



MEMORANDUM

CELINDA C. LAKE
President

To: Interested Parties

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Partner

From: Celinda Lake; David Mermin; Rick Johnson
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Subject: Findings from a survey of registered voters in comparison to the atmosphere before the 1980 election

DR. ROBERT G. MEADOW
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Date: December 10, 2007

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Research conducted by Lake Research Partners¹ on behalf of Change to Win indicates that **the 2008 election is poised to produce a change the likes of which have not been seen since 1980. We see significant parallels between 2008 and 1980 in voter dissatisfaction with the direction of the country and economy, lack of hope for the future, and a feeling that the American Dream is slipping away.** One key difference between the two elections is that **heading into 2008, voters see labor unions as a key part of the solution.** Voters believe that unions have a significant role to play, and that workers joining together is an effective way to keep the American Dream alive.

Ø **Today, as in 1980, an overwhelming majority of Americans feel that the country is off on the wrong track.** In 1980² when asked if things in this country were “generally going in the right direction” or “pretty seriously off on the wrong track,” only 20% of Americans were positive about the direction of the country, compared to 70% who believed things were off on the wrong track. Today³, that number is strikingly similar, with 20% of American voters positive about the direction of the economy and 73% negative.

Ø **Heading into the 1980 election, a majority believed that the economy was getting worse⁴ and that it would not be getting better in the next year⁵.**

¹ Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey that was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers between September 6th and September 20th. The Random Digit Dialing (RDD) survey reached a total of 800 registered voters and 800 Non-supervisory workers. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.5%.

² Conducted by Roper Organization, February 9-February 23, 1980 national adult sample of 2,001.

³ From October 23 - 29, Quinnipiac University surveyed 1,636 American voters with a margin of error of +/- 2.4 percent.

⁴ Conducted by Cambridge Reports/Research International during July, 1980 and based on personal interviews with a national adult sample of 1,500.

⁵ Conducted by Los Angeles Times, May 20-May 25, 1979 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,304.

Today, a large majority again see the economy headed in the wrong direction. When asked in July of 1980, Seventy-four percent of Americans responded that the economy had gotten worse in the past six months. Today 61% of registered voters and 62% of non-supervisory workers believe the economy is headed on the wrong track.

- ∅ **Early in 1980, Americans were worried about the future prospects of their children in startling proportions. Today we see the same disturbing trend, with more and more Americans believing the American Dream is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve.** In February of 1980⁶, when Americans were asked whether in the future “prospects for our children [would] be better, worse, or about the same as they were for us,” only 28% were able to respond that they thought things would be better, while 66% thought things would be the same or worse (31% the same, 35% worse). Today, when we ask registered voters whether they feel the next generation will be economically “better off, worse off, or about the same as the generation of adults who are working today,” the numbers are even worse. Only 19% of voters believe that the next generation will be better off, with 77% believing that they will only be the same or will be worse off (31% the same, 46% worse). Worse still, only 9% believe that the American Dream will be easier for the next generation to achieve, with 66% believing it will be more difficult.
- ∅ **Fortunately, in 2008 people do believe that changing course is possible, and they believe that labor unions can play a key role in restoring the American Dream.** In March of 1980, the electorate was ready for a change, with 70% agreeing with the statement “it is time for a change of administration in Washington”⁷. Today the yearning for change is even greater, with fully 91% of registered voters saying they want a change of direction from the policies of the last 7 years.
- ∅ **Voters believe that preserving a strong middle class and restoring the American Dream are of paramount importance, and they believe that labor unions will have an important role to play.** Indeed, when asked if labor unions could help in restoring the key foundations of the American Dream, voters state by huge margins that unions can be helpful. Ninety-five percent of voters believe that unions can help workers with the number one American Dream issue, having “a job that pays enough to support a family” (73% definitely help), and the same number believe that unions can help workers to have “a secure and dignified retirement.” Voters rate the helpfulness of unions at 90% or above for every core American Dream issue.

⁶ Conducted by Civic Services, February 1-February 15, 1980 and based on personal interviews with a national adult sample of 1,611.

⁷ Conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly & White, March 29-March 30, 1980 and based on telephone interviews with a registered voters sample of 917.