

## MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES  
FROM: DEE ALLSOP, MIKE DABADIE  
SUBJECT: TIDES & FLOODS, BUT NO TSUNAMI (YET): 2008 ELECTION  
IMPLICATIONS & POST ELECTION SURVEY LEARNINGS  
DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2008

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Despite other analysis and the AP exit poll, our non-partisan national post election survey of actual voters indicates that while voters were primarily concerned about the economy, they did not vote their pocketbooks alone. Rather, our data indicates voters were really motivated to “change the world for future generations and to restore trust in government” as the primary drivers of their actions both long and short term.

Furthermore, voters who secured Barack Obama’s place in history were not motivated by traditional political coalitions, geography or demographics, but rather by their hopes, dreams and aspirations. While our data and exit polls show that the election turned on the economy (Fall 2008) and the war, a more rigorous look at the data indicate that a desire for new leadership and voter values were the true driving forces behind the vote for change.

Three themes paved the way for the Obama victory:

- 1. A Tide of Historic Voter Pessimism and Distrust: We have never seen voter negativity over the direction of the nation or so many Americans worried about their future as high as it was the day the polls opened.**
  - 84% of voters feel the country is pretty seriously on the wrong track
  - 81% of voters are “worried”
  - 78% of voters are “frustrated”
  - 72% of voters do not “trust elected officials in Washington to do what’s right”
    - This is the highest we have ever seen voter distrust and combined with the fact that “restoring honesty and trust in government” was the second most important vote determinant issue behind the economy, sends a strong message that voters want elected officials to listen to their needs
- 2. A Flood of Change for Hope: The economic crisis accentuated the need for change, but making the world better for future generations, the desire for new hope and opportunity, and restoring trust in the government were the real forces behind the decisions voters made at the polls.**
  - The strongest guiding motivation for voters was the “desire to make the world a better place for future generations” (32%)
  - Notably, the “desire to increase financial security for me or my family” was the strongest guiding motivation for only 23% of voters, despite the fact that 45% felt “getting the economy back on track” was the most important determining issue for their vote

**3. But Not A National Tsunami of Voter Realignment: Although Obama won resoundingly in the Electoral College and received 4% more of the popular vote than did John Kerry in 2004 (48% for Kerry to 52% for Obama), there was not a national realignment across the electorate demographically or geographically.**

- Despite the landslide democratic victory, 49% of survey respondents identified themselves as “conservative,” compared to 35% “liberal” and 16% “moderate.” These numbers represent a slight decrease in self-identified conservatives and liberals compared to previous elections, and a quadrupling of moderate voters. Yet, the nation remains right-of-center
- There was no overwhelming political realignment. An assessment of Kerry’s voter groups in 2004 compared to Obama’s in 2008 shows that Obama for the most part extended traditional Democratic voter coalitions, but did not bring in newer groups, as has occurred in past presidential elections
  - Intensity of Hispanic support: up 27% from Kerry’s 2004 vote advantage over Bush, compared to Obama’s 2008 advantage over McCain
  - Intensity of working women support: up 24% from Kerry’s 2004 vote advantage over Bush, compared to Obama’s 2008 advantage over McCain
  - Intensity of African American support: up 15% from Kerry’s 2004 vote advantage over Bush, compared to Obama’s 2008 advantage over McCain
    - But these aforementioned groups were already part of the Democratic vote coalition and what our data shows is that Obama simply extended Kerry’s 2004 wins but did not alter the landscape. In fact, efforts placed by Democrats to drive up the union vote did not seem to take shape either
- The surge in turnout of the youth vote (ages 18 to 29 years) never materialized. Young people voted overwhelmingly for Obama (up 25% from Kerry’s youth vote advantage over Bush), but as a percentage of the voting public, youth voters weren’t significantly a larger share than they were in the 2004 election

Looking ahead, president-elect Obama and the Democratic Party now begin to govern with high expectations. And while many are already saying that campaigns based on emotion rather than fact usually hit failure in governing because of an inability to meet expectations, we have seen over time just the opposite. Leaders who start governing (or managing for that matter) from a place of vision have the ability to build support across a wider set of disparate coalitions. Indeed, voters today seek a restoration of trust and the formation of a bond with leaders who will help them actualize their own dreams and values.

*Methodology: This FirstView poll surveyed 1,049 voters via the phone and online. The scientific survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.*

*For more details visit [www.firstviewsurvey.com](http://www.firstviewsurvey.com)*