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To: Friends of Democracy Corps and The Voter Participation Center

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## Tuesday and What It Tells Us About 2016

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The 2014 election was a major defeat of Democrats – a wave election that will have long-term consequences. It was produced by the Republicans who were energized by nationalizing the election around Barack Obama and it was also produced by the President's failure to engage with an economic narrative and vision relevant to the current tough economy. As a result, Democrats and their supportive coalition were driven out of the electorate – despite the best efforts of supportive groups. Both female and male white non-college voters walked away from Democrats. In that respect, 2010 and 2014 look very similar. The results were only marginally better than in 2010 because the Rising American Electorate voted Democratic in larger numbers.

The main message of the election and take-away from this election-night poll<sup>1</sup> is surely a call to the Democrats' national leaders to address this new economy where jobs do not pay enough to live on, working women and men are struggling without help, and good American jobs are not being created while the government is beholden to those with the most money. The voters want to vote for change, and this poll shows that the Democrats and their supportive coalition would rally to a message that understands people are struggling with the new economy; but that was not President's economic narrative for this election and it showed. Tackling the new economy is a tremendous undertaking, but also one that will be received by a large audience of voters and that is the best path forward for Democrats.

But for all that and two consecutive off-year wave elections, there is no reason to think Republicans have raised their odds of electing a president in 2016. Looking at this poll, one would rather be in the position of the Democrats than of the Republicans.

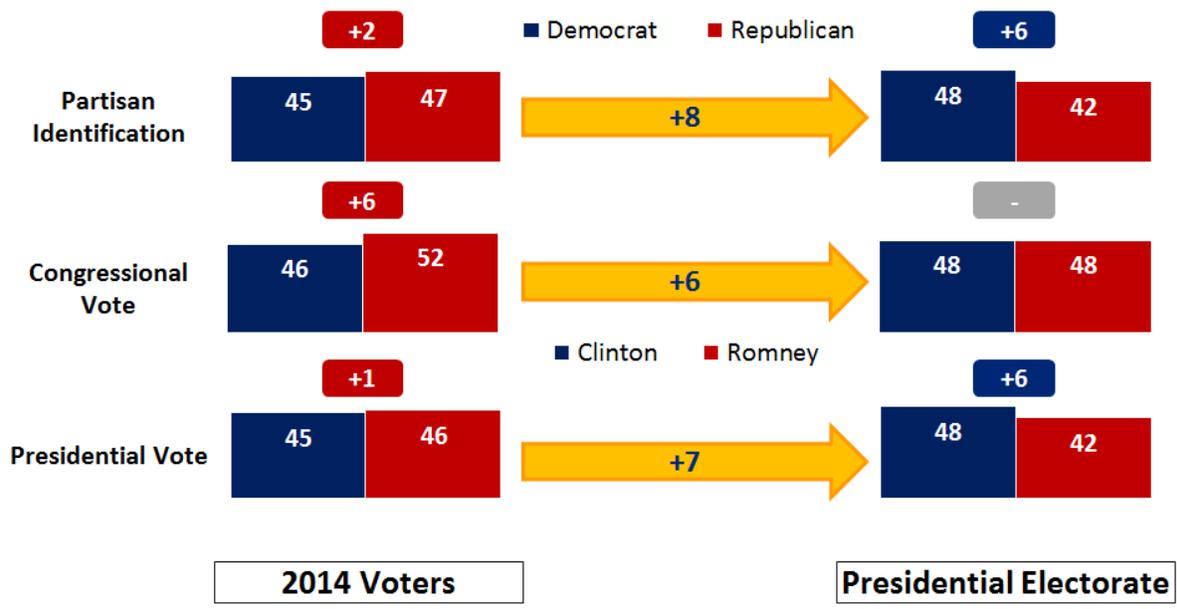
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<sup>1</sup> Based on a unique survey of 1,429 likely 2016 voters across the country, including 1,030 2014 voters, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for Democracy Corps and the Voter Participation Center. This survey was conducted from November 3-5, 2014 using a list of 2010 voters, 2012 voters, and new registrants. Unless otherwise noted, the margin of error for the full sample is +/- 2.59% at 95% confidence. Results among 2014 voters are weighted to reflect election results and Exit Poll demographic results publicly posted by Edison Research. This also includes oversamples conducted for the Voter Participation Center in Senate Battleground seats to allow more in-depth message testing in these states as well as an oversample of unmarried women that voted in 2014. Half of respondents were reached by cell phone, in order to account for ever-changing demographics and trying to accurately sample the full American electorate.

In the presidential electorate that we surveyed, some of whom voted on Tuesday, Democrats have a 6-point advantage in party identification; the congressional vote is even; and Hillary Clinton defeats Mitt Romney by 6 points – well ahead of Obama’s margin in 2012. Moreover, this does not reflect the projected growth in Millennials and Hispanics in the 2016 electorate.

In a national race with Hillary Clinton on the ticket, Democrats right now close the margin among Independents by 3 points and she also leads among seniors by 5 points. While she too receives only 29 percent with whites in the GOP conservative heartland, she gets 54 percent of whites in the West, is even with 46 percent of the white vote in the Midwest, and trails by only 5 points among whites in the East.<sup>2</sup> Her losing margin with white non-college women is only 10 points (but she still loses the white non-college men by 17 points). Unmarried women and the Rising American Electorate drive the vote for Hillary; she wins each by more than 20 points.

*I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for President in 2016, if the election for President were held today and the candidates were Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate, and Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate, for whom would you vote?*



The election was fundamentally important, but has not disrupted the national trends and coalitions – even on the day of triumph electorally for the Republicans.

<sup>2</sup> The GOP Conservative Heartland consists of the following states: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming.



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**These are the factors, revealed in the poll, which produced the 2014 wave:**

- Republican base voters, particularly in the GOP conservative heartland that includes many of the Senate battleground states, were intensely hostile to President Obama and showed great determination to express that in voting.
- Democratic voters and their coalition were de-motivated by their doubts about Obama. With 40 percent of the RAE and unmarried women disapproving of Obama's job performance, it was very difficult to motivate them to vote.
- Democrats had success running against the Republican governing model in Florida, North Carolina, Kansas, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania which made these races competitive, but that was drowned out in some states by the successful anti-Obama election narrative Republicans ran in the final weeks.

Voters on Tuesday voted on the economy and that dominated everything else: 53 percent of those who voted for the Republican candidate for Congress said their vote was about the economy, jobs and wages while 58 percent of those who voted Democratic said the same. While Democratic House and Senate leaders try to address key economic issues, the president's narrative still spoke of America as the leading economy in the world.

The biggest doubts about the Republicans among those who did not vote for them were their support for tax cuts for the rich rather than the middle class and fear that they are beholden to the billionaire special interests that fund their campaigns. People believe that the rich are using their influence to rig the system so the economy works for them but not the middle class. Unfortunately, very few of the campaigns made that the central argument.

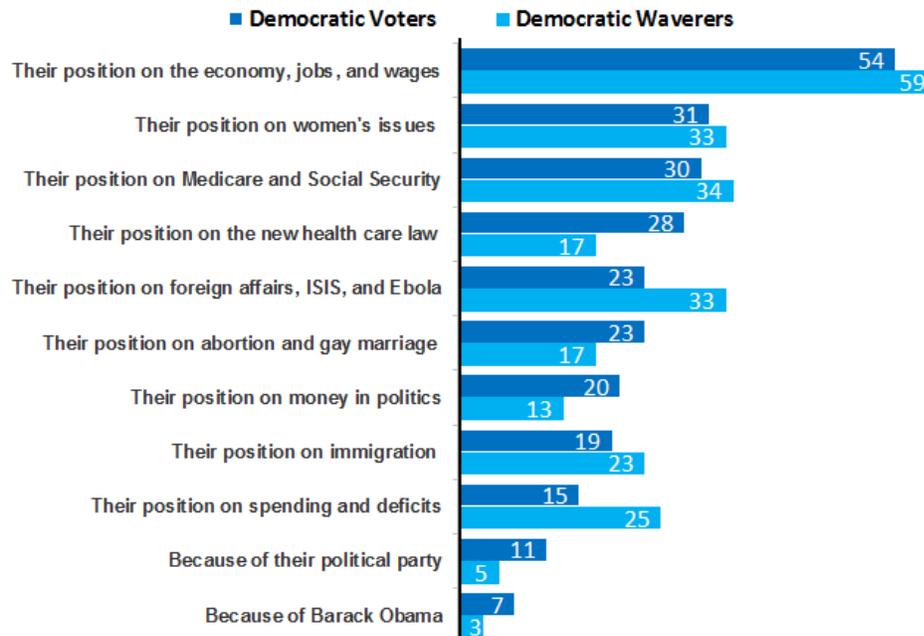
But the areas where Democrats did make some gains in their vote margin this year were among the segments of the Rising American Electorate including unmarried women (up from 57 percent to 60 percent), Hispanics (up from 60 percent to 62 percent) and Millennials, the only generation with whom Democrats won a congressional margin (up from 55 percent to 57 percent). It is hard to believe, but it could have been worse without those gains.

So note that broad base is already there in the presidential electorate. The RAE votes for Hillary Clinton by a margin of 57 to 33, but they also prefer a generic Democratic House candidate by a 60 to 36 margin, replicating their 2012 result. The RAE remains the starting point, though House Democrats need to make further gains.

Those that voted Democratic in this election were determined by the economy but also the Affordable Care Act, abortion, women's issues and Medicare – all grouped together and important. We will look back and regret that the president and Democrats did not make the case for the Affordable Care Act, given its success and Republicans being on the defensive.



*Now I am going to read you a list of reasons people vote for one candidate over another. After I read this list, tell me which THREE are the most important when deciding who to vote for in the election for U.S. Senate/Congress.*



When it comes to the agenda ahead, it's the economy, stupid – but with recognition that social transformations and diversifying family structures have changed what policies matter. For the Rising American Electorate, the priorities are ensuring women receive equal pay, reducing the federal deficit, helping small business, and enacting policies that help working women and working families.

If you think the Republicans in Congress are headed on a new path, consider that a 50 percent majority of Republicans think “the new Congress should begin an impeachment investigation of Obama.”