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Celinda C. Lake  
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To: Interested Parties

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From: Lake Research Partners

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Re: Women in the 2006 Elections

Date: November 17, 2006

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David Mermin  
*Partner*

Ms. Magazine and the Women Donors Network commissioned an election eve survey to evaluate the gender gap in voting preferences and in priorities for the future among voters in the 2006 elections.<sup>1</sup> The following memo highlights the key findings from this research.

Robert G. Meadow,  
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## Key Findings:

Susan Kannel  
*Vice President*

### Women Voted for Change

Joshua E. Ulibarri  
*Vice President*

- In the 2006 elections, women led the way for change. Early in the year, they decided the country needed to go in a new direction, especially around the war in Iraq and voted that way on Election Day.

Rick Johnson  
*Vice President*

### Women Want New Priorities

- Women are directing the agenda for the new Congress on Iraq, health care and retirement security. Women's domestic agenda is much broader than men's and includes child care and early education, equality for women, raising the minimum wage, and rebuilding areas affected by Hurricane Katrina.

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<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 1000 2006 voters and was conducted between November 6<sup>th</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn using random digit dial (RDD). The interviews consisted of a base sample of 1000 men and women who are likely voters nationwide. The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, race, education, union membership, parental status and party identification in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the demographic configuration of these populations. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1%.

## 2006 is The Year of the Woman Leader

- Women leaders are also an important part of change, especially to women voters. Nearly a majority of voters think it is important that we have the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives (49 percent important, 24 percent very important). Among women, 54 percent say a woman Speaker is important (26 percent very important).
- A large number of voters also say that electing more women to Congress would change the scandals and corruption that have overwhelmed Washington. Almost half of voters say that having more women in office would change the situation in Washington a lot or some (47 percent, 21 percent a lot). Among women voters, 52 percent say more women will change corruption, including 23 percent a lot.

## Issues for the Next Congress

**Voters top priorities for the next session of Congress focus on the war in Iraq (mean 8.4 out of 10, with 75 percent of voters rating this as an 8-10), health care (8.3, 74 percent) and the economy and jobs (8.2, 72 percent).<sup>2</sup> Iraq was the most frequently mentioned voting issue for voters (men: 21 percent, women: 17 percent).**

- Women and men diverge on their priorities for the next Congress. Women focus on the war, health care, social security and retirement, and the economy and jobs, while men identify corruption in government, the war and the economy and jobs as their top priorities.

<b>Top Concerns Among Women and Men (mean/% rating this as an 8-10)</b>	
<b>Women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The war in Iraq (8.7/80%)</li> <li>• Health care (8.6/79%,)</li> <li>• Social Security and retirement (8.4/75%)</li> <li>• Economy and jobs (8.4/75%)</li> </ul>
<b>Men</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corruption in government (8.2/72%)</li> <li>• The war in Iraq (8.2/71%)</li> <li>• Economy and jobs (8.0/70%)</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Voters were asked to rate a series of issues on a scale of 0-10, where 10 is a very high priority and 0 is a very low priority.

- Among Democrats, health care is the highest rated priority (8.9/with 86 percent of voters rating this as an 8-10), followed by the war in Iraq (8.8/85 percent) and Social Security and retirement (8.6/81 percent).
  - Democratic women are more likely than their male counterparts to give these three issues between 8-10. Almost nine in ten Democratic women rate health care as an 8-10 (89 percent), compared with 82 percent of Democratic men. Similarly, 87 percent of these women rate the war in Iraq as an 8-10 (men: 82 percent), and 85 percent of women rate Social Security and retirement in this highest tier (men: 76 percent).
- Republican voters identify corruption in government as their top priority (8.0, with 67 percent of voters rating this as an 8-10). This is followed by the war in Iraq (8.0, 65 percent) and the economy and jobs (7.8, 64 percent).
  - Among Republicans, women are much more likely than men to rate the war as an 8-10 (73 percent vs. 58 percent). They respond similarly on corruption in government and the economy and jobs (corruption – women: 66 percent, men: 69 percent; economy and jobs – women: 62 percent, men: 65 percent).
- Independent voters also have their own priorities for the next Congress. They rate economy and jobs highest (mean 8.5, with 78 percent rating this as an 8-10), followed by health care and the war in Iraq (health care: 8.3/77 percent; war in Iraq: 8.3/76 percent).
- Like Democratic women, Independent women voters place health care at the top of their priorities: 88 percent of these voters rate health care as an 8-10.

<b>Top Concerns Among Democratic, Independent and Republican Women (mean/% rating this as an 8-10)</b>	
<b>Democratic women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health care (9.2/89%)</li> <li>• Social Security and retirement (8.8/85%)</li> <li>• Economy and jobs (8.8/84%)</li> </ul>
<b>Independent women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health care (8.9/88%)</li> <li>• Economy and jobs (8.6/79%)</li> <li>• The war in Iraq (8.5/78%)</li> </ul>
<b>Republican women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The war in Iraq (8.3/73%)</li> <li>• Corruption in government (8.1/66%)</li> <li>• Social Security and retirement (8.0/66%)</li> </ul>

- Medium tier issues include a domestic agenda fueled by women voters. Over half of women voters say it is a high priority for Congress to deal with women’s equality under law (mean 7.4, with 58 percent rating this as an 8-10), child care and early education (7.4/57 percent), raising the minimum wage (7.4/56 percent), and rebuilding areas affected by Hurricane Katrina (7.3/52 percent). Men rate these issues lower: women’s equality under law (6.8/49 percent), child care and early education (6.5/43 percent), raising the minimum wage (6.1/39 percent), and rebuilding areas affected by Hurricane Katrina (6.0/35 percent).
- Stem cell research (overall mean 6.3, with 44 percent rating this as an 8-10), abortion (6.0/42 percent) and paid sick leave (5.6/30 percent) are lower priorities for both male and female voters.

See Appendix A and B for full list of issues.

## Speaker of the House

**Despite just coming onto the scene, voters think it is important to have the first woman as the next Speaker of the House of Representatives. Just under half of voters say that it is very or somewhat important that we might have the first woman as our next Speaker (49 percent important, 24 percent very important).**

- Women place particular importance on the prospect of having the first woman Speaker (54 percent important to 45 percent not important), while a large number of men also say this is important (43 percent important to 56 percent not important).
- Support for a female Speaker follows party lines. Democrats, and particularly Democratic women, express greatest importance around having a female Speaker of the House (Democratic women: 73 percent important, with 38 percent very important; Democratic men: 58 percent important, 27 percent very). In contrast, Republicans are more likely to say that having the first woman Speaker is not important (70 percent not important, 55 percent not important at all).
- A majority of Independent women, the key swing voters in 2006 and 2008, also place a great deal of importance on this issue (56 percent important, 22 percent very important).
- Other voters who believe it is important to have the first woman Speaker include women under 50 (58 percent important, 28 percent very important), African Americans (81 percent, 49 percent), unmarried voters (61 percent, 29 percent), Methodists (58 percent, 33 percent), Middle Atlantic voters (59 percent, 32 percent), and Northeastern women (65 percent, 31 percent).

- Among those least likely to say it is important that we might have the first woman as Speaker of the House include: married men (62 percent not important, 48 percent not important at all), fathers (60 percent, 49 percent), voters living in West South Central and Mountain regions (62 percent, 53 percent; 61 percent, 43 percent) of the country, and those who say moral values most influenced their 2006 voting decision (67 percent, 57 percent).

## **Electing Women to Congress to Bring About Change after Corruption and Scandals**

**The 2006 elections were a vote for change in Washington as related to scandals and corruption. Almost a majority of voters say that electing more women would change the situation in Washington (47 percent a lot/some, 21 percent a lot).**

- A majority of women voters (52 percent) say electing more women would change the corruption in Washington a lot or some and 43 percent of men agree - a 9-point gender gap.
- Again, majorities of Democratic men and women and Independent women feel that more women in office would make Congress less prone to corruption (63 percent, 66 percent and 53 percent a lot or some change respectively).
- Other voters who see women as bringing change include women under 50 (54 percent a lot/somewhat), college women (56 percent), African Americans (71 percent), voters in a household with a member in a teachers union (59 percent), and women living in the Northeast, Midwest and West (all 57 percent).
- Voters less likely to think that electing more women will bring about change include men under 50 (60 percent a little/not at all), Republicans (71 percent), fathers (61 percent), Baptists (59 percent), Southern men (58 percent), voters living in the East South Central region (63 percent).

## **Women Lead the Way for a New Direction in Congress**

- **While both men and women voted for change in the 2006 elections, it was the women's vote that drove the margin for the change in the House and Senate.** Women voted for the Democratic candidate by a 12 point margin (55% Democrat to 43% Republican), while the margin among men was only 3 points for the Democrats (50% Democrat to 47% Republican) with a five point gender gap between men and women.<sup>3</sup> This election represents a particular shift from the 2004 elections, when women voted +3 points for Kerry (51% to 48%) and men voted +11 for Bush (55% to 44%).<sup>4</sup> Clearly,

<sup>3</sup> 2006 Exit Poll: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/pages/results/states/US/H/00/epolls.0.html>

<sup>4</sup> 2004 Exit Poll: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/US/P/00/epolls.0.html>

men followed women’s 2004 voting pattern into 2006, a trend that emerged throughout the mid-term elections.

- **The women’s vote determined Democratic control of the Senate in the three close races that determined the elections.** Democratic Senate candidates in the Missouri, Montana, and Virginia races in particular owe their success to women. Female voters supported the Democrats by 6 to 10 points, while men favored their Republican opponents by 2 to 10 points -- creating a gender gap of 10 to 4 points between women and men.

<b>2006 Senate Votes in Key States<sup>5</sup></b>			
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Gender Gap</b>
<i><b>VA: Webb vs. Allen</b></i>	+10 Dem (55% Webb to 45% Allen)	-10 Dem (45% Webb to 55% Allen)	+10
<i><b>MO: McCaskill vs. Talent</b></i>	+6 Dem (51% McCaskill to 45% Talent)	-5 Dem (46% McCaskill to 51% Talent)	+5
<i><b>MT: Tester vs. Burns</b></i>	+7 Dem (52% Tester to 45% Burns)	-2 Dem (48% Tester to 50% Burns)	+4

<sup>5</sup> 2006 Exit Polls, Senate races: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/pages/results/states/MT/S/01/epolls.0.html>

**Appendix A: Issues for Next Congress (Mean/% Rating 10)**

	<b>All Voters (Mean/% Rating 10)</b>	<b>Men (Mean/% Rating 10)</b>	<b>Women (Mean/% Rating 10)</b>
<b>War in Iraq</b>	8.4/48%	8.2/43%	8.7/54%
<b>Health care</b>	8.3/39%	7.9/33%	8.6/46%
<b>Corruption in government</b>	8.3/45%	8.2/45%	8.3/45%
<b>The economy and jobs</b>	8.2/36%	8.0/30%	8.4/41%
<b>Social Security and retirement</b>	8.1/36%	7.8/31%	8.4/40%
<b>Women's equality under law</b>	7.1/30%	6.8/26%	<b>7.4/34%</b>
<b>Child care and early education</b>	6.9/25%	6.5/20%	<b>7.4/30%</b>
<b>Raising the minimum wage</b>	6.8/27%	6.1/22%	<b>7.4/31%</b>
<b>Rebuilding areas affected by Hurricane Katrina</b>	6.7/24%	6.0/17%	<b>7.3/30%</b>
<b>Stem cell research</b>	6.3/20%	6.1/16%	6.6/25%
<b>Abortion</b>	6.0/24%	5.7/19%	6.3/28%
<b>Paid sick leave</b>	5.6/13%	4.9/10%	6.2/16%

**Appendix B - Issues for Next Congress (Mean/% Rating between 8 and 10)**

	<b>All Voters (Mean/% Rating between 8 and 10)</b>	<b>Men (Mean/% Rating between 8 and 10)</b>	<b>Women (Mean/% Rating between 8 and 10)</b>
<b>War in Iraq</b>	8.4/75%	8.2/71%	8.7/80%
<b>Health care</b>	8.3/74%	7.9/68%	8.6/79%
<b>Corruption in government</b>	8.3/71%	8.2/72%	8.3/71%
<b>The economy and jobs</b>	8.2/72%	8.0/70%	8.4/75%
<b>Social Security and retirement</b>	8.1/71%	7.8/66%	8.4/75%
<b>Women's equality under law</b>	7.1/53%	6.8/49%	<b>7.4/58%</b>
<b>Child care and early education</b>	6.9/50%	6.5/43%	<b>7.4/57%</b>
<b>Raising the minimum wage</b>	6.8/48%	6.1/39%	<b>7.4/56%</b>
<b>Rebuilding areas affected by Hurricane Katrina</b>	6.7/44%	6.0/35%	<b>7.3/52%</b>
<b>Stem cell research</b>	6.3/44%	6.1/40%	6.6/48%
<b>Abortion</b>	6.0/42%	5.7/38%	6.3/46%
<b>Paid sick leave</b>	5.6/30%	4.9/24%	6.2/36%