

To: Interested Parties
From: *Lake Research Partners*
Subject: Impact of Unmarried Women's Vote in GA, NH, NC, & MN
Date: November 5, 2008

An election eve study conducted by Lake Research Partners, sponsored by Women's Voices. Women Vote, in four battleground states with intensely competitive Presidential and U.S. Senate contests shows that unmarried women proved once again to be a decisive political force in American politics, making the difference in electing progressive candidates to the Presidency and U.S. Senate in 2008. Findings from election eve surveys in North Carolina, New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Georgia show unmarried women overwhelmingly supportive of progressive candidates, and much more so than their married counterparts. Unmarried women were also noticeably more energized to vote in 2008: voting early and in record numbers; exhibiting uncharacteristically low drop-off rates; and, most important, helping secure progressive victories in some of the toughest electoral battlegrounds.

Summary Findings

- **The marriage gap is once again a major fault line among women, with unmarried women supporting progressive candidates in strong and disproportionate numbers.** In all four states surveyed, unmarried women provided the Democratic candidates for President and U.S. Senate with commanding margins, particularly when compared to married women in those states. In the Presidential contest, unmarried women supported Obama by 47 points in Minnesota (72% to 25%), 42 points in Georgia (70% to 28%), 38 points in New Hampshire (68% to 30%), and 36 points in North Carolina (68% to 32%). In the Senate contests, unmarried women supported the Democrat by 49 points in Georgia (71% to 22%), 38 points in Minnesota (62% to 24%), 34 points in New Hampshire (64% to 30%), and 30 points in North Carolina (62% to 32%). These margins are impressive in their own right, but all the more so considering that married women in these states voted for the Democratic candidates for President and Senate at far lower levels. In fact, in Georgia and North Carolina, married women voted for McCain over Obama. And in Georgia and Minnesota, married women actually supported the Republican Senate candidates over the Democrats.
- **Unmarried women helped turn Red states Blue in tough political battlegrounds.** In both early and Election Day voting, unmarried women voted solidly for Obama and the Democratic U.S. Senate candidates. Collectively, unmarried women voted more solidly for Obama and their respective Democratic U.S. Senate candidates than women overall. They voted more solidly for the Democratic candidates than any other major voting group, with the exception of African Americans. In North Carolina and New Hampshire, unmarried women helped lift two female Senatorial candidates – Kay Hagan and Jeanne Shaheen, respectively – to stunning upsets over entrenched incumbents. In Minnesota, unmarried women were essential in keeping Franken in the hunt (that race is now headed for an automatic recount). In Georgia, unmarried women helped turn the state into a new battleground, with Chambliss and Martin now facing a runoff. In the presidential contest, unmarried women buttressed Barack Obama's margins in every state, helping put him over the top in all the states surveyed, save Georgia.
- **Unmarried women were much more energized to vote this cycle.** Stunning majorities of unmarried women in all four states said they were more interested in the November 4th election compared to elections in the past, including roughly half who said they were "much more interested." Moreover, unmarried women – who have typically been less interested in elections than married women – report being nearly as interested as married women this cycle.
- **Unmarried women were also a force in down-ballot races.** In previous cycles, unmarried women were much more likely to drop off after voting for President. Not so this year. In each of

- the four states surveyed, about nine in ten or more of unmarried women said they voted for U.S. Senate candidates further down the ballot.
- **Early voting among unmarried women was a boon for progressive candidates.** In Georgia, early voting women supported Obama by 18 points (54% to 36%), compared to a 7-point margin overall (53% to 46%). At the Senate level, early voting women gave Martin an 18-point edge (51% to 33%), compared to a smaller 12-point margin overall (54% to 42%). In North Carolina, early voting women went for Obama by 24 points (59% to 35%), compared to a 10-point margin overall (55% to 45%). In the Senate race, they gave Hagan a 28-point advantage in early voting (60% to 32%), compared to a 14-point cushion overall (55% to 41%).
 - **The number one issue among voters in 2008 was the economy – and for women especially. Women, particularly unmarried women, voted for candidates who advanced a compelling agenda for economic change.** The economic crisis has had a profound impact on unmarried women, who tended to cite rising health care costs, the federal budget deficit and national debt, the need for good paying jobs, higher taxes, daily expenses like food and child care, and retirement security and as the issues that were the most important drivers of their vote in 2008.

Statewide Summaries

In Georgia, unmarried women propelled Jim Martin to a runoff against Saxby Chambliss in what was considered safe Republican turf*

Georgia became an unlikely battleground late in the 2008 cycle, and both unmarried and Black women were a major factor girding Democrats' renewed competitiveness statewide in this state. Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Jim Martin forced a stunning runoff with incumbent Republican Saxby Chambliss after pulling within 3 points on the final tally (47% to 50%). Martin was helped in no small measure by unmarried women, who supported him by 49 points (71% to 22%), as well as Black women, who were nearly unanimous in their support of him (95% to 1%). In contrast, married women supported Chambliss by 7 points (52% to 45%), and men voted for Chambliss by a sizeable 21-point spread (59% to 38%). For Martin, getting unmarried women out to vote in the runoff election – a task that has never been attempted before – is the key to winning this seat.

Obama also made a spirited run at McCain, falling by only 5 points (47% to 52%) in a state that was hitherto a deep shade of red. But it was unmarried and Black women again who were instrumental in making Obama competitive, supporting him by 42 points (70% to 28%) and 92 points (96% to 4%), respectively. Married women supported McCain by 10 points (55% to 45%), and men voted for McCain by 18 points (58% to 40%).

Driving Democratic margins in Georgia was unprecedented enthusiasm among women, particularly unmarried and Black women. Over half of all women (56%), including 58% of unmarried women and 69% of Black women, said they were “much more” interested in the November 4th election compared to elections in the past. Only 2% or less of each cohort expressed less interest in this election (1%, 2% and 0%, respectively). Certainly, voter outreach and mobilization played a key role, as roughly one-third (35%) of all unmarried women said they were contacted about registering and voting in this year's elections.

A panoply of economic concerns influenced women's vote this year. Rising health care costs was the top concern for women (16% top concern), especially unmarried (18%) and Black women (22%). After health care, women cited higher taxes (15%), the federal budget deficit and national

debt (12%), job loss (10%), and the lack of family-supporting jobs (10%). Unmarried and Black women cited the same litany of issues, with a few exceptions: unmarried women also cited daily expenses like food or child care (10%); Black women were noticeably less concerned about rising taxes (6%) but much more anxious about the lack of good paying jobs (16%).

In North Carolina, unmarried women and Black women deliver stunning victories to Barack Obama and Kay Hagan

North Carolina's changing demographics have made it competitive at the statewide level for several years now. But not until Obama's impressive primary win in North Carolina, did the Tarheel state emerge as a Presidential battleground. Today, both President-elect Obama and U.S. Senator-elect Hagan owe their victories, in large part, to the stalwart support of unmarried women.

Obama eked out the narrowest of victories in North Carolina, a state that has not voted for the Democratic presidential nominee since 1976. Obama beat McCain by just over 10,000 votes in a finally tally that showed 50% to 50%. Men voted for McCain, 54% to 45%. Among women, the Presidential race was not close, with 55% voting for Obama and 45% for McCain, but this advantage obscures a wide marriage gap among women. Unmarried women voted for Obama by a staggering margin, 68% to 32%. Married women actually voted for McCain by a 5-point margin, 52% to 47%.

The U.S. Senate race in North Carolina was called before the Presidential, with Hagan defeating Dole by 9 points, 53% to 44% with the remaining votes going to the Libertarian candidate. While men split on this race (47% each), women handed Hagan an impressive 14-point margin, 55% to 41%. The marriage gap among women in the Senate race was also noticeable, though less dramatic than at the top of the ticket. Married women voted for Hagan by 6 points, 51% to 45%. Unmarried women voted for Hagan by thirty points, 62% to 32%. The Democrats also won white unmarried women in North Carolina by 2 points in the Presidential (51% for Obama to 49% for McCain) and the Senate race (47% for Hagan to 46% for Dole). But Black women were the cornerstone of support for the Democrats in North Carolina, with nearly one-hundred percent voting for Obama and well over nine in ten voting for Hagan. In both the Presidential and the U.S. Senate races in this state, unmarried women and Black women carried the Democratic candidates to victory – and in the case of Hagan, afforded her the convincing margin that translates into political capital in the state and in Washington.

The 2008 campaign inspired an astounding level of enthusiasm among women in North Carolina. Roughly two-thirds (67%) report being more interested in this election compared to elections in the past, including a 51% majority of women who said they were “much more interested.” Less than one-third of women voters (30%) said there was no difference in their level of interest between this election and previous ones and just 2% said they were less interested. Impressively, fully half of women in the state (50%) say they were contacted about registering and voting in the election, slightly higher among unmarried women (52%).

The economy was the number one issue for women in North Carolina, with rising health care costs their most pressing economic concern. Nearly one-fifth of women in the state (19%) picked rising health care costs as the most important economic issue determining their votes – 21% among unmarried women. Other urgent economic concerns for women in North Carolina include higher taxes (15%), the federal budget deficit and national debt (12%), lack of jobs that pay a family-supporting wage (10%), a secure retirement (8%), daily expenses like food or child care (8%), the possibility of losing one's job (6%), and the rising cost of gasoline and fuel (5%). There is no noticeable difference in the ranking of economic concerns between married and unmarried women.

In Minnesota, unmarried women are the difference in a Senate race that is still too close to call

The final results of the hotly contested U.S. Senate race in Minnesota are still not in, but the Presidential race was called for Obama early in the night, with the Democrat carrying the state, 54% to 44%. Both men and women voted for Obama, but it was unmarried women who gave him his commanding statewide margin. Married women gave Obama a 2-point margin (51% to 49%) – roughly the same margin afforded him by men in the state (50% to 47%). Unmarried women, however, supported Obama by a whopping 47-point margin, 72% to 25%.

Unmarried women were absolutely pivotal in the U.S. Senate race in Minnesota, which is currently tied and headed for an automatic recount, with 42% of voters supporting both Coleman and Franken and 15% for Barkley. Men voted for Coleman, 46% to 39%. Women voted for Franken by a similar margin, 46% to 37%, but it was unmarried women who carried the Democrat. Married women actually voted for Coleman, 44% to 38%, while unmarried women voted for Franken by a commanding 38-point margin, 62% to 24%.

Majorities of women in Minnesota were energized and mobilized by the 2008 campaign. Fully 59% say they were more interested in this election compared to elections in the past, including 43% who were “much more interested.” Thirty-seven percent said there was no difference in their level of interest between this election and previous ones and just 3% said they were less interested. Even in a state with traditionally high turnout patterns, an astounding 45% of Minnesota women say they were contacted about registering and voting in the election.

The economy drove the issue agenda for women in Minnesota, and rising health care costs topped the list as the most important economic issue determining their votes (24%), followed by the federal budget deficit and national debt (15%), higher taxes (14%), a secure retirement (9%), lack of jobs that pay a family-supporting wage (9%), daily expenses like food or child care (5%), the possibility of losing one’s job (5%), and the rising cost of gasoline and fuel (4%). The rank ordering of economic concerns is similar for unmarried women, though rising health care costs is an even higher concern for unmarried women at 28%.

In New Hampshire, Jeanne Shaheen ousted John Sununu with the help of an energized base of unmarried women

Once again, New Hampshire was a contested battleground late in the cycle, but in the end unmarried women helped turn what might have been a close contest into a decisive victory for Democrats at both the Presidential and U.S. Senate levels. Democratic U.S. Senate challenger Jeanne Shaheen won decisively over incumbent Republican John Sununu (52% to 45%), aided in large part by unmarried women, who voted for Shaheen by 34 points (64% to 30%). Men voted for Sununu by 8 points (53% to 45%). In the race for President, unmarried women helped Obama to an 11-point overall victory, supporting him by a slightly higher margin of 38 points (68% to 30%). Men split their vote between the two candidates. Without the support of unmarried women, both races would have been much tighter.

New Hampshire women, particularly unmarried women, were noticeably more energized to participate in the 2008 elections. Fully half of all women, including 51% of unmarried women, said they were “much more” interested in the November 4th election compared to elections in the past. No more than 1% of each cohort said they were less interested this year. Driving enthusiasm among women was an impressive voter mobilization program, which reached over half (53%) of all women, including nearly six in ten (57%) of unmarried women.

The economy was a consistent theme throughout the 2008 cycle, including among women in New Hampshire. Women were most likely to cite rising health care costs (22%), the federal budget

deficit and national debt (18%) – this was even higher for unmarried women (22%) – and higher taxes (13%) as the issues that helped determine their vote in 2008. Unmarried women also cited concern over the lack of family-supporting jobs (10%). Married women similarly cited rising health care costs (23%), higher taxes (16%), and the federal budget deficit and national debt (15%).

***With 99% of precincts reporting. Final numbers overall and for subgroups may change slightly.**