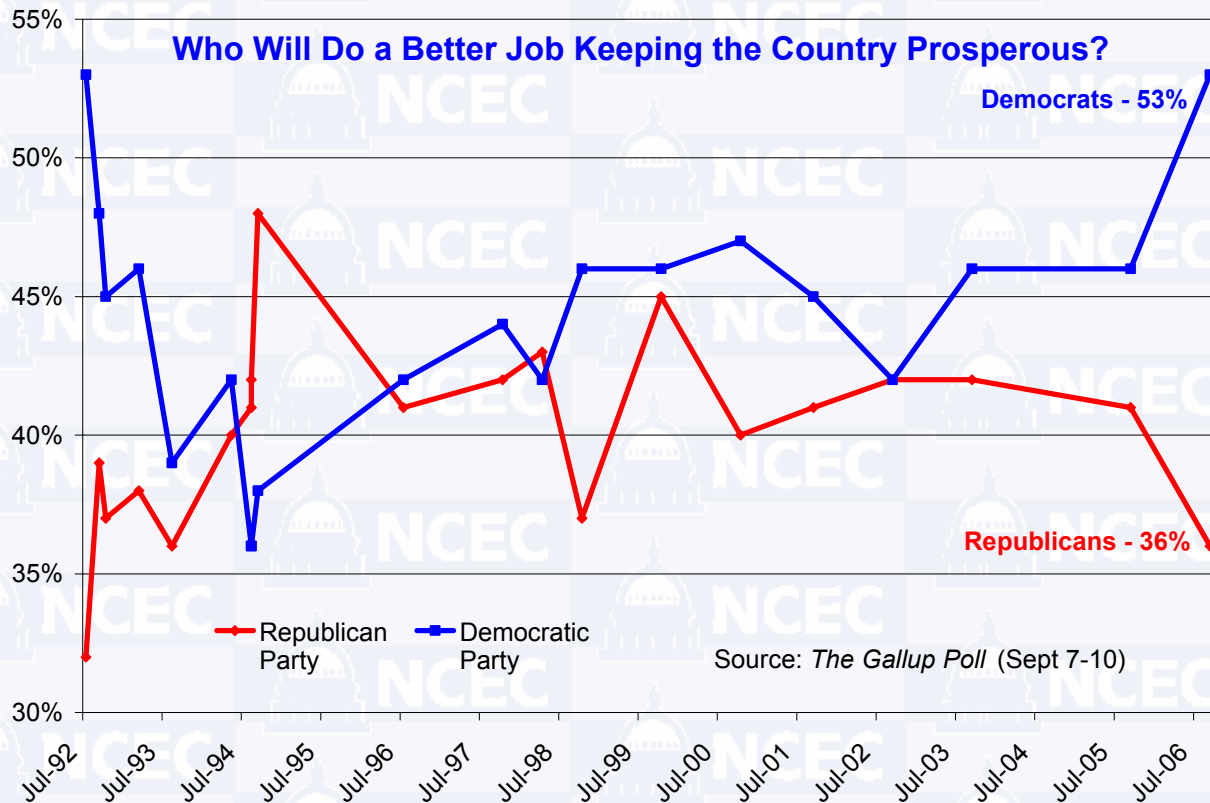
The latest Gallup Poll shows that Americans view Democrats much more favorably than Republicans and that they would prefer to have Democrats lead them into the future. The September 7–10 Gallup Poll shows that 54 percent of those surveyed had a favorable opinion of the Democratic Party (the best rating for the party since August 2004). Conversely, only 42 percent had a favorable opinion of the Republicans, while 53 percent had an unfavorable opinion. Public opinion of the GOP has been steadily declining; a year ago, the public was evenly divided in their opinion of the Republicans, but their lack of real leadership has the public looking for a better way.



Democrats Seen as the Party of the Future

More important than current opinions of the parties is the fact that Americans believe that Democrats are the party that can keep the country prosperous in the future. The same Gallup Poll shows that 53 percent of those surveyed said they thought that Democrats would better keep the country prosperous, in comparison to just 36 percent for the Republicans. The poll also shows that the Republicans can't rely on the issues of security to save them in this election. The

aforementioned poll gave the Republicans a mere two-point advantage related to the question of which party will better keep the country safe in the future.



GOP Losing Its Base

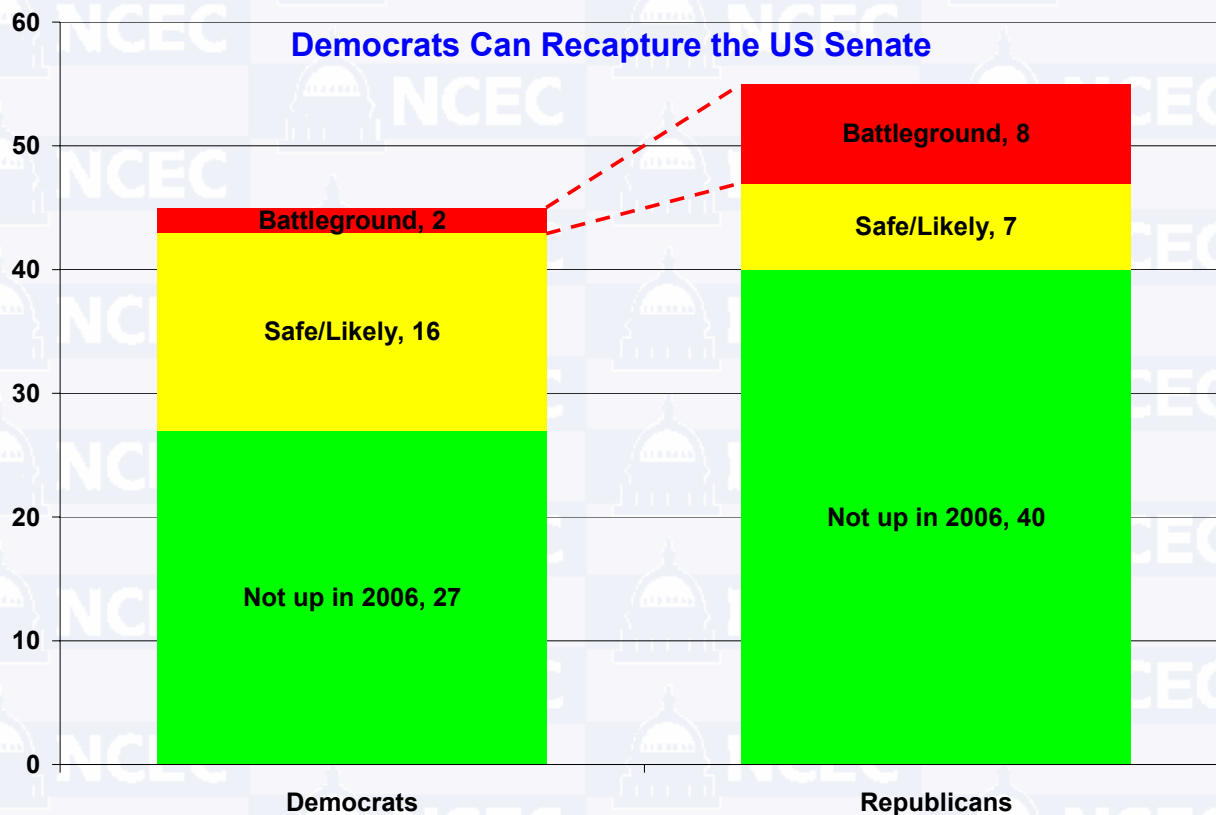
In past elections, the Republicans have been able to depend on their stronghold in the South, particularly among southern women, to deliver congressional majorities and presidential elections. However, it seems that the overbearing rhetoric on security and their attempts to sidestep Supreme Court rulings on issues like wiretapping and prisoner abuse has driven away many of their most ardent supporters. "I think history will show him to be the worst president since Ulysses S. Grant," said Barbara Knight, a self-described Republican since birth and the mother of three. "He's been an embarrassment." This quote from *The Washington Post* underscores the frustration building in southern women. "Bush secured a second term due in large part to support from 54 percent of southern female voters, while women nationally favored Democrat John Kerry, 51–48 percent." A recent AP poll shows that three of every five southern women say they plan to vote Democratic in the upcoming election. This seismic shift is a main reason why several districts in the South appear winnable this November.

Recent Developments Assure a Close Race for Control of the Senate

Since the beginning of the election season, it has been commonplace to believe that the Senate was beyond the reach of Democratic control. Six weeks before Election Day, this premise is simply not true. While the House appears to be the more likely chamber to go "blue," majority control of the Senate may come down to only one or two races. There are now eight GOP and five Democratic battleground Senate contests. Democrats continue to lead in Montana and Pennsylvania, and the GOP is nearly ready to concede defeat in Ohio, which leaves only three seats left to capture. A great deal was made about Sen. Chafee's victory in the Rhode Island primary, but the polls show

that Democratic candidate Sheldon Whitehouse is running in a dead heat with Chafee, according to an August 16–21 poll from Fleming and Associates. Clearly, there remains a lot to be decided in this race. The Senate race in Missouri continues to be very tight, with Republican incumbent Jim Talent maintaining a slim lead over Democratic candidate Claire McCaskill, who remains within striking distance. The story is the same in Arizona where Democrat Jim Pederson continues to close the gap against Republican incumbent Jon Kyl. A September 6–8 poll from Harstad Strategic Research has Pederson just six points down; he had previously been behind by as many as 14 points in June.

Another reason to believe the Senate may go Democratic this year is the race in Tennessee, where Harold Ford Jr. recently took the lead over Republican candidate Bob Corker. Corker, who will have to testify next month about his role in a land acquisition deal with Wal-Mart, may have given Ford all he'll need to win this seat. Further, the GOP is still reeling from the famous “Macaca” statement made by Senator George Allen, which has catapulted Democratic challenger Jim Webb’s poll numbers and created a dogfight in Virginia.



In order for us to take control of the Senate, it is imperative that we hold on to control of seats in Washington and New Jersey, which are homes to the only two Democrats who appear to be in danger. The situation continues to brighten for Senator Cantwell, as the McGavick campaign has gotten bogged down trying to explain a drunken driving incident involving McGavick that he disclosed on his campaign’s blog a few weeks ago. The situation in New Jersey is in more dire circumstances as Robert Menendez now trails Robert Kean Jr. by four points according to a September 8–10 Strategic Vision poll. If the election were to take place today, the Democrats would gain seats, but we wouldn’t take control of the chamber. However, more developments are sure to come, and NCEC will spare no effort and will not stop fighting until the polls close.